

ALIVE & THRIVE

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture

ALIVE & THRIVE | KEBEDE TAFESSE

Why nutrition-sensitive agriculture?

Good nutrition supports healthy brain development and allows children to achieve their full potential. Nutrition is part of agriculture; however, increased staple food production to achieve caloric self-sufficiency, a laudable goal for governments national food security agendas, is inadequate for achieving nutrition objectives. Populations cannot thrive on a diet of primarily staple foods. Governments must broaden their agendas to address the need for dietary diversity. Consuming a healthy, diverse diet is essential for fully reaching individual and population-level human potential. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) is an approach that promises to help achieve this nutrition outcome.

What activities support NSA?

Agriculture is the only sector that can deliver, at scale, the commodities necessary for nutritious diets. Heathy diets are those that include legumes, nuts, vegetables, animal foods, and fruits. Apart from naturally nutrient-dense foods such as eggs, animal source foods and vitamin A-rich fruits and vegetables, nutritious foods include biofortified crops, or plants whose nutritional qualities have been improved through agronomic practices, conventional plant breeding, or modern biotechnology. The **primary focus** of agriculture in supporting NSA should be on the production, processing, storage, and marketing of nutritious foods.

Additionally, NSA activities must minimize the risk to humans of infections and disease which immediately impact health status. NSA promotes safe agricultural practices – on and off the farm – as well as consumer food safety to reduce the risk of organic and inorganic contamination.

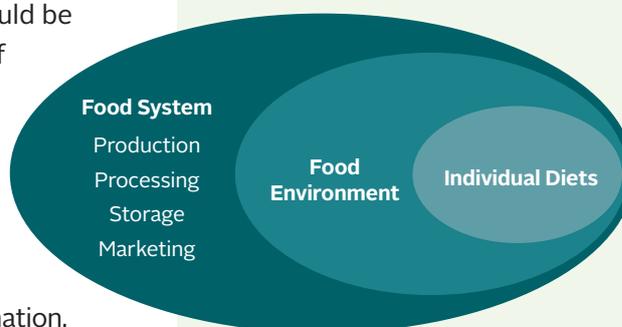
Agriculture is an important livelihood for most rural Ethiopians. NSA activities emphasize that income generated through agricultural activities, in addition to the other production-related objectives such as productivity and profitability, should support health and nutrition through investments in healthy diets, water,

WHAT IS NUTRITION-SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE?

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture, or NSA, is the science and practice of producing plants and animals, as well as preparing and marketing its products, that support good human health and nutrition.

NSA refers to agricultural approaches that (1) incorporate specific nutrition-related outcomes; and (2) help to reduce the underlying and basic causes of malnutrition. These causes may be related to access to food, caregiving resources, health resources, environmental sanitation, and the food environment.

WHAT INFLUENCES DIET?





sanitation and hygiene, healthcare, and caregiving, especially for mothers and young children.

Finally, women engage in agricultural activities and devote much time and energy to agriculture-related tasks from production to marketing, often using rudimentary technology. The energy and time that women, especially those pregnant and lactating but also those who continue as the primary caregivers of young children, a common practice in most Ethiopian households, devote to agricultural tasks have direct impacts on their health and nutrition status as well as the nutritional status of their infants and young children. NSA activities seek to minimize the energy and time burdens of agricultural tasks on women, especially mothers.

EXAMPLES OF NSA OUTCOMES

NSA activities support one or more of the following outcomes:

- Stable year-round supply of nutritious foods, especially those lacking in diets
- Price stability and affordability of nutritious foods for most consumers
- Improved food safety and hygiene practices
- Increased appeal or desirability of nutritious foods
- Enhanced status of women as income earners, mothers, and caregivers

What is Alive & Thrive doing to support NSA in Ethiopia?

Alive & Thrive is helping develop capacity at federal and regional institutions to implement the National Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Strategy (NNSAS), and assisting the federal ministry and six regional bureaus of agriculture with technical support, tools and materials. This support aims to increase adoption of practical skills and tools to plan, implement and monitor an integrated NSA approach, so that the NSA activities and outcomes described above are mainstreamed into government work plans and routine activities.

Additionally, to help improve the implementation of the NNSAS, A&T supports the generation of new knowledge with targeted studies, especially to support the practical side of mainstreaming NSA within the government system, and the larger Ethiopian food system.