Sowing the seeds for nutrition-sensitive agriculture
The story of the collaboration between the Germany’s Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and FAO on nutrition

Seeds were planted in Afghanistan...

The collaboration between BMEL and FAO on nutrition started in 2002, in Afghanistan, as part of a project designed to strengthen information systems for food and nutrition security (GCP/AFG/026/GER). It became apparent that greater support was required to empower Afghanistan’s Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) to improve nutrition its policies and programmes. The project “Supporting Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods in Afghanistan” (GCP/AFG/039/GER) was therefore initiated in 2005. This project laid the seeds for an integrated approach for mainstreaming nutrition in agriculture, including work on government policies, strengthening multi-sectoral collaboration, capacity development of government and NGOs, and livelihoods support and nutrition education for communities. Additional BMEL-funded projects on food and nutrition security built on this foundation, making the following key achievements possible between 2005 and 2015:

- **Mainstreaming nutrition in government policies and multi-sectoral coordination**: nutrition considerations were mainstreamed in MAIL’s strategies, and collaboration between MAIL and ministries of health, education, women’s affairs and youth were strengthened; the comprehensive food security and nutrition strategic framework “Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda” (AFSANA) was developed and endorsed by the Second Vice-President, and a multi-ministerial High Level Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee was established. (GCP/AFG/039/GER; 050; 056; 075)

- **Strengthening national institutions**: the Home Economics Department was greatly strengthened, expanding it from 5 staff in Kabul to 67 staff (including 48 provincial staff), running with a budget of over a million dollars annually. (039; 050; 069)

- **Integrating nutrition education in agriculture and community development**: nutrition education materials on improved feeding for young children and improved food processing were developed and hundreds of professionals working for government and NGOs at community level were trained to disseminate them through agriculture, poultry, livestock, education and health services, enabling thousands of households across the country to know more about nutrition and improve their diets. (039; 050; 069)

- **Gender-sensitive agriculture**: The Home Economics Department, largely staffed by women, has spear-headed gender-sensitive agriculture in MAIL. With BMEL support, it has supported dozens of women’s groups and cooperatives and established three provincial Women Technology and Transfer Centers (WTTTCs). It developed the National Strategy on Women in Agriculture, endorsed by the Minister in September 2015. (069)
... seedlings were sown in Africa

Inspired by the success of the projects in Afghanistan, the BMEL and FAO Nutrition division decided to bring lessons learnt arising from this experience to sub-Saharan Africa, through the project “Supporting Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa” (GCP/RAF/454/GER), in 2010. FAO worked with the African Union New Partnership for African Development (AU NEPAD) to mainstream nutrition in agriculture policies and investment plans. Through the CAADP (Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Plan) Nutrition Capacity Development Initiative – rolled out through 3 sub-regional workshops held between 2011 and 2013 – 50 multi-sectoral country teams led by CAADP focal points designed roadmaps to integrate nutrition in agriculture. These roadmaps are now guiding country investments. The project enabled FAO to ensure agriculture was effectively addressed in multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition, in particular in countries having joined the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. Several BMEL-supported projects are ensuring follow-up to this initiative at regional and country levels, through a comprehensive approach promoting nutrition and the Right to Food, building on GCP/RAF/454/GER and previous BMEL-funded projects on the Right to Food:

- The project **Mainstreaming Nutrition in CAADP** (GCP/RAF/477/GER) builds capacities at regional and country levels to implement the CAADP nutrition roadmaps, with a focus on agriculture and multi-sectoral planning for nutrition, integrating food consumption indicators in information systems, and integrating nutrition in agriculture extension services.

- The **West Africa Hunger Free Initiative** works with the ECOWAS (in particular the Agriculture Commission) to improve multi-sectoral collaboration on nutrition at regional and country levels and promote the Right to Food, in collaboration with the Pan African Parliament.

- The project **Mainstreaming Nutrition and the Right to Food in Sierra Leone’s Smallholder Commercial Agriculture Programme** (GCP/SIL/042/GER) strengthens multi-sectoral coordination on food and nutrition security at national and district levels; developed the Sierra Leone Food-based Dietary Guidelines; trains extension workers on nutrition; integrates nutrition in the curriculum of Njala University, with Giessen University; and is promoting the integration of the Right to Food in the Constitution.

- The project **Improving the resilience and nutrition of vulnerable people in Mali** (initiated in January 2015), will provide direct support to strengthen the resilience and nutrition of 3000 vulnerable households.

...and are growing into trees supporting the global nutrition agenda

The results of FAO’s and BMEL’s collaboration on nutrition at regional and country levels in Africa and Afghanistan are informing and even shaping the global nutrition agenda. Based on the field experiences of BMEL-funded project, FAO facilitated a consultation which resulted in the production of **Key Recommendations for Improving Nutrition in Agriculture**. These are informing the planning of many governments and development partners including the World Bank, USAID, and GIZ. Furthermore, the results of the CAADP Nutrition Initiative were shared widely in the preparations for the ICN2 and in the CFS. This concrete experience, together with the results of BMEL-funded projects on nutrition education (ENACT/ENAF & IMCF), have helped consolidate commitment for “nutrition-sensitive food systems” in the global nutrition agenda.