

JOURNAL

TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS



Special Initiative Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems

Global Programme Transformation of Food Systems

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS EDITION?

► In the second edition of this journal, we reflect on a Transformative Initiatives (TI) virtual exchange meeting on women's empowerment. We are particularly excited to share many highlights from the TI. You can look forward to an engaging interview with Pawan Agarwal, as well as recommendations for interesting articles and information about upcoming events.

We hope you enjoy reading!

2nd Virtual Exchange Meeting of Transformative Initiatives

7 November, virtually

► *The 2nd Virtual Exchange Meeting of Transformative Initiatives* gathered up to 50 participants in the virtual space from the three national transformative initiatives (TI) in India, Malawi, and Zambia as well as the two global TIs, the Next Gen(d)eration Leadership Collective and the ICLEI City Food Network. Building on previous meetings held in Berlin, Nairobi, and online, this exchange provided a virtual platform to share highlights, engage in topical discussions, and further strengthen the collaboration between the TIs.



Sharing of highlights

► In the first part of the exchange, the TIs were given the floor to share their highlights of the past months. These encouraging insights included, among others, drafting a **global handbook on fresh food markets**, identifying **new partner organisations** to collaborate on **inclusive leadership practices**, celebrations of **traditional foods** at the World Food Day in Zambia, **prominent**

presence at fora in Malawi such as the Malawi Agriculture Productivity and Commercialization Conference or the Regional Multistakeholder Policy Dialogue, and promoting **nutrition education** through diverse initiatives in India. This broad range of highlights and successes underlines the **uniqueness** of every TI's path towards transformation.

Topical Dive on Women's Empowerment

► Inspired by Vishala Reddy's input on **women's empowerment** in food systems, participants discussed the **meaning** and **relevance of empowerment**, **challenges** and **opportunities** within the TI, and the **needs** to seize these opportunities. Based on a holistic understanding of empowerment as an **inclusive and equitable process** beneficial for everyone, participants also identified **discriminatory power dynamics** and **gender norms** as persisting barriers to empowerment within food systems. The TI saw potential to better integrate **gender as a cross-cutting topic** more broadly within existing processes and

actions through joint discussions and co-creation. Further areas of interest raised included **inclusive leadership**, collaboration with **women-led groups**, mobilisation of **role models**, and **changing narratives** to highlight the holistic benefits of empowerment.

The exchange ended with an outlook to other relevant questions which will be taken up in upcoming events and the presentation of a **net-working area** to strengthen thematic linkages within the TI network.

Voices from the group work:

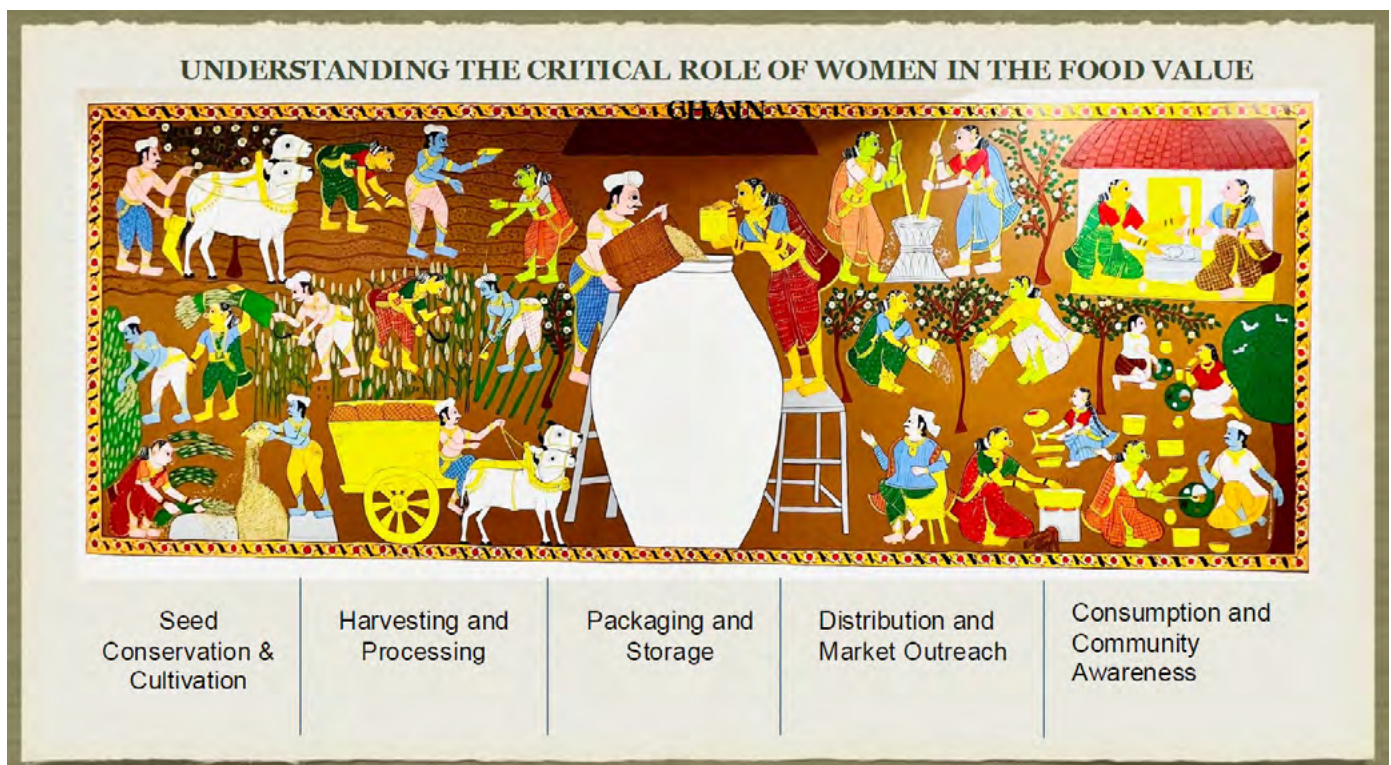
‘Women’s empowerment is not about women taking over men’s roles, it is about new perspectives of gender.’

‘Changing narrative and explaining why also men are profiting from this, often this is only explained from the female perspective.’

‘Are there other role models (...) who could act as influencers?’

Further food for thought on the topics of gender and women’s empowerment:

- Nutrition is not just a women’s issue! Gender-transformative approaches for overcoming malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies (GIZ). [🔗](#)
- Newsletter ‘Africa Gender Innovation Lab’ (World Bank). [🔗](#)
- The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems (FAO, 2023). [🔗](#)
- Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition (FAO, WFP, IFAD). [🔗](#)
- Gender, Power and Politics in Agriculture. Revisiting Theory and Practice (Springer E-book). [🔗](#)



An insight from Vishala Reddy’s inspiring input.

ONE PROGRAMME, MANY FACES

DO YOU ALREADY KNOW?

The transformative initiative is promoting visionaries and leaders and has created a platform for action for all stakeholders. What does that look like in practice? The smile on Agarwal's face fades for a moment. 'There is too much ultra-processed food on the market, for example, and too many chemical pesticides – we are working to change that.' You have to convince people that there is a demand for healthier food.

As head of a food regulation department in India, Agarwal has seen how many challenges cannot be addressed by the government alone. 'Governments are slow to make decisions,' he smiles again, 'and that's good because a mistake at that level can have big consequences.' But then a transformation needs other allies, and Agarwal sees them in business and the market. 'A few pilot projects are not enough – what we are doing needs to be scaled up.' Having retired from government service two years ago, Agarwal is now enjoying an un-retirement in which he is helping to drive India's 'National Pathway': This roadmap for transformation involves small farmers as well as agroecologists and businesses.

The Networker: Pawan Agarwal



▶ With 36 years of service in government departments, he doesn't look like a retiree: With his many laughs and attentive manner, Pawan Agarwal looks more like a transformation manager, which he is. The 62-year-old heads the 'Food Future Foundation' – the secretariat of a coalition of partnerships dedicated to transforming food systems in India. 'We are creating a shared vision for healthier, safer, and more sustainable food,' he says.

And, of course, the state: 'I am sure the government will develop an appetite for change in food systems,' he says optimistically. And he ties his assessment to a specific demand: 'Farmers should be compensated for not using chemical pesticides.'



This interview was conducted with Mr Pawan Agarwal (TI India) at the 1st Transformation Learning Lab in Berlin, January 2024.

Transforming Africa's Urban Food Systems through Youth Peer Networks

▶ The Next Gen(D)eration Leadership Collective (NGLC) **forums**  provide a platform for individuals and groups to voice their challenges and experiences in transforming food systems through leveraging the eight courageous leadership practices outlined in NGLC's **manifesto** .

The latest forum, titled *Transforming Africa's Urban Food Systems Through Youth Peer Networks*, held 25 October 2024, was co-hosted by AfriFOODlinks, an initiative coordinated by ICLEI Africa and aimed at anchoring food systems in local governance across African and European cities. In the Next Gen(D)eration Leadership Collective (NGLC)'s latest forum, AfriFOODlinks youth ambassadors Tashi Pipek, Christine Bonareri, and Clémentine Bakole Maroyi shared powerful insights into how partnerships foster peer-to-peer exchanges of knowledge, ideas, and experiences, and how they drive

resilience and empowerment within communities across Africa and Europe, all bound by a shared social purpose to transform urban food systems. Clémentine leveraged AfriFOODlinks' network to learn strategies for overcoming societal and market barriers for women entrepreneurs in Congo and for creating economic opportunities for women and youth in her community. Christine gained access to solar drying technology in Kenya to improve fish preservation, and empowered women to adopt this technology by involving them in the decision-making process. And Tashi, through AfriFOODlinks, provides young leaders with a support network that transcends 'linguistic, geographic, hierarchical, cultural and digital divides', to drive inclusive change. Their stories highlighted efforts to break structural, cultural, and social norms in their communities, amplifying the voices of those who have long been unheard.

Learn more about their journey and impact: <https://www.nextgenerationleaders.org/post/transforming-africa-s-urban-food-systems-through-youth-peer-networks> 

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI INDIA

World Food Day Conclave

On the occasion of World Food Day, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) in collaboration with Bhaskaracharya College of Applied Sciences, and under the aegis of the Coalition for Food Systems Transformation in India (CoFTI) organised a conclave on the theme of 'Food for All: Achieving Sustainable Food Systems for Amrit Peedhi'. It highlighted sustainable food systems and focused on the right to food as a fundamental human right.

The event featured insightful panel discussions with experts, a scientific poster competition, and presentations highlighting advancements in sustainable agriculture and food processing. By promoting sustainable practices, youth engagement, and food security, the event



sought to strengthen partnerships across government, academia, and industry, supporting India's vision of becoming 'Viksit Bharat', a developed entity, by 2047.



HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI INDIA

Smart Protein Forum 2024

17 – 18 October, Bengaluru, Karnataka

- The Smart Protein Forum, held on 17–18 October 2024, at The University of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences & Technology (TDU) in Bengaluru, Karnataka, brought together over 800 participants under the Coalition for Food Systems Transformation in India (CoFTI). Hosted by TDU and the Good Food Institute (GFI) India, this dynamic event convened scientists, industry leaders, and culinary experts to explore India's future in smart protein. With technical talks, engaging panel discussions, and a lively cooking competition, the forum spotlighted innovations in sustainable food, including plant-based proteins, biomass fermentation, and alternative protein sources. The event was a platform for fostering cross-sectoral partnerships and knowledge exchange across science, policy, and industry, driving momentum towards a robust smart protein ecosystem, and sustainable food solutions for India.



HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI INDIA

Event: Stakeholder Consultation for Chhatarpur Model Region

13 – 14 November 2024, Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh

Transforming Food Systems: A Model Region Approach in Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh

▶ Efforts to transform food systems in India are gaining momentum, aiming to create farming practices that are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable while ensuring food availability and nutrition security. Recognising the complexity of food systems and their inter-connection with ecosystems, water resources, health, and social dynamics, a **landscape-level approach** has been proposed. This approach emphasises holistic understanding and local solutions tailored to specific regional challenges.



In this context, Chhatarpur district in Madhya Pradesh has been identified as a potential pilot location for building a model region. Leveraging ongoing initiatives by GIZ, Welthungerhilfe, and other civil society organisations, a vision for the district includes fostering convergence among diverse stakeholders to co-create sustainable solutions.

An initial systems-mapping exercise in August 2024, followed by a two-day in-person stakeholder consultation, laid the groundwork for this initiative. The discussions involved government officials, CSOs, and agroecology and nutrition experts, focusing on co-creating a Common Meaningful Programme (CMP) titled **Local Innovations for Holistic Food Systems Transformation (LIHFT)**.

The workshop highlighted synergies between agroecology, nutrition, and local economies, and culminated in a participatory systems map and a draft concept note. A field visit to the Nutrition Smart Village in Bhusor showcased real-world innovations. With a shared vision and roadmap, Chhatarpur is poised to become a living laboratory for sustainable food systems transformation.



HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI INDIA

Event: Consultative Workshop on Street Vending Haats for Indian Cities

28 November 2024, New Delhi

Shaping the Future of Street Vending Markets in Indian Cities

▶ Street vending is a cornerstone of India's urban economy, providing livelihoods to millions and affordable goods and services to urban residents, particularly lower-income groups. Recognising this, the Government of India, under the PM SVANidhi scheme, has pledged to establish 100 organised street vending haats or food hubs annually over the next five years. These hubs aim to enhance vendor welfare, streamline activities, and boost local economies by offering organised spaces equipped with essential facilities. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) is leading this transformative initiative, focusing on key pillars such as infrastructure development, food safety, governance, and livelihoods. During a consultative workshop



held in collaboration with CoFTI, key stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organisations, and urban planning experts, discussed strategies to design vibrant, sustainable street vending environments.

Key Points from the Workshop:

- ▶
- **Infrastructure Development:** Discussions included site selection, sanitation, parking, and financial mechanisms like public-private partnerships to ensure the long-term viability of vending hubs.
 - **Food Safety and Hygiene:** Training vendors in safe practices, introducing FSSAI certification, and implementing waste management systems were highlighted as critical measures.
 - **Governance and Policy:** Establishing City Food Councils to integrate urban food governance with broader development strategies while fostering public awareness about nutrition and sustainability. This will enable cities to address challenges to local food systems and enhance the availability, accessibility, and affordability of healthy foods for residents.
 - **Livelihood Promotion:** Emphasising vendor empowerment through skill development, cultural engagement, and inclusive policies, particularly for women and marginalised groups.

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI INDIA

- **Multi-Sector Synergies:** As urban development spans sanitation, water, mobility, energy, and more, efforts like the Smart Cities Mission showcased potential synergies, sustaining such initiatives beyond programme timelines remains a challenge.



Mr Rahul Kapoor, Secretary, MoHUA, highlighted that **food ecosystem integration** needs to look into the importance of embedding food, nutrition,

and health considerations into urban planning and street vending hubs and markets should reflect a city's 'food vision'.

Insights from the workshop will shape comprehensive guidelines for the development and management of these vending haats. With support from MoHUA and local authorities, these hubs will provide organised, accessible spaces that enhance vendor operations and consumer experiences, while promoting the cultural and economic vibrancy of India's street vending sector. Ms Shalini Pandey, Director, MoHUA, emphasised how food security and nutrition had not been a part of deliberations till now and will now be a part of the guidelines that will be released shortly.

By creating sustainable street food ecosystems, this initiative not only supports urban livelihoods, but also enriches the cultural identity and economic fabric of Indian cities.



HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI ZAMBIA

World Food Day: TI Zambia Supports the Food Systems Transformation as Part of the 2024 World Food Day Commemorations

15 – 16 October 2024

▶ TI Zambia supported the Eastern Provincial Nutrition Coordinating Committee (PNCC) to mobilise stakeholders in commemorating the 2024 World Food Day (WFD) under the theme *‘Zambia at 60, promoting the right to food for a better life and better future through*

consumption of indigenous foods – leave no one behind.’ The event had two parts: 1. **training on food systems transformation targeting the 20 PNCC members** on 15 October, and 2. **a community-based commemoration of the World Food Day** on 16 October 2024.



Participants from the Departments of Community Development and Forestry



GIZ technical advisor facilitating the food system training

Training on Food Systems Transformation for the PNCC Members

▶ Twenty participants from various government institutions and the private sector were trained in the Food Systems Transformation concept using the Diagnose – Envision – Action approach. The **Food Systems Orientation Package** was designed for partners and stakeholders in PNCC to develop a common understanding of the concept of food systems transformation and its potential to benefit people (health), the planet (environment), and prosperity (economy) in line with Zambia’s 8th National Development Plan. The guest of honour was the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Dr Lewis Mwape who, in his opening remarks, urged the heads of departments to be more engaged, ensuring the implementation of the government’s vision and strategy for the food systems transformation.

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI ZAMBIA

Spotlights 2024 World Food Day Celebration

On the second day, the provincial stakeholders led by the Eastern Province Permanent Secretary and Chief Maguya joined the Jerusalem community in Chief Maguya's area to commemorate the 2024 World Food Day on 16 October 2024. The celebration was marked by exhibitions from Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) and private sector agri-food companies. Ngoma dancers entertained the audience and the community volunteers presented a drama disseminating the messages in line with the localised theme.

Have you seen ZANIS News Coverage?

[Click here to find out!](#)



Msekera Research Institute exhibition stand



Exhibition stand of the Department for Community Development

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI ZAMBIA

Community Awareness Meeting in Zambia

Engagement with Traditional Leadership on Food Systems Transformation

▶ The Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance (CSO-SUN) with support from GIZ recently held community awareness meetings in Zambia's Chongwe and Rufunsa districts. These meetings aimed to sensitise traditional leaders, local farmers, and community members on the current challenges of Zambia's food system and the urgent need to transform our food system into a sustainable, equitable and resilient one. The meetings further explored potential locally-led solutions to the current food crisis and the role that the traditional leadership can play in transforming our food system. The training community dialogues are part of CSO-SUN's broader goal

to transform Zambia's food system by promoting sustainable and culturally relevant practices that improve the nutrition and well-being of local communities.

At the core of CSO-SUN's approach is the empowerment of traditional leaders who hold significant influence within their communities. By sensitising these leaders to the needed transformation of our food system, CSO-SUN aims to create a ripple effect that will trickle down to communities and individual households, while at the same time, building the much-needed voices for community-led advocacy.



Food systems transformation dialogue with traditional leaders in Rufunsa district



Traditional leaders in Rufunsa learn about the importance of embracing sustainable farming practices

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI ZAMBIA

During the meetings, the leaders proposed different solutions to the current food crisis, such as the integration of locally available foods into daily diets, and embracing crop

diversification to improve the nutritional value of diets, support soil health, and protect crops against pests and diseases, making agriculture more resilient.



Traditional leaders brainstorming on potential solutions to the challenges of food and nutrition insecurity in their communities

‘Addressing food security requires unity and cooperation among farmers, traditional leaders, government bodies, and civil society organisations.’

Below are some of the recommendations made by the traditional leaders:

- **Formation of Committees to Combat Deforestation** – there is an urgent need to address deforestation, which threatens biodiversity and degrades soil quality. Traditional leaders proposed forming committees within their chiefdoms to oversee conservation efforts. The committees can put in place by-laws for the preservation of natural resources.
- **Adoption of Sustainable Farming Techniques** – recognising the impact of climate change, there was an emphasis to embark on sustainable practices to restore soil fertility and reduce the need for chemical fertilisers. Embracing these methods helps to build a more sustainable agricultural system that aligns with Zambia’s environmental conditions. Further, the need for easy access to information on farming systems such as agroecology was emphasised.
- **Improved Manure Management** – many farmers rely on manure as a natural fertiliser, but without proper storage techniques, its benefits can be lost. The group discussed alternative ways of storing manure to maintain its quality and prevent harmful environmental effects, such as methane and carbon dioxide emissions from improper storage and open burning.
- **Encouraging the Growth of Traditional Crops** – participants recognised that traditional crops – such as millet, sorghum, and indigenous vegetables – are not only nutrient-dense but also more resilient to drought and pests. Encouraging farmers to grow these crops can improve food security, promote biodiversity, and sustain cultural food heritage.

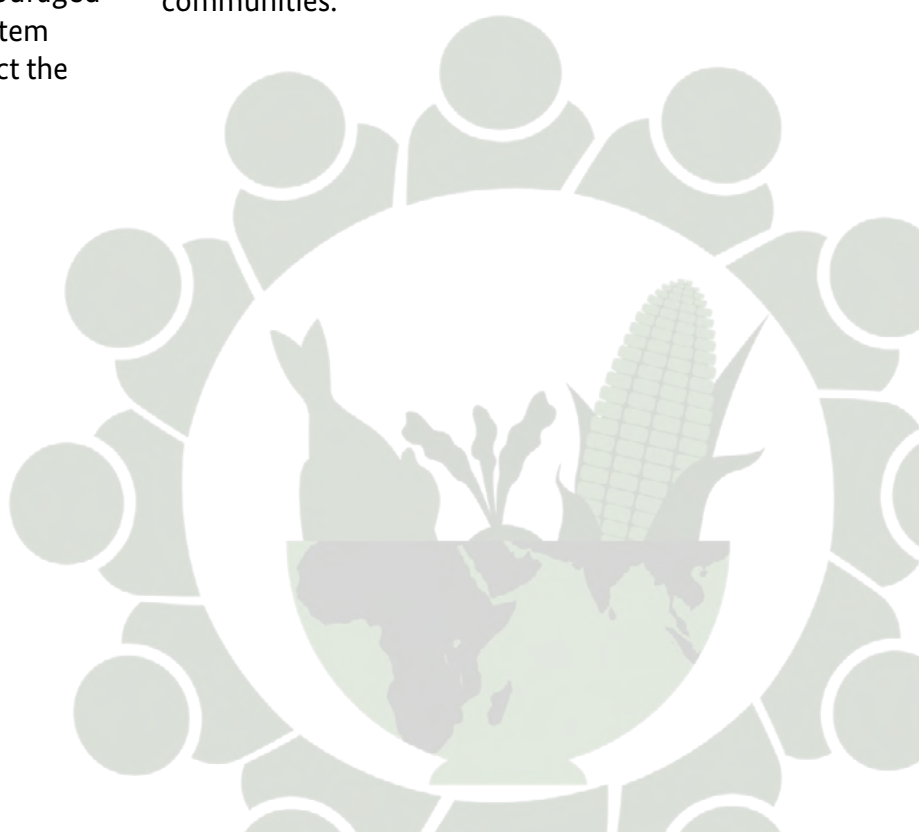
HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI ZAMBIA

- **Enhancing Food Preservation Practices** – proper food preservation techniques can reduce post-harvest losses, ensuring communities have a stable food supply even in times of scarcity.
- **Government Support for Farmers** – the traditional leaders highlighted the need for government intervention to establish more dams, which can provide reliable water sources for irrigation. Participants also called for the provision of soft loans to help farmers invest in sustainable agricultural practices, such as irrigation systems, seeds, and eco-friendly tools.
- **Engaging Youth in Food Systems** – recognising that the future of Zambia's food systems lies with the youths, the meeting recognised the importance of engaging young people in agriculture.
- **Community Voices in Food Systems Advocacy** – one of the most powerful outcomes of the meeting was the call for community members to take an active role in advocating for their own needs. Instead of waiting for government intervention, farmers and local leaders were encouraged to voice their demands for food system changes, ensuring that policies reflect the community's priorities and insights.

Building a Collaborative Path Forward

The importance of collaboration across various levels – from local communities to national government bodies was a common theme throughout the dialogues. CSO-SUN emphasised that food system transformation requires the concerted efforts of multiple stakeholders, including traditional leaders, CSOs, the government, and community members. Together, they can build a resilient food system that not only addresses immediate food and nutrition security needs but also lays the groundwork for sustainable, long-term solutions.

The Rufunsa and Chongwe community dialogues marked a significant step forward in advancing food and nutrition security, and sustainable agricultural practices in Zambia. These community dialogues are a way of empowering communities to take control of their food systems and make informed decisions about their diets, farming practices, and environmental stewardship. As CSO-SUN continues its work, it hopes to inspire similar collaborative efforts across Zambia, ultimately paving the way for healthier, more resilient communities.



HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI MALAWI

Transformative Initiative for Food Systems in Malawi: Driving Change at the 2024 Malawi Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization Conference (MAPCC)

11 – 12 September 2024, Lilongwe, Malawi

► The Transformative Initiative (TI) for Food Systems in Malawi recently joined forces with Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture, the National Planning Commission, and MwAPATA Institute to support the 2024 Malawi Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization Conference (MAPCC). Held on 11–12 September 2024, at the Bingu International Conference Center (BICC), the event attracted over 400 participants from government, academia, private companies, and the civil society. With Minister for Agriculture Sam Kawale as the Guest of Honour, the conference set the stage for transformative collaboration and innovation across Malawi's food systems.

Under the theme 'Transforming Agri-food Systems to Generate Wealth for All', the conference facilitated meaningful discussions on strategies and pathways for food systems transformation amidst increasing climate challenges. This theme resonates with the national development agenda, 'Malawi 2063', which emphasises agricultural productivity and commercialisation.

'Reflecting on agri-food systems transformation is crucial during this time, as we continue to pursue agricultural productivity and commercialisation goals in the context of climate change shocks,' stated Hon. Sam Kawale, Malawi's Minister for Agriculture, further highlighting the event's significance.

Discussions were organised around seven sub-themes, addressing critical areas such as building resilient agri-food systems, financing mechanisms, the policy and regulatory environments, and the roles of women and youth in agri-food transformations. These sub-themes provided a comprehensive framework for stakeholders to share insights and explore collaborative solutions to improve food security and sustainability in Malawi.

The TI project, championed by GIZ and composed of the three partners CISANET, CSONA, and MwAPATA Institute, also presented its contributions to the food systems sector, highlighting its ongoing efforts to support the transformation of Malawi's agri-food systems.



Honorable Sam Kawale, Minister for Agriculture, speaking

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI MALAWI

Empowering Bottom-up Transformation: Dissemination of Malawi's National Food Systems Synthesis Report

16 – 25 October 2024, Lilongwe, Malawi

► The Transformative Initiative Malawi successfully supported an initiative by the National Planning Commission (NPS) and the Ministry of Agriculture to decentralise the dissemination of the National Food Systems Transformation Synthesis Report in four regional meetings with all districts in Malawi. These events invited local leaders from the districts to shape actionable strategies to overcome critical food system challenges across the country.

The meetings, held in Blantyre, Zomba, Mzuzu, and Salima, from 16 to 25 of October and led by TI partner MwAPATA, brought together representatives from district councils, local governments, environment, agriculture, nutrition, health, trade, youth groups, and forestry – all key players in Malawi's food systems.

Insights and Key Outcomes

Several themes emerged from the discussions. **Across all regions, participants expressed their concerns about Malawi's over-reliance on maize**, which comprises 95% of the nation's staple food. While maize is critical to food security, stakeholders emphasised the **need for diversified crops** to create a more resilient food system that ensures nutritionally balanced diets. The Affordable Input Programme, currently focused on maize, could better support this diversity by including a wider range of crops and livestock. Another issue highlighted was the **under-utilisation of land**. Stakeholders from regions such as Mangochi and Machinga discussed the need for policy reforms to encourage productive land use. **Increased mechanisation and the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT)** were also underscored as crucial elements for modernising agriculture and

increasing productivity, especially among small-holder farmers who still rely on manual tools. Feedback also revealed **challenges related to market access and value addition**. While crops like tobacco benefit from established market structures, many other value chains lack the infrastructure and policy support needed for growth. **District representatives called for structured markets and financing incentives** to boost value-added agriculture and ensure fair pricing.

Moving Forward: Collaborative Action at the District Level

Despite these challenges, the regional meetings were a promising step towards localising the transformation of food systems. Districts such as Dedza, Mzimba, and Chikwawa were recognised for their commitment to advancing food systems action plans, yet it was clear that all districts require support and capacity-building to achieve their goals. A proposed governance framework for district-level food systems and standardised reporting frameworks were also discussed, setting a foundation for enhanced coordination and accountability.



District council representatives during group discussions at the Central Region meeting in Salima

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI MALAWI


Fanrpan: Forging Pathways to Resilient Food Systems in Africa

6–9 August 2024, Lilongwe, Malawi

- ▶ The Regional High-Level Multi-stakeholder Policy Dialogue, held in Lilongwe from 6 to 9 August 2024, was a landmark success, setting transformative steps for Africa's food systems. The event brought together a diverse group of policymakers, agricultural experts, and key stakeholders to address the pressing challenges of climate change, food insecurity, and sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

What is FANRPAN?

- ▶ The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an all-inclusive multi-stakeholder pan-African network that provides independent evidence to inform and influence policy processes at national and regional levels. FANRPAN is a multi-tiered network consisting of a regional secretariat and established national nodes, currently present in 18 African countries, and growing. FANRPAN has nodes in all Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) member states. The network's membership includes food, agriculture and natural resources (FANR) related government departments, parliamentarians, research and farmer organisations, private sector, civil society organisations, and the media. CISANET, one TI partner in Malawi, is part of the Network.
- 2. **Building Resilience** – Key strategies for protecting smallholder farmers against climate shocks were discussed, from climate-smart crops to community-based adaptation initiatives.
- 3. **Nutrition-Sensitive Systems** – Policy recommendations were developed to enhance food security and combat malnutrition, emphasising the importance of nutritious, accessible food for vulnerable groups.
- 4. **Cross-Cutting Support** – Emphasis was placed on gender-responsive approaches, technology access, and knowledge-sharing as tools for empowering women, youth, and marginalised communities.

The dialogue, organised by **FANRPAN** , focused on four crucial themes designed to inspire innovative policy frameworks:

1. **Sustainable Production** – Participants delved into eco-friendly agricultural practices like agroecology, sustainable intensification, and circular food systems to reduce waste and increase productivity.

The event's interactive format, which included panel discussions, learning sessions, and workshops, provided platforms for vibrant discussions and collaboration. Participants crafted actionable policy recommendations and forged alliances that will shape future initiatives across the continent.

'The dialogues also produced key outcomes that will guide policymakers and organisations in

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE TI MALAWI

advancing sustainable, inclusive, and resilient agricultural systems. By fostering commitments to change, these outcomes are expected to influence regional and national agendas, ensuring a coordinated approach to sustainable agriculture in Africa,' said Edwin Munthali, Programme Manager for CISANET, which is one of the three partners in the Transformative Initiative for Food Systems (TI) in Malawi, supported by the German Development Cooperation through GIZ.



Elizabeth Namoana, Interim National Director of CISANET, representing the organisation committee

Malawi Day – Focusing on Malawi's Strengths

▶ The TI, represented by all three members also comprising CSONA and Mwapata Institute, exhibited its work at the Malawi Day, the last day of the conference that showcased promising initiatives in Malawi working towards the above-mentioned goals. The TI Malawi used this opportunity to learn and exchange with other initiatives, policy makers, and international input givers on how to improve future implementation in line with global trends.



Elizabeth Namoana, Interim National Director of CISANET, representing the organisation committee

One of the event's leading voices, Professor Alexander Kalimkira of the Lilongwe University of Agriculture Research (LUANAR), emphasised the critical role of evidence-based policies, sustainable nutrition financing, and behavioral

changes in making nutritious food accessible and affordable. His presentation laid out both the challenges and opportunities in eradicating hunger, urging attendees to pursue action-driven approaches. Echoing this sentiment, speakers like Professor Chavula and representatives from the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) presented on building resilient food systems that integrate social and environmental sustainability into agriculture.

The urgency of transformative strategies was underscored by Kate Hartley of Self Help Africa, who called for bold, unified approaches to address rising food insecurity. Highlighting economic challenges and policy gaps, she advocated for decisions that align policy with on-the-ground realities to drive sustainable improvements.

The conference ended with a powerful call to action for stakeholders to advance from discussion to coordinated, impactful solutions. By fostering partnerships, sharing knowledge, and championing essential policy reforms, CISANET's conference demonstrated a vital step towards a food-secure Malawi.

EXPERIENCE REPORT

Multi-stakeholder Collaboration in Food Systems Transformation – Experience from Zambia and Malawi

by Fyness Lydia Ching'oma, Lilongwe, Malawi

▶ I recently had a chance to do a temporary work placement with the Transformative Initiative (TI) in Zambia. On several occasions I met with partners and other colleagues from the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN), and the Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience (FANSER) project in Zambia. Malawi and Zambia are similar in many ways, but also have unique specifics. Both countries are guided by the objectives of the Global Programme and operate within the same M&E framework, while each country has its own set of activities and target groups, given the complex nature of food systems. The levers of transformation are the same, but how these are defined and achieved depends on the country context. One common feature among the two countries is their stakeholder landscape and the coordination of food systems.

In Zambia, the National Food and Nutrition Commission, through the Office of the Vice President, is currently coordinating and championing the food systems agenda at the national level. It convenes all stakeholders involved in transforming food systems. In Malawi, the convening power currently lies with the Ministry of Agriculture, supported by the National Planning Commission and other development partners and institutions working on food systems. I dwell much on the power to convene stakeholders because transforming food systems requires a multi-sectoral approach. Since the UNFSS in 2021 and the development of the National Pathways in both countries, little progress has been made in the collaboration

efforts from the national level, trickling down to the grassroots level. Both countries were severely hit by the effects of El-Niño in the 2023/24 growing season, and there is clear evidence that the food systems are not resilient to shocks.

Through my discussions with stakeholders in both countries, it seems evident that there is minimal political will towards transforming food systems. A multi-sectoral approach to the transformation of food systems is relatively difficult to achieve as sectors continue to work in silos. Support from development partners is available but not well coordinated. Organisations continue to select elements of the food systems and implement different activities, and in some cases, multiple organisations are working in the same area, but their efforts are not coordinated. This also goes back to the fact that the current governance structures for food systems are not designed by the entities with the convening power. However, in both countries, stakeholders continue to create platforms for learning and sharing of experiences and interventions on food systems transformation. The entities with the convening power are open to engaging with all sectors and at all levels.

The Zambian experience enlightened my understanding of the roles of multiple players in food systems, including civil society organisations and academia. It challenged my views on women and youth integration in food systems transformation, but left me filled with the positive energies that different stakeholders have in the food systems transformation agenda.

EXPERIENCE REPORT

Visioning as a Tool for Food Systems Transformation

by Fyness Lydia Ching'oma, Lilongwe, Malawi

► Food systems differ from context to context among communities and districts, depending on an area's geography, population, natural resources, political landscape, climate change, economy, and many other factors. Since food systems are context-specific, isn't it justified to develop interventions for transformation that are context-specific? The global agenda on the transformation of food systems has a general overview of how food systems should transform, but at a micro-level, it is necessary to develop interventions that respond to the specific identified needs of the communities and areas.

The 'Visioning Process' gives a chance to engage in the transformation of localised food systems to achieve better and healthier outcomes. **The visioning process is a participatory approach that we use to collectively envision a desired future state or outcome and develop a shared vision among stakeholders.** It involves a structured process of engaging diverse stakeholders in creative and forward-thinking exercises to imagine and articulate their aspirations, goals, values, and priorities.

Central to the process is first the principle of **'power in the people'**, which allows participants to identify their challenges and opportunities, and to formulate solutions that are within their capacity and context. This method enables participants to be creative and develop strategies to transform their food systems beginning with changing themselves. **'Collaboration and coordination'** at all levels is another principle of the process. Transformation of food systems would be difficult to achieve without coordinated efforts, hence the need for **'multi-stakeholder'**

dialogue, another key element of the process. Each stakeholder has a role to play in the transformation. And we place the emphasis on being **'solution-oriented and not problem-focused'**, while utilising **'positive emotional attractors'** to trigger constructive cognitive responses that increase individual motivation, effort, optimism, flexibility, creative thinking, resilience, and other adaptive behaviours. Through the dialogues, the process also ensures that no one is left behind and that the power dynamics within the stakeholder landscape are well-balanced at all levels.

Through visioning, participants are challenged to understand the food system landscape in their context and to understand that the power to transform it lies with themselves. External support is crucial, but interventions introduced in different communities or districts can only be successful if the people are able to **'own the process'**. The Transformative Initiative (TI) in Malawi has championed the visioning process as a guiding tool for transforming food systems. It has been evident that this is an unconventional approach, but it has sparked interest in the communities and challenged the status quo.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Read more

► How do Agnes Kalibata and David Navarro look back on the UNFSS dialogues? Learn about the process and how the pathways came to life in their recent publication ***Food systems transformation through dialogues*** (**Food systems transformation through dialogues | Nature Food**) [🔗](#).

In line with the articles above from our TIs, they conclude ‘The UNFSS dialogues and the national pathways that emerged as a result are reminders that advancing food systems requires engagement across sectors and disciplines — especially those concerned with agriculture, environment, climate, health, energy and finance. It is time to consider how to promote dialoguing more broadly when action is taken on complex and contested systems challenges. (...) Multi-stakeholder dialogues can play a valuable role in providing spaces where participants can focus on systems approaches to long-term transformation within the context of local realities. (...) The framing of any dialogue process should be based on the issues being addressed and stakeholders that have interests in them, and means for accelerating momentum — coherently and on a large scale. This means that dialogues should involve diverse sectors and stakeholders, at local, national and regional levels, and simultaneously focus on both short-term responses and longer-term systems change. There is a constant need to encourage participation of all with an interest; especially for groups that may be left out, such as women and young people.’



The African Food Systems Forum **Home – AFS Forum’s 2024** [🔗](#) took place in Kigali/Ruanda from 2–4 September, where more than 5.000 participants from 97 countries gathered. The forum presented itself as a very relevant meeting place for politicians, experts, academia, and donors interested in the transformation of agricultural and food systems in Africa. AGRA proved to have a high convening power. The thematic focus is broadening, including not only classical agricultural topics such as soil health, irrigation, livestock, etc. but also food systems transformation, agricultural policy, Post-Malabo process, gender, or natural resources. Of special interest to GP TES and all TIs is the increasing importance of nutrition-related topics as well as the enormous potential for learning and networking, as there were over 150 official events with over 350 speakers. Countless meetings took place around the event. In an exhibition hall, around 50 institutions had stands. GIZ (including the GP TES team representation) was present with a delegation from HQ and numerous staff from partner countries. The event proved to be very important and a presence at next year’s event is highly recommendable.

If you have a topic, highlight, update, report, event or literature recommendation that you would like us to include in the next journal, please email us at gv-tes@giz.de.

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