

## Feed the Future Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab Country Activity Brief - Nepal 2023-2024

### Introduction

The Feed the Future Food Systems for Nutrition Innovation Lab (FSN-IL) is at the forefront of catalyzing the transformation of food systems to improve nutrition across diverse global contexts. Operating its activities in Bangladesh, Malawi, Mozambique, and Nepal, FSN-IL collaborates with governments, research and academic institutions, private sector stakeholders, and development partners to address the unique challenges within each country's food system.

Through its closely interlinked domains of research for development (R4D), human and institutional capacity development, and stakeholder engagement, FSN-IL works to identify scalable solutions that address critical gaps in food systems, prioritizing improved access to nutrient-rich perishable foods, food safety, and reducing food loss and waste.

The country-specific update below offers a snapshot of FSN-IL's ongoing efforts to reduce food loss and waste, promote nutrient-dense diets, and accelerate the adoption and scaling of food systems innovations tailored to the broader context and needs of Nepal.

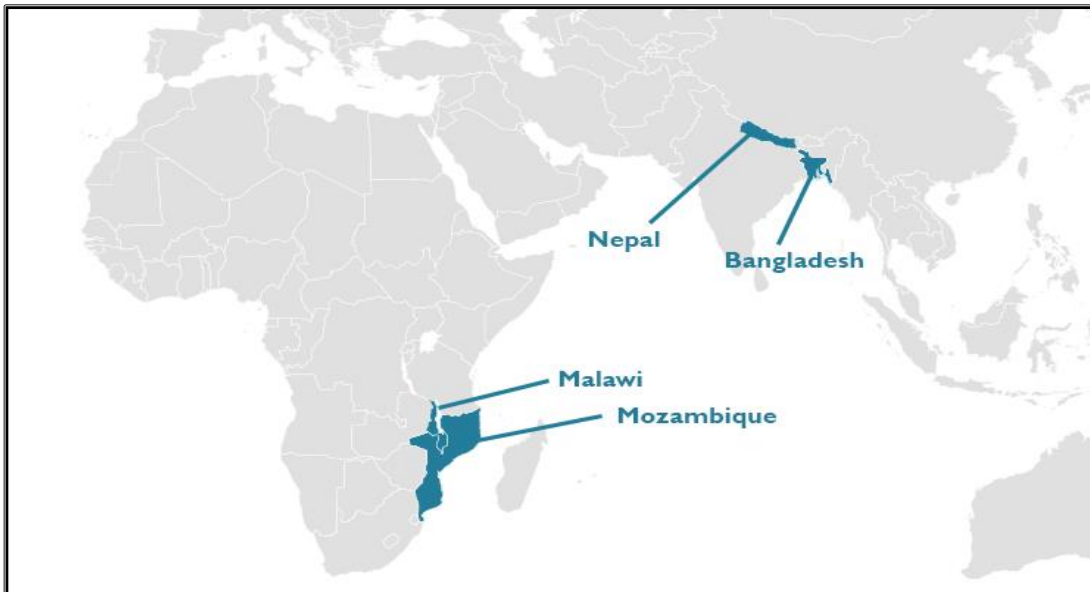


Figure 1: Map of FSN-IL Focus Countries

### Nepal Activity Brief | Key Highlights from FY2024

#### Delivering for Nutrition Conference | Kathmandu, Nepal | November 2023

FSN-IL co-hosted the Delivering for Nutrition in South Asia: Equity and Inclusion (D4N23) conference that took place on November 1-2 in Kathmandu, Nepal. FSN-IL supported the D4N23 conference by providing travel bursaries for 15 participants to attend from the focus countries of Nepal and Bangladesh. FSN-IL also served as one of the reviewers for the abstract review process. In addition, an interactive learning lab titled "Field Perspectives on Semi-Qualitative Data Collection" was led by the Valley Research Group, one of FSN-IL's in-country partners, on day two of the conference.

A total of 27 participants attended the workshop, which focused on both the theoretical and practical aspects of research design, quantitative and qualitative sampling, and how to conduct data collection in the field. Participants were given exercises and opportunities to apply the information and receive feedback on individual cases and scenarios relevant to their context and experience.

### **Circular Food Systems Workshop on Food Loss and Waste | Nagarkot, Nepal | May 2024**

In May 2024, a Circular Food Systems Workshop was held in Nagarkot, Nepal with 13 participants from Nepal and 12 participants from Bangladesh. The three-day, interactive workshop led by Thriving Solutions involved in-depth discussions and modules that featured case studies and context-relevant examples. At the end of the training, participants applied newly learned circular economy concepts by working in groups to create roadmaps tailored to country-specific goals identified by their team members. Impacts of this training include generating awareness and enhancing local stakeholder capacity to understand and implement circular economy strategies related to food systems and nutrition, thereby driving sustainable long-term outcomes in their various sectors, projects, and policy planning.

### **Scalability Assessment Workshop | Kathmandu, Nepal | August 2024**

In August 2024, FSN-IL hosted an interactive Scalability Assessment Workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal. Twenty-three participants attended the two-day training. The objective of the workshop was to train food systems actors and stakeholders on context-specific bundling of innovations for scaling impact, utilizing existing partnerships and collaborations. Closing remarks were given by Debendra Adhikari from the USAID mission and Kiran Rupakhetee from the office of the Prime Minister in Nepal. The workshop was co-facilitated by Robin Shrestha, Associate Director of FSN-IL, and Giacomo Zanello from the University of Reading. The workshop was successful in generating momentum in the adoption of a systems framework for initiating food systems change, identifying and quantitatively assessing the commercial viability of innovations, and the bundling of these innovations for complementarity and multi-sector collaboration across food systems value chains. The workshop was well received, and participants were very engaged, using their respective experiences and expertise to identify scaling ambitions within their respective value chains (dairy, fruits, vegetables, and animal products). As an output of the workshop, they generated a bundle of innovations to address context-specific priorities around agri-food systems. As part of this process, participants utilized FSN-IL's Bundling Innovations for Scaling Impact (BI4SI).

### **FY2023 R4D Competitive Award: Reducing Ginger Storage Losses with Women Producers in Nepal | Ongoing**

FSN-IL sub-awardee, Purdue University, and Catholic Relief Services Nepal are currently engaged in an activity with women producers in Nepal to reduce ginger storage losses. To date, the project has selected 75 small producers, mostly women, with an additional 75 to be added before the ginger harvest season in November of this year. The project has also been working on a bundle of innovations including low-cost storage units, sensors, standard operating procedures for ginger producers, and market linkages to cooperatives in the Pyuthan district of Nepal.

### **FY2023 R4D Competitive Award: Empowering and Innovative Designing for Protecting Nutrient Dense Food: Rural Market Development | Ongoing**

The R4D activity, led by UC Davis and iDE Nepal, utilizes a comprehensive approach to improving food systems through technology adoption and business support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). With iDE as the lead implementer, initial project planning and staff orientation meetings were conducted in the Myagdi and Syangja districts, with similar efforts planned for the Kaski district. The iDE Nepal team will closely engage with Mandala AgriFresh, Tribhuvan University, and Agricultural Forestry University in country for collaborative research initiatives. Following participation in the Scalability Assessment Workshop organized by FSN-IL, the project team from iDE Nepal together with Mandala

AgriFresh will utilize the BI4SI interactive innovation tool to assess the feasibility and applicability of emerging innovations at the project districts. This will guide the team in designing and implementing the technology review framework moving forward.

### **FY2024 Competitive Award Selection and Final Approval | Planned**

FSN-IL is engaged in an extensive co-creation process with two EOIs that were successfully selected through a competitive review in Nepal.

### **Networking and Collaboration with In-Country Stakeholders | Ongoing**

FSN-IL continued its engagement with the national, sub-national, and local governments, development organizations, the private sector, and academic, research, and civil society institutions in Nepal. FSN-IL worked closely with the Department of Food Technology and Quality Control within the Ministry of Agriculture to provide technical assistance in drafting and disseminating the food quality standard guidelines for Nepal. In addition, it continued its engagement with the National Planning Commission in implementing in-country activities, including the Nepal buy-in activities (Nutrition Governance Assessment and Food Environment Policy Initiatives Assessment). FSN-IL also successfully invited the joint secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers to the Aspen Global Climate Institute Workshop in early June.

Throughout this year, FSN-IL has continued to engage with SMEs and the private sector, including large commercial businesses such as the Laxmi Group, research institutions such as the National Agriculture Research Centre, NEFOSTA, and AFU, and the Consumer Right Investigation Forum, through a series of workshops to support and facilitate the scalability assessment of innovations, as well as circular economy concepts on reducing food loss and waste.

In addition, FSN-IL closely engaged with FTF Innovation Labs, such as the Food Safety Innovation Lab, to facilitate a national consultation on microbial food safety of fresh produce in May.

### **Nepal Buy-in | September 2023 – September 2025 | Ongoing**

On September 25, 2023, FSN-IL secured a buy-in from USAID to advance the assessment of nutrition governance at the national and provincial level alongside an assessment of provincial-level food systems in Nepal. As part of the buy-in, FSN-IL successfully completed data collection for the two assessments. The NGI and Food-EPI surveys are particularly timely and relevant in the context of Nepal with the implementation of Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plan-III and Nepal's Food Systems Transformation Strategic Plan underway. Additionally, the NGI has been endorsed as a primary indicator to track progress on Nepal's Nutrition for Growth (N4G) commitments, a global pledging movement, to achieve national targets for investment and improvements in nutrition outcomes by 2030.

Data collection for the NGI and Food-EPI surveys took place concurrently from March-June 2024. The NGI survey involved a total of 1182 interviews with government and non-government officials from 7 provinces, 25 districts, 50 municipalities, and 100 wards. Similarly, a total of 295 national and sub-national food systems experts from 7 provinces, 25 districts, 50 municipalities, and 100 wards were interviewed as part of the Food-EPI survey.

FSN-IL initiated data analysis for the NGI and Food-EPI surveys, which will conclude in December 2024. Findings from both surveys will be distilled into a comprehensive report followed by a presentation to key government stakeholders in Nepal to receive feedback. Based on the feedback and survey findings, FSN-IL will develop and implement tailored capacity-building workshops at the provincial level, followed by a national dissemination workshop in April-June 2025.