

# Food systems: some insights from the discussions amongst GCP3 projects

NWO-WOTRO GCP3 workshop: IMPROVING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN GHANA FROM A FOOD SYSTEMS APPROACH



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## Food systems

- The network of actors and activities that interact with one another, within an ecological, social, political/cultural, and economic environment.
- Activities include growing, processing, distributing, consuming, and disposing of foods, from provision of inputs to waste and recycling
- Influenced by structural conditions such as rules, standards and policies, and actors that support operation, optimization and innovation of the system



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## Diversity of foci of GCP projects

- Reducing aflatoxin of maize in Kenya
- Commercialization pathways dairy systems Kenya
- Nutrition-sensitive agriculture in Vietnam and Lao
- Low price fish chains in Ghana and India
- Horticulture transitions in Chile and Uruguay
- Cocoa crop and services improvement in Ghana and Ivory Coast
- Allotment gardens in cities in Benin
- Integrated mangrove- aquaculture systems in Indonesia

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## Food systems can be analysed in many ways

- E.g.:
  - Political economy/ecology perspectives
  - Nutrition perspectives
  - Environmental perspectives
  - Food culture perspectives
  - Global-local perspectives
  - Energy/material/carbon flow dynamics
  - Etc.
- Studies generally zoom in on certain aspects

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## Food systems in GCP3 projects

- Some take a very holistic perspective, e.g. mapping food systems and characterising food & nutrition security and food safety aspects of value chains
- Some are more focused on the production system and work from there, e.g. in integrated shrimp systems and cacao
- Some are really focused on a certain transition with a certain perspective (e.g. towards agro-ecology), whereas others are more focused on incremental improvement in production systems and chains
- Some are transitioning 'informal' systems towards more formalized commercial systems, whereas others aim to create or maintain more informal grassroots based systems

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## Some key issues discussed this morning

- Normativity and political orientation/preference towards certain food systems must be made explicit in research and the (policy) systems they connect to
- However, better to think about to create synergies between different food systems
- Indicator based systems can be useful to stimulate discussion, but should not be seen as a panacea
- The many components of food systems may create tradeoffs (e.g. food access versus nutritional value) in short and long term

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