Countries should align their national food and nutrition security strategies with the regional, continental and global strategies and frameworks as a first step towards addressing food and nutrition insecurity.

Improved agricultural productivity and production are key to achieving food and nutrition security and can be achieved through climate adaption and mitigation measures, access to land and water for agriculture, especially for women, and post-harvest food loss and waste management, among other factors.

Improved market access for diverse and nutritious foods, especially for vulnerable population groups, is vital for combating food insecurity in both urban and rural areas.

Empowerment of women and youth is necessary to enable them to play a more meaningful role in food and nutrition security issues at both household and community levels.

Delivery of healthy and safe food to consumers requires enactment and enforcement of the necessary legislation and developing adequate capacity in laboratory facilities for regulatory purposes.

Countries should provide adequate investment for coordination and implementation of food and nutrition strategies, support for research on the cost of hunger and compliance with the right to food laws.

Countries need to develop robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems for their food and nutrition security strategies, based on comprehensive multi-sectoral results frameworks and indicators.

The 2020 Global Nutrition Report and the State of Food and Nutrition (SOFI) 2020 paint a grim picture of the global food and nutrition security situation. Globally, one in nine people is hungry and one in every three is overweight or obese. Many countries, including those in Southern Africa, are experiencing the double burden of malnutrition, where undernutrition and micro-nutrient deficiencies co-exist with overweight, obesity and other diet-related conditions such as non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The number of people affected by hunger has been slowly increasing since 2014, with increases in Sub-Saharan Africa being greater than any other region (SOFI, 2020). The world is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 – zero hunger by 2030. If anything, current trends would result in 840 million hungry people by 2030, with an additional 83 to 132 million as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (SOFI 2020).

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Regional Vulnerability Assessment Synthesis Report 2020 (SADC RVAA 2020) indicated that the regional food and nutrition security outlook for 2020/21 was dire, especially during the lean season of November 2020 to January 2021. Even before countries in the region put in place national lockdown and restrictive measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic from early 2020, the region was on course to reach high levels of food and nutrition insecurity.
The projection was similar to the situation in the 2019/2020 season when 41 million people were food insecure. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already precarious situation, with the 2020/2021 season projected to register an increase of at least 10% food insecure people in the SADC region. This comprises 33.6 million people in rural areas and 11.1 million in urban areas.

The second Biennial Review Report (BRR) on national commitments to the Malabo Declaration for the two-year period ending 2019, which was released in February 2020, showed that most countries in the SADC region, including the five focus countries for this policy brief, were lagging behind in their nutrition targets (Figure 1).

The SADC has a regional Food and Nutrition Security Strategy 2015-2025 (FNSS) that is aligned to the Malabo Declaration and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The degree of domestication of the regional FNSS, as measured through the level of alignment of national food and nutrition strategies of focal countries, is one of the key factors affecting their performance in the BRR (AUC, 2020).

Figure 1. Countries’ performance on food security and nutrition indicators.

This policy brief is aimed at advancing the need for countries to ensure that, as a first step towards addressing food and nutrition insecurity, they should ensure that their FNSS are aligned to the regional strategy. The decision to focus on FNSS rather than food and nutrition security policies was taken because strategies are the means through which policies are implemented, and they tend to be modified more often in response to changing conditions than is the case with policies.

THE APPROACH

The areas of misalignment varied by country. The main gaps identified in the country FNSS compared to the regional FNSS were in the following areas:

Food productivity and availability
- Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation measures (Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa)
- Access to land and water for agriculture, especially by women (Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa)
- Management of post-harvest food loss and waste (Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa)

Access to food
- Access to markets to improve access to diverse and nutritious food (Lesotho, Madagascar, South Africa)
- Use of savings as an income strategy (Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa)

Food safety
- Accreditation of laboratories for monitoring food safety (Lesotho, Madagascar)
- Standards and legislation on food fortification (Lesotho, South Africa)

1Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa
2Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe
POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The degree of alignment of national food and nutrition strategies to the regional strategy determines the level of domestication of regional frameworks to which countries have committed. Since the regional strategy is aligned to the continental and global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) frameworks, countries cannot expect to deliver on related continental targets and SDGs without domesticating the regional food and nutrition strategy. Therefore, alignment of the national food and nutrition strategies is the first step towards addressing food and nutrition insecurity. The specific areas of misalignment have the following policy implications:

i) Improved agricultural productivity and production are key to achieving food and nutrition security and should be assured through climate adaption and mitigation measures, access to land and water for agriculture, especially for women and post-harvest food loss and waste management, among other factors.

ii) Improved food access through better market access for diverse and nutritious foods, especially for vulnerable population groups, is crucial for combating food insecurity in both urban and rural areas.

iii) The empowerment of women and youth to enable them to play a more meaningful role in food and nutrition security is necessary, including access to labour-saving technologies, safeguarding women’s time-use and promoting youth-targeted measures.

iv) Food safety measures, including enactment and enforcement of legislation and developing adequate capacity in laboratory facilities for regulatory purposes, are vital in delivering healthy and safe food to consumers.

v) Adequate investment in food and nutrition strategies, including support for research on the cost of hunger, and the right to food laws and budgets to coordinate and implement food and nutrition strategies, are necessary to create a stable food system environment.

vi) Robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, based on comprehensive multi-sectoral results frameworks and indicators are necessary to monitor progress towards the countries’ food and nutrition targets.
About FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an autonomous regional stakeholder driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established by Ministers of Agriculture from Eastern and Southern Africa in 1997. FANRPAN was borne out of the need for comprehensive policies and strategies required to resuscitate agriculture. FANRPAN is mandated to work in all African countries and currently has activities in 17 countries namely Angola, Benin, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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