

(Draft)

## National Pathway to Sustainable Food System of Myanmar by 2030

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In accordance with Myanmar's Vision for 2030 agenda of sustainable development, national FSS secretariat and report preparation team adopts this National Pathway Document under the guidance and supervision of National Convenor. This document incorporates key propositions from national strategic report, being developed through an arduous process of National Dialogue among government ministries, NGOs, private sectors and CSOs.

Based upon the feedbacks and inputs from the dialogue process that focuses on five action tracks recommended by the FSS secretariat, which have been reported on August 14th 2021, this document put forward three most prioritized action tracks for Myanmar: (Track-1) Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all (Track-2) Shift to sustainable consumption pattern, and (Track-5) Build resilient to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses, respectively.

### Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all

Myanmar recognized the importance of food and nutrition security as the SDGs' commitment aims to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. However, it also recognizes that most of the current practices national food system are still in initial stage of achieving this goal.

Fundamentally, poverty still remains an important driver of food insecurity in the country, and often exacerbated by unexpected negative shocks such as high prices of food, low prices of agricultural outputs, serious health epidemics and deadly natural disasters. Economic poverty and food poverty vary across the country. While some remote areas and hilly regions of

the country suffered mostly from lack of food availability compounded with subsistence farming systems and under-developed infrastructures; urban areas experienced poor food affordability fueled by high price of logistics and distribution. Both have negative impacts on nutrition of both rural and urban populations.

With utmost effort and collaboration with development partners, Myanmar has achieved a significant improvement in eradication of hunger, malnutrition, poverty over the last decade, and the incidence of malnutrition has declined remarkably among the population. The government has also adopted Multi-sectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition (MS-NPAN) and Agriculture Development Strategy and Investment Plan (ADSIP) to foster inclusive agricultural development and to achieve food and nutrition security. Under these plans, specific investment and development projects were implemented to address key challenges in agriculture sector and to improve productivity, access to market and food security.

Based on the existing challenges and constraints regarding access to safe and nutritious food, the following action tracks were identified as prioritized areas for implementation:

- Promoting enhanced food production in each agro-ecological zone
- Supporting livelihood through increased on-farm, non-farm and off-farm incomes
- Scaling up of cold chain technology

### **Increasing access to nutritious food**

The state of food and nutrition security in Myanmar is paradoxical in a number of ways. Though agriculture sector is recognized as an important economic sector by the Government of Myanmar, the sector is still experiencing challenges of low productivity, asset inequality, high price volatility, insufficient investment, weak research, extension and financial services, which in turn affect public access to nutritious food.

While factors such as food preferences and nutritional knowledge affect household dietary choices, relative food costs also play an important role in these choices, especially for

poorer households. Most Myanmar households over-consume staples such as rice while under-consuming more nutrient-dense foods due to low affordability of the latter.

In order to address this challenge, some solutions are being explored: scaling up in improvement of nutrition and awareness of malnutrition, increasing availability of nutritious food, strengthening of agri-businesses and agro-food industries, and improving social protection measures.

### **Making food safer**

Over the last decade, food safety issues became a high concern for the public and accordingly, various initiatives were taken to promote food safety along the food chains in Myanmar. However, there are many gaps to fill for safer food supply chain. The mandates and oversight functions over food safety concerns are split over different ministries. National inspection and certification system for food, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, cosmetics and other household products is in place to protect the health of consumers and facilitate fair practices in trade. Respective agencies have carried out inspection and certification activities for domestic manufacturing facilities as well as export and import operations. Despite of these enforcements, there is still poor coordination and low investment in safe food production and distribution within the private sector. The awareness-promotion programs pertaining to food safety are not sufficient, and many stakeholders along the supply chain were less knowledgeable about this matter. Potential solutions for food safety is identified and explored: strict enforcement of food safety protocols, strengthening of legal and regulatory frameworks, capacity and institutional development of relevant agencies in charge of food safety compliance, and promoting consumer awareness.

### **Shift to sustainable and healthy consumption pattern**

Myanmar with a growing population, decreasing natural resource base, high food loss and waste, and vulnerability to climate change, has been experiencing unsustainable trends in

food consumption on one hand and unhealthy consumption patterns on the other. Therefore, Myanmar has prioritized action track 2 on shifting sustainable and healthy consumption pattern to achieve the 2030 Agenda sustainable development goals (SDGs).

## **Food Environment**

In Myanmar, low quality diet is contributing to a triple burden of malnutrition (under 5 stunting, micronutrient deficiencies and obesity) resulting in enormous short and long-term human and economic consequences. Proposed solutions were discussed and identified development of food system framework, incorporation of nutrition education in National Education Strategic Plan (2016–2021), and (iii) city-level food strategies to create an enabling food environment. The following areas are considered.

### **Food Demand**

In Myanmar, food demand is managed through two legal frameworks: the National Food Law and the Consumer Protection Law. These laws were enacted to protect and to assist with consumer rights claims, to make system effective, to relay the appropriate information to the consumers, to take action for the protection of consumers, to ensure the high quality for safety, health and satisfaction of the consumer.

Myanmar is currently undergoing a transition toward nature positive food system where healthier and safer food products are economically affordable and socially desirable. In Myanmar, breastfeeding practiced universally and 90% of mothers were fully aware of the benefits of breast-milk. Though the government has made several efforts to improve infant feeding practices in Myanmar, it remains a major challenge to reverse the trends in child malnutrition.

### **Food Waste**

In Myanmar, food waste and losses occur mainly at early stages of the food value chain. To reduce food waste, there are various approaches to focus on specific areas of the supply

chain, national policies, education programmes, and developing governmental regulations, and recycling food waste as animal and aquaculture feed and fertilizer can be a good solution.

### **Cross Cutting Issues**

#### **(i) Awareness Raising**

Awareness is the most fundamental issue. For raising awareness, the country needs to (i) establish a national framework of advocacy, (ii) to achieve coordination and planning on awareness promotion activities and (iii) private sector campaigns on consumer awareness of processed food in the supermarkets.

#### **(ii) Women empowerment**

Women's empowerment within their households and communities is essential to inclusive food systems. For Women empowerment; the country needs to develop the programme such as (i) institutional support for women's role in food and nutrition security; (ii) capacity development of women leaders; and (iii) knowledge products for women's oriented education programs.

### **Build Resilient to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses**

Myanmar pledges to ensure the continued functionality of sustainable food systems in areas that are prone to conflict, climate change, environmental decay, natural disasters, health and economic shocks. Myanmar will proactively plan and maintain functionality of food systems under these circumstances while safeguarding resiliency of environmental, economic and social foundations of food systems.

In line with global themes of food system transformation, Myanmar identified and explored four national themes for further actions: (i) climate change, environment and ecology; (ii) economic shocks; (iii) pandemic, pest and disease outbreaks; and (iv) Internal Conflict and Instability.

Moreover, broad cross-section of stakeholder's recognition is urgently needed to enhance evidence-based decision making and implementation of the above-mentioned national themes. In addition, the strategies and actions must be harmonized with national as well as international practices.

The recommended game-changing actions of food system transformation in Myanmar's action track no. 5 are:

- i. To support existing all-inclusive coordination and partnerships within existing architecture (encouraging civil society organization-CSO and philanthropic organizations)
- ii. To facilitate joint advocacy, decision-making, policy and joint programming to address complex food crises with integrative approaches
- iii. To achieve effective and adequate resource allocation for resilience building activities;
- iv. To mainstream disaster risk reduction into all development plans across sectors