

Evidence-Based Agricultural Development Planning



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Aligning agricultural initiatives and transforming food systems through evidence-based integrated planning can effectively balance environmental protection, market opportunities, and social inclusion. This brief highlights RAISE-FS experience of woreda profiling, planning, and implementation via local mandating, which fosters meaningful agricultural transformation.

In countries like Ethiopia, characterized by diverse agroecological zones, the process of identifying and prioritizing local conditions, key challenges, opportunities, and leverage points is essential for achieving sustainable development. This is because sustainable progress depends not only on recognizing these factors but also on carefully planning to fully leverage them in ways that promote food and nutrition security, stimulate inclusive economic growth, and harness environmental sustainability. Recognizing these challenges, the RAISE-FS project has **designed, tested and validated a bottom-up planning approach** that has demonstrated the potential of designing bundled innovations based on an in-depth understanding location specific opportunities, challenges and priorities and integrated planning based on sharing roles and responsibilities among key stakeholders.

Effective agricultural development planning contributes to increased productivity, food & nutrition security, and inclusive rural development, which are essential for poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth. Despite various efforts, the development of the agricultural sector in Ethiopia is far from its potential. This has resulted in low productivity, a high yield gap, an exponentially increasing living income gap, and increasing levels of food and nutrition insecurity especially affecting the most vulnerable population groups.

Agricultural development planning can play a critical role in defining pathways and guiding the implementation of interventions to overcome complex agricultural challenges. Adopting a bottom-up approach in agricultural development planning emphasizes public participation as essential for user satisfaction and effective outcomes. Engaging diverse stakeholders incorporates **local knowledge and community priorities into food system policies**, making them context-specific and regionally responsive, thus enhancing effectiveness and sustainability. This approach also promotes social inclusion by

empowering marginalized groups, like women, youths and smallholder farmers, addressing inequities and ensuring resources benefit vulnerable populations. Additionally, bottom-up planning fosters trust and collaboration among stakeholders, which is vital for successful implementation of potential food system interventions.

Effective agricultural planning ensures that interventions are tailored towards specific conditions and needs of different regions, food systems, and communities, considering variations in agro-ecology, soil, climate, water, social and economic resources. By aligning agricultural initiatives with sustainability goals and food system transformation pathways, evidence-based integrated agricultural development planning can help balance productivity gains - for food and nutrition security, and for market opportunities - with environmental protection and social-inclusion, while safeguarding against potentially negative trade-offs.

Woreda LMAT approach

The planning approach, Woreda LMAT (Woreda profiling, planning and implementation through Local Mandating for Effective Agricultural Transformation) has four key components, namely (i) **mandating of relevant actors** for collaborative governance and implementation, (ii) **woreda food system profiling**, which - undertaken through the Rapid Food System Appraisal and quantitative baseline surveys - aims at identification of woreda specific leverage points and priorities, (iii) Identification of suitable locations and required inputs for specific innovation bundles using **Innovation Recommendation Mapping**, and (iv) woreda bottom-up planning considering the actual coordination for implementation, monitoring and scaling of specific innovations.

Mandating relevant actors—particularly the knowledge and research institutions located within the respective woredas—to facilitate woreda-level food system profiling, innovation recommendation mapping, and the testing and validation of

innovations will play a crucial role in **strengthening evidence-based decision-making** and **accelerating system-level change for effective food system transformation**.

The Rapid Food System Appraisal (RFSA), baseline surveys and special studies were used as evidence to identify the resource bases, development challenges, and gaps to prioritize leverage points for food system transformation together with diverse local stakeholders. It synthesized the information into comprehensive woreda profiles that are used to support woreda planning (see reference documents).

The **woreda food system profiles** capture detailed information on local demographics, agroecological conditions, production systems, markets, nutrition and social inclusion. These profiles serve as evidence-based tools to guiding local planning and help design targeted outcome-oriented interventions that align with the realities in the woreda. The woreda profile gives an overview of the current status, dynamics, and behaviour of the local food system. The profile is meant to enable stakeholders to be on equal footing in understanding the complex challenges and realities of the woreda, and to use these insights as starting point for the woreda planning process.



Data-driven and GIS based decision support tools and approaches, **Innovation Recommendation Mapping (IRM)**, were developed to support evidence-based planning by identifying suitable scaling niches for scaling ready innovations by matching the innovation's requirement with the available, and suitable, biophysical and socio-economic conditions of specific woredas. IRM helps to strategically and spatially plan how, and where, to promote scaling ready innovations in target woredas which have suitable conditions for the respective innovations.

By including the bottom-up planning approach and IRM into a woreda level agricultural development planning, RAISE-FS has been able to facilitate multistakeholder planning processes involving Woreda office of Agriculture, Woreda planning office, Woreda level health and nutrition office, women and youth office, farmers' representatives, experts from Ministry of Agriculture, and Regional and Zonal Bureaus of Agriculture. RAISE-FS facilitated the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms that utilize woreda profiles and IRM maps to plan the scaling of selected innovations by assessing the suitable areas, quantities of inputs required for scaling and identifying the required support.

Key publications

Woreda based bottom-up planning: experiences and implications

blog <https://raise-fs.org/2023/11/10/woreda-food-system-profiles-for-bottom-up-planning-and-informed-decisions/>

Woreda food system profiles

[Woreda food system profiles \(Amhara, Oromia, South, Tigray\)](#)



Facilitators guide – RFSA

https://raise-fs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/swre-raise-fs-22-001_rfsa-tool-guide-1.pdf



Baseline report

https://raise-fs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/swre_raise-fs_22_007_fs_bl_report_2022.pdf



<https://raise-fs.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/swre-raise-fs-raise-fs-bl-report-for-tigray-region-25-041.pdf>



Living income assessments

https://raise-fs.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/swre-raise-fs-24-028_living-income-gap-of-smallholder-farmers-in-southern-ethiopia.pdf



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