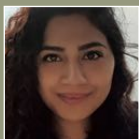




Transforming food systems to improve diet affordability: Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis in Burkina Faso

Research summary¹

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BURKINA FASO

What we know: A multi-sector approach is essential to ensure nutrition security for all.

What this article adds: A Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis was conducted in Burkina Faso to identify barriers to adequate nutrition intake and to propose solutions to improve the availability of nutritious food, as well as its physical access and its affordability, particularly by the most vulnerable populations. The results showed that a nutritious diet is not affordable for half of the population. The cost of an energy sufficient diet is USD1.22 per day for a household of six. The cost of a nutritious diet is USD2.59 which represents a proportion of 50% to 110% of the minimum daily wage (USD2.20) in Burkina Faso. To improve access to nutritious food and prevent malnutrition in a sustainable manner, the FNG analysis identified and modelled the potential impact of activities in several sectors that target vulnerable households and individuals and are tailored to geographic and seasonal specificities. Improved homestead gardens could cover 20% of the cost of household food, milk and fish production could cover 40% while food baskets and combinations of interventions could cover more than 75% of the cost of household food during the lean season and for displaced persons.

Introduction

Burkina Faso has made progress in recent years in improving the health and nutrition of children under five years of age. The national trend in the prevalence of stunting and wasting has decreased over the past decade (World Bank, 2021). However, the country still faces challenges in reducing malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies.

With the recurrence of conflict, climate shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic, communities are experiencing a loss of livelihoods resulting in increased food insecurity and malnutrition (OCHA, 2020). Markets are poorly supplied with high quality nutritious food, the infrastructure to produce fortified food is inadequate and diets remain undiversified.

A multi-sector approach, using a range of policies, strategies and actions, is essential to ensure nutritional security for all. To this end, the Government of Burkina Faso conducted a Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis in 2020. The Nutrition Directorate of the Ministry of Health conducted this

study under the direction of the Prime Minister with technical and financial support from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Methods

The FNG analysis is a multi-sector food system analysis approach to nutrition. The analytical framework combines a Cost of the Diet (CoD) analysis with a review of secondary data with the aim of identifying barriers to adequate nutrition intake and entry points for improving the availability of, and physical and financial access to, nutritious foods, particularly by the most vulnerable populations (Deptford et al, 2017). The effective engagement of stakeholders from multiple sectors plays a central role in the analytical process and ensures that the results of the analysis are followed

¹ Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, WFP, FIDA (2020) Fill the nutrient gap, Burkina Faso. Rapport Résumé. Juillet 2020. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP0000122033/download/?_ga=2.31114303.182709335-8.1617034052-2028320644.1583855001

by nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmatic and policy decision-making (Bose et al, 2019).

Findings and key interventions

The analysis in Burkina Faso was carried out in close partnership with IFAD which allowed for a particular focus on food systems, including food production. The results showed that a nutritious diet is not currently financially accessible (affordable) for half of the population. The cost of an energy sufficient diet is USD1.22 per day for a household of six people and the cost of a nutritious diet is USD2.59 which represents 50% to 110% of the minimum daily wage (USD2.20) in Burkina Faso (IFC, 2019). Within the household, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women have greater nutritional needs and thus higher individual costs.

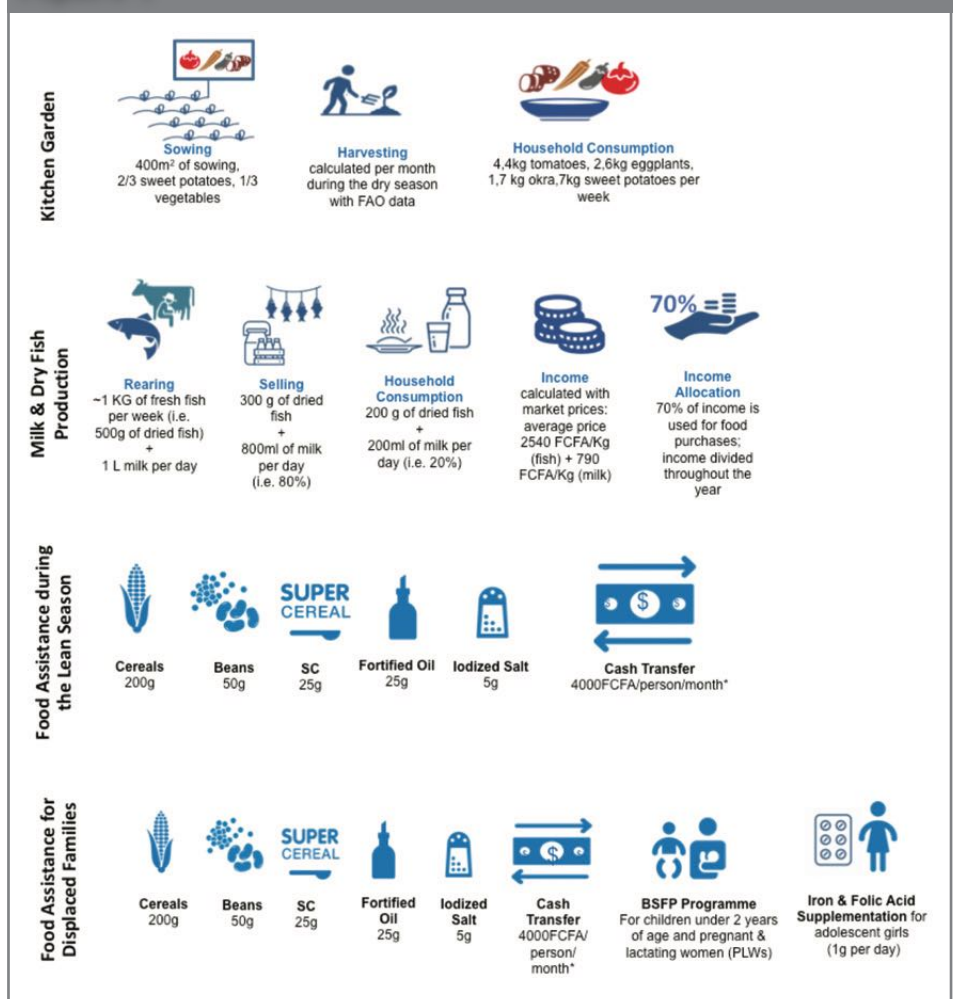
Structural bottlenecks in nutritious food value chains have been exacerbated by recent insecurity and conflict resulting in high prices, especially for nutrient-rich animal source foods. The impact is felt most acutely in the north of the country which is supplied by the agricultural breadbasket of the south. Food prices, the cost of a nutritious diet and lack of affordability are highest in the pastoral north and in areas hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs). Displaced populations also suffer higher rates of malnutrition than host populations and are more food insecure due to the loss of their agricultural livelihoods and the frequent sale of assets (including livestock). In agricultural areas, cereals are the dominant production. Investment in and diversification of production are essential to improve nutritional status not only in these areas but in the rest of the country that depends on these crops.

Improving access to nutritious food and preventing malnutrition in a sustainable manner requires a reorientation of interventions toward food systems and multi-sector collaboration. The FNG analysis identified and modelled the potential impact of activities in several sectors that target vulnerable households and individuals and are tailored to geographic and seasonal specificities. These interventions include agricultural and pastoral production enhancement, food assistance, cash transfers and nutritional supplementation (Figure 1). The activities modelled can contribute directly to nutritious food intake or through food purchases with the income generated, thereby reducing the remaining cost of a nutritious diet and reducing non-affordability. Improved vegetable gardens could cover 20% of the cost of household food and milk and fish production could cover 40% while food baskets and combinations of interventions could cover more than 75% of the cost of household food during the lean season and for displaced people.

Conclusion

This analysis created several opportunities including strengthening partnerships between government structures and technical partners

Figure 1 Key interventions to transform food systems and improve affordability



such as the Société nationale de gestion des stocks de sécurité alimentaire (SONAGESS), IFAD and FAO. A key lesson learnt from the FNG analysis in Burkina Faso is that it is important to strengthen knowledge about the role of supply chains and the multi-sector nature of interventions in order to improve availability and access to nutritious food.

Similar FNG analyses have been conducted in other Sahelian countries and have led governments, in collaboration with the WFP, to launch the CRIALCES project – Food Crisis Response in the Central Sahel: Nutritional Support and Recovery for Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali (2020-2024) (European Commission, 2021).

This project focuses on reorienting food systems toward the production, processing, distribution and consumption of nutritious, physically and financially accessible food, including for the most vulnerable, in crisis-affected areas. This includes improving resilience by strengthening small-scale farmers and food processing units, access to markets and finance. The project will also implement social and behaviour change communication activities aimed at increasing access to and affordability of locally available nutritious foods to improve feeding practices and prevent malnutrition.

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