

FEED THE FUTURE INNOVATION LAB FOR LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS

SAFE FOOD, FAIR FOOD FOR CAMBODIA

Cambodia has a rich tradition of tasty and nutritious foods. Animal-source foods are an important part of the cuisine with pork, fish, and poultry products widely consumed. The great majority of livestock products are produced by smallholders, many of them women, and sold in traditional, wet markets where women also predominate as retailers. In recent years, Cambodia has seen growing food safety concerns. Development is accompanied by urbanization, rapid increases in demand for livestock products and, consequently, rapid changes in supply chains, which become longer, more complex, and less transparent. Trust in food goes down, often with good reason as the food system develops in a way that provides little rewards for those with good practices, but high rewards for those who carry out bad and unsafe practices.

Under the *Safe Food, Fair Food for Cambodia* project, we propose two major research areas to tackle the above-mentioned issues: (i) to generate evidence on the health and economic burden of foodborne diseases in animal-source food value chains important to the poor and women and (ii) to pilot a market-based approach to improving food safety that builds on successfully implemented projects in Africa and India. Our central idea is market-based, light-touch interventions that are sustainable and scalable, changing practice through capacity building and incentives, and provision of an enabling policy environment.



A beef retailer along a road in Cambodia. (Photo credit: CelAgrid)

Project objectives

With the overall aim of reducing the burden of foodborne disease in informal, emerging formal, and niche markets and targeting small- and medium-scale producers, the project has five objectives with associated activities, outputs, and outcomes.

- **Objective 1:** To generate actionable evidence on the health and economic burden (gender-disaggregated) of foodborne diseases associated with animal-source foods in Cambodia.
- **Objective 2:** To develop, pilot and test a new approach to food safety, which relies on incentives (rewards) and light-touch interventions in close partnership with the private sector.
- **Objective 3:** With stakeholders, to describe, plan, and monitor how evidence-based recommendations and the tested approach could contribute to the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems (LSIL) theory of change.
- **Objective 4:** To make recommendations for enhanced engagement and benefit sharing for men and women in animal-source food value chains through improving understanding of gender aspects and the gender appropriateness of interventions and also by integrating nutrition and food safety.
- **Objective 5:** To build capacity in understanding food safety risk, its management, and effective communication among stakeholders including the government, private sector, academia, donors, and media.

Expected outcomes

- Greater understanding among policymakers, donors, and the private sector of the multiple burden of foodborne diseases and their implications for nutrition security.
- Increased openness to promising approaches to improve food safety equitably and sustainably.
- Agreement by Cambodian food safety stakeholders on what will be needed to take evidence and innovative approaches to greater scale guided by the LSIL theory of change.
- Improved knowledge and understanding of nutrition-gender dynamics in foodborne disease risks and viable options identified for increased gender equity in foodborne disease risk management.
- Improved understanding and communication of risks among academics, policymakers, private sector and media.
- Improved capacity in researchers, students, government, and non-governmental organization partners and value chain actors.

Lead institution and key partners

The project is a 3.5-year sub-award (Sep 2017–Mar 2021) under the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems. The sub-award project is led by the International Livestock Research Institute in partnership with the National Animal Health and Production Research Institute, the Centre for Livestock and Agriculture Development (CelAgrid), and Emory University.

Project focus areas

Because so little is known about the distribution or burden of foodborne disease, the approach will be at multiple levels with initial risk profiling and situational analysis of food safety. The project will then focus on one or more high-risk livestock value chains to estimate burdens of foodborne disease and finally on one value chain to pilot an intervention. Risk profiles will be at the sector level and cover all animal-source foods produced in Cambodia in the formal and informal sectors as well as animal-source food imports. The more in-depth studies on hazards present as well as their health, economic, and nutrition impacts will be on urban and peri-urban consumption around Phnom Penh and the adjacent provinces which have the highest density of pork and poultry and are in a Feed the Future Zone of Influence site (Siem Reap).

Participation of markets and market operators

- Agreeing to provide information to probabilistic surveys on risks and hazards that are generalizable to a large proportion of markets.
- Through participatory appraisals and focus group discussions, co-creating knowledge on food safety as well as gender, equity, and nutrition aspects.
- Participating in pilots to build capacity of market sellers and which provide incentives for behaviour change.

Research method and approach

The overall research method is ‘participatory risk analysis’ which is an approach to working in informal markets that combines risk analysis and participatory learning and analysis. See information on the participation of markets and market operators in the box.

A unique aspect of this project is to develop a systematic and structured approach, starting with risk profiling and moving to risk assessment and risk management, while investing in risk communication and capacity building. The project will adopt a gender-sensitive approach in the design and implementation of planned activities to ensure that project outcomes and impacts will be gender inclusive, but also because we believe that mainstreaming gender is necessary to achieve impact in food safety projects. This is because gender and equity issues are important along the animal-source food chain, both because men and women play different roles along the value chain, from production through slaughter and processing to sale, and because risk of foodborne disease varies by gender and sex.

Contact information

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