

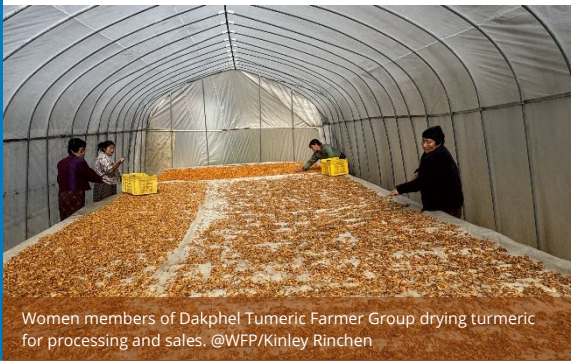


World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief

November 2024 - January 2025



Women members of Dakphel Turmeric Farmer Group drying turmeric for processing and sales. @WFP/Kinley Rinchen

Operational Context

Bhutan transitioned from the least developed country category in December 2023. WFP's support to the Government remains critical in areas of food systems and resilience, school nutrition and emergency preparedness and response, which are also key areas of focus in the 13th five-year plan (2024-2029).

Only 2.6 percent of Bhutan's land is arable and agricultural production costs are high. The country is also highly vulnerable to natural hazards and increased climate variabilities. Employment in agriculture is mainly for small-scale subsistence farming with low productivity, often with limited processing and value addition.

The population's overall nutritional status has improved, however there is a 'triple burden of malnutrition' with undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. These are related to a lack of knowledge and access to nutritious and diversified foods.

Bhutan remains highly vulnerable to disaster events but lacks the necessary data information systems, response plans and coordination systems to prepare for emergencies adequately.

WFP has been in Bhutan since 1974.



Population: **0.65 million**

2023-24 Human Development Index: **125 out of 193 countries**

Income Level: **Lower middle-income**

Stunting: **17.9%** Wasting: **5.1%**
Underweight: **8.8%** (Children under-5)

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Highlights

WFP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Samir Wanmali visited Bhutan in January, reaffirming WFP's commitment and support to the Government and people of Bhutan.

Operational Updates

- WFP conducted a consultation workshop for Agriculture Resilience Plan in the four districts (Zhemgang, Trongsa, Tsirang, and Sarpang) where the Building Resilient Commercial Smallholder Agriculture (BRECSA) project is being held. The workshop validated the findings of the Consolidate Livelihood Exercise for Analyzing Resilience report from 28 October to 14 November. Over 200 participants (79 percent men, 21 percent women) represented a diverse range of stakeholders, including district sector heads, lead farmers, local governments leaders, NGO representatives, extension officers, and Project Management Unit (PMU) staff. Nutrition-sensitive awareness was also provided during the community consultations.
- To strengthen the capacity and skills in community engagement, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and effective project implementation, WFP in collaboration with the Tarayana Foundation, conducted a three-day training from 27 January to 3 February. The training was aimed at the newly recruited 37 *sanam jabjorpas* (community mobilizers) for the BRECSA project. Seventy participants (31 percent women, 69 percent men) comprising *sanam jabjorpas*, district officials, PMU staff, and Tarayana programme officers. WFP conducted a desktop review and development of data collection guides for the qualitative study on food availability, accessibility, affordability, and consumption, targeting women and girls in the project districts. WFP will support the Tarayana Foundation in completing the fieldwork, analysis, and report compilation for the study in Q1 of 2025.

Nutrition

- WFP participated in a meeting organized by the Ministry of Health to develop a social and behaviour change (SBC) action plan for nutrition in monastic institutions in Bhutan. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Ministry, UNICEF and Central Monastic Body. A set of recommendations were made in the meeting, including the implementation of a pilot for SBC actions. The Central Monastic Body will identify 3-5 monastic institutions for the preliminary implementation of the SBC action plan.
- The pilot will look into the linking of smallholder farmers and cooperatives to the monastic institutions, and the introduction of fortified rice in improving the nutritional status of monks and nuns in the country.

Country Strategic Plan (2024-2028)

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Feb-Jul 2025 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
14.6 m	8.85 m	0.54 m



Cultivation of organic vegetables were introduced as part of nutrition-sensitive agriculture intervention. ©WFP/Galey Tenzin

Strategic Outcome 1:

Rural populations in Bhutan, particularly women smallholder farmers, young people, and persons with disabilities, achieve climate-resilient livelihoods and increased food security and nutrition by 2030

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide technical assistance to national and local government institutions with the aim of strengthening the capacity of farmer-based organizations to manage climate shocks and introduce innovative risk management solutions for climate resilient and nutritious food production
- Provide technical assistance to national and local government institutions with the aim of strengthening the capacities of producer groups, small-scale agro-enterprises and other value chain actors that empower women and young people in targeted value chains

Strategic Outcome 2:

The citizens of Bhutan, particularly vulnerable population groups, benefit from enhanced human capital and a food system that is resilient to climate and other crises and shocks by 2030

Focus area: Resilience building

Activities:

- Provide technical assistance to government and other stakeholders aimed at improving social protection provision, including by linking national school feeding programmes to farmers and suppliers, to facilitate the consumption of safe, healthy and nutrient-dense diets
- Provide technical assistance, including in relation to social behaviour change, in support of government and private sector efforts to promote fortified food products, and ensure that all school feeding programme beneficiaries and the public consume safe, healthy and nutrient-dense diets
- Provide technical assistance and innovative solutions to government institutions for the expansion of people-centred disaster risk reduction programmes that integrate nutrition considerations and foster preparedness for and effective response to shocks and stressors

- To bring together farmers, traders, aggregators and government officials, WFP conducted a series of Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) workshops from 24 –31 December. These workshops focused on the value chains of dairy, vegetables, and coffee to agree with the participants on the value chain process and the formation of an innovation platform. The MSP workshop was conducted at various districts within the project areas. The workshop provided an important platform for stakeholders to share their insights, discuss challenges, and collaboratively work towards enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of the respective value chains. Seventy-one people participated in these workshops.
- In Q4 2024, WFP facilitated a School Menu Planner (SMP) Plus training for school administration officials, as well as an integrated food preparation training for school cooks in Bumthang, Mongar, Punakha and Gasa districts. This was part of the process to complete the eight remaining districts for SMP training which began in 2024, under the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme (NSFNP). The SMP Plus tool optimizes school meal menus considering the cost and nutritional value, while prioritizing locally-sourced foods and support for smallholder farmers. Eighty-four cooks were trained in school meal preparation practical including food hygiene and storage exercises. Forty-nine participants including school principals and school mess-in-charges from select schools, district education officers, district agriculture officers, agriculture extension officers, and district livestock officers attended the training and developed localized feeding menus for schools in the district.

Donors

Global Agriculture and Food Security Program

- WFP successfully completed a four-year project funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) focusing on school feeding infrastructure development and support for the school feeding supply chain. Following its completion, WFP hosted a KOICA mission to review the completed work and assess a new five-year funding proposal to scale up the work. The mission reviewed the 51 school kitchens and storage facilities built/refurbished under the first phase and visited schools and monastic institutions for inclusion in the new proposal, in collaboration with Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD).
- WFP participated in the review of the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme led by the MoESD in January 2025. WFP offered expertise in exploring new models for school feeding financing to update the stipend to be able to afford nutritious, diverse meals for children in schools.
- Mr. Samir Wanmali, WFP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, visited Bhutan in January in support of the operations and activities of the WFP in the country. The RD's visit reaffirmed WFP's steadfast commitment to support the Government and people of Bhutan in meeting the Agenda 2030 goals, in particular SDG2 – Zero Hunger as well as support strengthened partnerships with the Government and other partners.



WFP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Samir Wanmali meets with Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay