



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Building resilient food systems in Bhutan

National priorities for the agriculture sector

In Bhutan, 60 percent of the population are engaged in agriculture, but the country imports 50 percent of its total food requirements. There are several challenges within Bhutan's food system, which became pronounced with the COVID-19 pandemic. To build a high-performing and resilient food systems in Bhutan by 2030, the government has identified eight transformative pathways, a joint result of the UN Food System's Summit, 2021. The pathways will ensure that Bhutan's food systems assure access to affordable and safe food for all, eradicate all forms of malnutrition and hidden hunger, double smallholder incomes and alleviate poverty, empower women and children, reduce drudgery, contribute to meaningful employment creation, remain ecologically benign and carbon neutral, and build resilience to shocks and stressors across the food systems network.

WFP in Bhutan

WFP, through its Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023), focuses on supporting the government in enhancing food security and nutrition, and a transformative food systems that is carbon-neutral and economically viable. WFP's assistance is implemented through various programmes and activities to increase demand for locally available nutritious foods while supporting the government in strengthening production capacity, post-harvest management, marketing, knowledge management, cost efficiency, and coordination and policy.

Building resilient commercial smallholder agriculture

WFP, as a technical partner to the government, aims to support a 30 percent increase in commercial agriculture production in four districts by 2030. Through the Building Resilient Commercial Smallholder Agriculture (BRECSA) project, WFP will transform smallholder agriculture in Zhemgang, Trongsa, Tsirang and Sarpang districts into inclusive and resilient agri-food systems that are profitable, and food and

nutrition secure. BRECSA targets 12,074 smallholder farmer households.

Sixty percent of the targeted 47,088 individuals will be women and 30 percent will be youth.

To enhance the resilience of smallholder farmers to climate risks, WFP is assisting the government to prepare an Adaptation Fund project. The project will enhance the food security of 10,000 smallholder farmers through innovative index-based micro-insurance. The project will indirectly benefit 47,000 farmers.

Farm-to-school linkage

Through a Korean International Cooperation Agency funded project, WFP assists the government to promote market-led production and strengthen the capacity of 9,000 smallholder farmers to produce nutritious food for schools under the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme, as well as local markets. WFP provides post-harvest and marketing assistance, and supports the capacity enhancement of government staff in agriculture value chains and marketing. WFP is assisting the development of the agriculture digital monitoring and reporting system using its data collection platform called MoDA. The agriculture



monitoring and reporting modules are currently being integrated into Bhutan's national statistical database system

Challenges

In Bhutan, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed structural issues in the agriculture sector resulting in a national commitment to find long-term and transformative solutions to addressing these issues. Bhutan is dependent on food imports, mainly from India, and faces food insecurity. Only 2.6 percent of its total land is arable and agricultural production costs are high.

The country is also highly vulnerable to natural hazards and increased climate variabilities. Investments made in research, innovation and technology are limited.

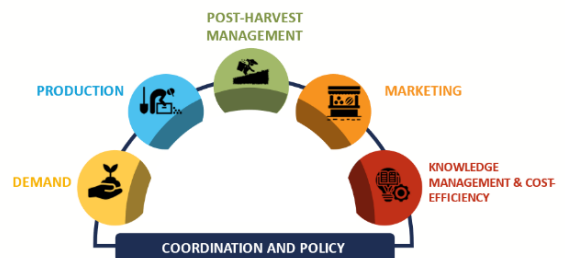
Key challenges in Bhutan's food system include: rural to urban migration; human-wildlife conflict; poor water management; limited agro-enterprises; inadequate marketing systems; and limited access to credit and subsidies. Employment in agriculture is mainly for small-scale subsistence farming with low productivity, often with limited processing and value addition.

Agriculture value chain approach

WFP aims to support Bhutan's national pathways for food systems development in key strategic areas such as:

- Supporting rural women smallholder farmers' economic empowerment by building capacity and providing better access to market.
- Supporting youth cooperatives and private sector enterprises in promoting business incubation opportunities, value addition to farm produce and market facilitation.

- Enhancing the availability of digital market information services and contract marketing services to smallholder farmers and traders.
- Strengthening market efficiency through enhanced supply chain linkages and services like infrastructure, transport, and market information.
- Coordination of international development agencies working in food systems for better synergy and knowledge sharing.



Building a future

Globally, governments have widely recognized that investing in smallholder farmers is key to unlocking the agricultural potential of their countries, reducing poverty, promoting inclusive growth and empowering women, among other advancements. Similarly, in Bhutan the government prioritizes investments in smallholder farmers. To support the government, WFP continues to provide technical expertise in developing programmes and supporting policies around smallholder market access. The core objective is to transform food systems by strengthening the ability of smallholders to do business, and supporting the government's capacities to design smallholder-friendly policies.

