



IMPACT BRIEF SERIES - #2

Evaluating Alliance Bioversity & CIAT's Role in Transforming National Food Systems in Vietnam (2023-2030)

By Salomón Pérez, Tatiana Rivera, Carolina Gonzalez, Alexander Buritica, Ilaria Urbani

ABOUT THE INNOVATION

Amidst global challenges such as economic recession, war, and climate change, governments need to meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The status of achieving SDG 2 (zero hunger) is regressing, as compared to 2015, the number of people facing hunger and food insecurity has increased – reaching around 735 million people in 2022. Understanding and **transforming food systems** is key to achieving multiple SDGs, including ending hunger and poverty, and taking climate action. Vietnam still faces challenges, but has made progress, in part supported by initiatives such as the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH).

The Bioversity–CIAT Alliance has collaborated closely with national partners, especially ICD-MARD, VAAS, NIN, IPSARD to catalyze the food systems transformation in Vietnam. This study examines how the Alliance supported the development of Vietnam's National Action Plan (NAP) for food systems and its potential impacts.



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THE PARTNERS

The following are the key institutions identified according to their role in developing Vietnam's NAP:

- MARD: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- VAAS: Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences
- NIN: National Institute of Nutrition
- IPSARD: Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development.
- FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
- VNUA: Vietnam National University of Agriculture
- ILRI: International Livestock Research Institute
- IFPRI: International Food Policy Research Institute
- Embassy of Canada
- FocusGroupGo Asia Pacific

METHODOLOGY

The study employed two methods: an approach of Outcome Trajectory and Word Cloud Analysis. **Outcome Trajectory** was chosen for its ability to evaluate complex contexts where cause-and-effect relationships are unclear. This method focuses on identifying and analyzing achieved outcomes, and tracing how various influences led to these changes.



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The following steps of Outcome Trajectory were implemented:

- 1. Middle-range theory identification:** A policy window for policy change was identified.
- 2. Outcome Identification:** Key outcomes were identified, with Vietnam's National Action Plan (FS-NAP) selected for its significance.
- 3. Designing Guides:** Over 20 interview questions were created to explore the NAP's development and the Alliance's role.
- 4. Data Collection:** Interviews were conducted with over 12 key actors involved in the FS-NAP process.
- 5. Validation:** Information from interviews was cross-checked with documents and other sources.
- 6. Analysis:** The data was analyzed to construct the history of the NAP and assess the Alliance's contributions.

Word Cloud Analysis was used to visually summarize feedback from interviews, highlighting frequently mentioned terms and themes. This method involved analyzing interview transcriptions using statistical software to create visual diagrams of word relationships and patterns.

The National Action Plan for Transparent, Responsible, and Sustainable Food Systems Transformation (FS-NAP), approved by Vietnam's Prime Minister in March 2023, outlines 21 goals for 2022–2030 to enhance food systems across three key areas: economic growth, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture.

- **Economic Dimension:** Aims to triple rural income by 2030, reduce multidimensional poverty, achieve \$30 billion in annual food exports, increase processed food value by 50%, and connect 50% of agri-food enterprises to a traceability portal.
- **Nutrition and Food Security Dimension:** Targets reducing severe food insecurity to under 5% of households, and decreasing child stunting, wasting, and obesity rates to below 15%, 3%, and 10%, respectively. It also aims to reduce adult obesity rates to below 20% and acute poisoning cases to 5 per 100,000 inhabitants.
- **Sustainable Agriculture Dimension:** Focuses on adopting good agricultural practices, increasing organic production, improving water-saving irrigation, and reducing postharvest losses and greenhouse-gas emissions by 10% compared to 2020.



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RESULTS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

What are the main outcomes resulting from the NAP trajectory and how did the Alliance contribute to them?

- **Introducing new concepts:** Under A4NH, the Alliance, together with national partners including VAAS, NIN, IPSARD and other institutions, helped introduce and popularize the concept of “food systems” in Vietnam, bridging gaps between agriculture and nutrition. By 2017, A4NH had begun working with national partners to introduce the concept and engage with stakeholders, including high-level government officials, about this integrated approach. Their research provided critical evidence and frameworks, such as food systems profiles, which have been used in the UNFSS dialogues and provided information contributing to the development of the National Action Plan (NAP) for Food Systems Transformation.
- **Arising public interest:** The Alliance, together with ICD, VAAS, NIN and IPSARD played a key role in increasing interest and involvement in food systems policy. Their advocacy and coordination brought together researchers, government officials, and international organizations, fostering a collaborative environment essential for the FS-NAP’s development. Their efforts were recognized by the Vietnamese government, highlighting their influence in shaping policy discussions and capacity-building.

- **Strengthened research and analytical capacity:** The Alliance significantly contributed to generating national interest and support for food systems policy. Their ongoing work, alongside other key actors like the Canadian Embassy and FAO, provided essential evidence, technical assistance, and financial support. This collaborative effort was crucial for Vietnam’s active participation in the UN Food Systems Summit and the eventual formulation of the FS-NAP.

The word-cloud analysis visually captures key actors' views on the Alliance's contribution to the development of the FS-NAP, it indicates that the Alliance is highly regarded for its significant role in providing technical support on food and nutrition, working alongside organizations like FAO and NIN. The analysis also shows that perceptions of the Alliance's contributions are consistent across different types of organizations—public, academic, and private.

Key actors emphasize the Alliance’s contributions in both technical and financial aspects during the FS-NAP development, highlighting the value of food systems dialogues and the role of the Ministry of Agriculture.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Enhance Stakeholder Engagement:** Maintain and strengthen the engagement of both national and sub-national stakeholders in the FS-NAP process. Active involvement of diverse stakeholders, including government bodies, local organizations, and community representatives, is crucial for sustaining support and ensuring that the food systems agenda remains relevant and effective. Regular consultations and participatory processes should be integrated into the implementation phase to keep stakeholders invested and informed.
- 2. Strengthen Technical Support:** The Alliance should continue to leverage its technical expertise to support implementing the FS-NAP. Ongoing technical assistance can help optimize strategies, adapt to changing conditions, and troubleshoot issues as they arise. This support is essential for translating the FS-NAP's goals into actionable steps and ensuring that the technical requirements for successful implementation are met.
- 3. Promote Collaborative Efforts:** The Alliance's should continue in its vital role of facilitating partnerships between government agencies, research institutions, international organizations, and private sector actors. Collaborative efforts can lead to the sharing of resources, expertise, and information, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the FS-NAP.
- 4. Focus on Priority Areas:** Prioritize and address areas where progress is slower or where targets are not being met, such as curbing greenhouse-gas emissions and addressing nutritional challenges. It is essential to direct additional resources and efforts toward these critical areas to ensure that the FS-NAP achieves its intended outcomes.
- 5. Expand Data and Analysis:** Enhance the evaluation and understanding of the FS-NAP's impact by expanding data collection and incorporating a wider range of variables. This includes assessing how factors such as climate change, economic fluctuations, and other policy interventions influence outcomes. A more robust dataset and more comprehensive analyses will provide better insights into the effectiveness of the FS-NAP and guide future adjustments. This approach will enable more accurate projections and help in making informed decisions to improve the plan's effectiveness.
- 6. Align with Complementary Policies:** Ensure that the FS-NAP is aligned with other relevant national and international policies, such as the Vietnam National Nutrition Strategy, to enhance coherence and leverage synergies, leading to more integrated and effective outcomes.

Vietnam's progress, supported by initiatives like the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, shows the value of strategic and collaborative efforts in shaping national food systems policies. This study emphasizes the Alliance's key role in developing Vietnam's National Action Plan (NAP) and underscores the need for continued stakeholder engagement, technical support, and policy alignment to ensure impactful and sustainable results.

October 2024



This publication is based on an internal report "Evaluation of The Alliance Bioversity & CIAT contributions to the new National Action Plan for Transparent, Responsible, and Sustainable Food Systems Transformation and its potential impacts (2022 - 2030)(NAP)". This impact brief is part of a series curated by the PISA for Impact Program, aimed at fostering a culture of evaluative results

