

PHILIPPINES FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PATHWAY

The Philippines fully supports the ambition and effort of the United Nations Food Systems Summit to launch bold new actions and solutions, leveraging on healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable food systems towards the attainment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The food systems and the achievement of the SDGs deal with the dynamics of the rural and urban agriculture development and food value chain. This encompasses the whole range of activities across environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructure, and institutions. Transforming food systems involves interlinked activities that relate to food production and utilization (harvesting, packing, processing, transport, marketing, nutritious food consumption, and food remains disposal), and builds on socio-economic and environmental outcomes.

This pathway document aims to provide an overview of the current Philippine food systems and present strategic areas and partnership and governance mechanisms that have been agreed upon during various multi-stakeholder food systems dialogues. It targets to develop a cohesive, inclusive, dynamic, and collaborative approach that cuts across various industries and concepts towards transforming the Philippine food system into one that shapes a healthier, more competitive, gender-inclusive, and climate-positive nation, and harnesses sustainable resources. It is anchored on a belief that in building back better, there is a need for a people-centered recovery that focuses on well-being, improves inclusiveness, and reduces inequality.

CURRENT FOOD SYSTEMS OF THE PHILIPPINES

The current food systems in the Philippines focus on production of commodities, supported by high productivity-oriented policies and technological development. Likewise, it is centered on empowering individuals, farming families, and agrarian communities towards creating a market surplus of staple commodities. It is managed in an attempt to secure domestic self-sufficiency and nutritional programs that are targeted beyond the lower socioeconomic groups and prioritize responsible food production, consumption, and utilization of nutritious foods.

However, the food systems dialogues stressed that addressing food production alone will not resolve the complex concerns faced by the Filipinos. As stated in the updated Philippine Development Plan, the performance of the agriculture, food and fishery (AFF) sector in the last three years has been weak due to climate/weather disturbances, pest and animal diseases, weak global demand, and increased competition resulting in the decrease in value of top exports (e.g., coconut), and weak coordination and convergence efforts among government agencies and stakeholders. Despite prioritizing the access, availability, affordability, and stability dimensions of food security, agricultural production decreased by 1.2% in the first quarter of 2020, increased by 0.5% in the second quarter, increased 0.7% in the third quarter, and declined at 3.8% in the last quarter of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in community quarantines also affected agricultural activities. Farmers, fisherfolks, and individuals residing in rural areas, where land tenure is disrupted, posted the highest poverty incidences among the basic sectors at 31.6, 26.2, and 24.5 percent, respectively. Moreover, safe and nutritious food in the Philippines are usually expensive, making them inaccessible to low-income families, whose livelihoods and source of income have been disrupted by the pandemic, which has exposed the vulnerabilities of the country's food supply chain and heightened concerns on food safety. Making things more complicated are the systemic nature of risks, effects of various natural hazards, and onslaught of calamities that destroy lives and livelihoods especially in the most vulnerable parts of the country.

Based on recent reports, Filipino households who are engaged in agriculture are more vulnerable to food insecurity with 39.8% being moderately food insecure and 17.5% being severely food insecure (FNRI-DOST, 2018-2019). In 2020, the Rapid Nutrition Assessment Survey (RNAS) revealed that 62.1% of the surveyed households experienced moderate or severe food insecurity which is 21.9 percentage points higher than 2019 levels of 40.29% (DOST-FNRI, 2020). Stunting among children below 2 years of age is recorded at 21.9% based on the 2019 Expanded NNS (FNRI-DOST). Stunting is a manifestation of chronic hunger or long period of food deprivation. Wasting among the same age group is recorded at 7%, based on the same survey. In the last 15 years, little progress has been made to reduce stunting despite registered good economic growth.

The top causes of disease burden in the Philippines are non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which are increasing among the poor (PIDS, 2020). According to WHO, NCDs such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and chronic diseases that affect the airways and lungs, take almost 300,000 lives in the Philippines every year. There is also an increasing NCD risk factors such as overweight and obesity that stem from unhealthy dietary patterns as observed in scientific studies. The country has shown slow progress towards fighting obesity, with an estimated 9.0% of adults (aged 18 years and over) living with obesity. Among Filipino adolescents, overweight has tripled in the last 15 years. There is a higher rate of overweight and obese children in urban areas than in rural areas and higher prevalence of several risk factors and environmental conditions could rapidly increase the rates.

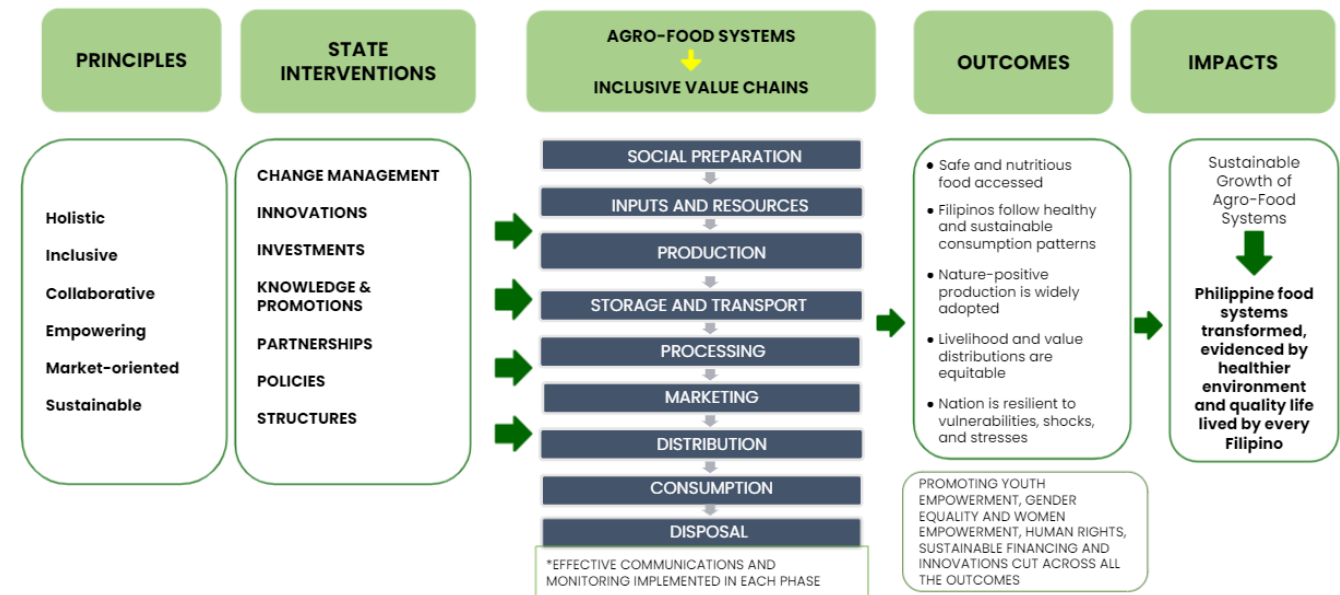
A report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) summarized the challenges facing the food systems, which include (a) ensuring food security and nutrition for the growing population, (b) provision of adequate income and livelihoods to millions of production and processing workers, and (c) achieving sustainable development (reduction of greenhouse gas emission, and climate change adaptation and mitigation). An issue paper developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization in preparation for the national food systems dialogue also identified various challenges faced by the Philippines' food systems covering issues on agriculture and production, food safety, social protection, health and nutrition, and climate change and the environment. The interlinking of sustainable and climate-smart food systems, land security, and improved nutrition in the Philippines indeed remains as a tough journey.

However, it is worth noting that while the COVID-19 pandemic and natural calamities are ravaging the country, the Philippine agriculture sector, especially with the empowered agrarian communities, rose to the occasion and kept the country's economy afloat with the steady and affordable food supply for the population. In terms of protecting social justice and respect for workers' rights, the Department of Labor and Employment proceeds with its COVID 19 related issuances and continuously updates the Labor Code of the Philippines towards creating an enabling environment that promotes fundamental principles and rights at work Compliance to labor laws is being monitored through the DOLE's enforcement mechanism.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH FOR THE PHILIPPINES TRANSFORMATION PATHWAY

The diagram below shows a conceptual framework that goes beyond the myopic approaches to solving food security, sustainability, and nutrition challenges. This conceptual framework describes how the principles bring about enabling factors to deliver the various goods and services to every Filipino, bringing the results where they would happen most. While pictured as a linear conceptualization, the working interface commands a high level of behaviorism, collaborations, and governance to result in an efficient, competitive, inclusive, climate-positive, and resilient food system.

Philippine Pathway to Inclusive and Sustainable Food System: Conceptual Framework



The agro-food systems comprise different segments and actors at the individual level, their organizations, and the societal level. These are the basic units that will animate the principles into an experiential reality with food systems binding humanity that seeks a good quality of life for all people and well-managed natural resources.

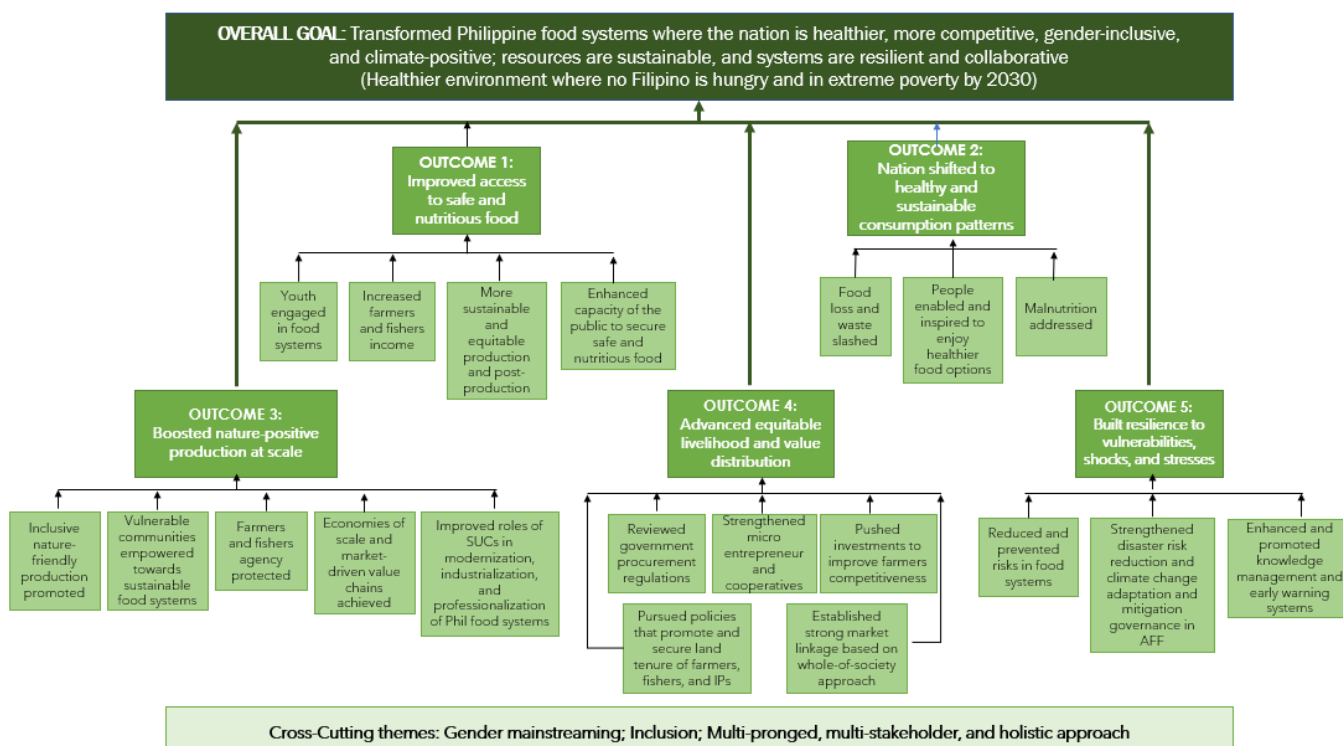
The coherence of policies, impact investments, and strong institutions are the embodiment of how food systems will nourish people, transform societies, and sustain peace and prosperity across humanity. Inclusive growth through adequate support services administered through a universal food value chain system shapes the future the Filipinos envision and is captured in this pathway document.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS OF THE PHILIPPINES BY 2030

The series of multi-stakeholder dialogues and consultation sessions arrived at a number of outputs that lead to a unified goal of a transformed Philippine food systems. These key result areas are aligned with the UNFSS Action tracks, evidencing the country's commitment to contribute to global goals and efforts.

Based on these exchanges, relevant resources, and global discussions, a Theory of Change has been developed to guide the overall strategies towards Philippine food system transformation. The outputs were identified based on the agreements during the national and subnational dialogues on what need to be prioritized to effect positive changes by 2030, with the understanding that even slight yet strategic and coordinated shifts to policies and platforms could lead to transformative changes.

THEORY OF CHANGE



Overall, the following are the strategic interventions that need to be prioritized and fleshed out to ensure that by 2030, the country's natural resources are made sustainable and that no Filipino will be hungry and be in extreme poverty. Outside all these solution areas and recommendations, pathways would be gender responsive and inclusive, and a targeted, multi-pronged, and holistic approach to developing and managing interventions would be adopted.

- **Ensure access to safe and nutritious food.**
 - Engage youth and women in food systems: This will require the passing and effective implementation of the Magna Carta for Young Farmers and Magna Carta of Women, and improving programs that incentivize youth and women participation in food systems.
 - Compensate the farmers properly: This can be undertaken through market linkage, farmer clustering, improved social protection programs for landless farmers and impoverished fishers, strengthened engagement with LGUs for technical support to farmers and fishers, speedy implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law through the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), and concrete and sustainable market tax and financial policies. Other suggestions were to encourage and promote agro-ecological, biodiverse practices in farms, fisheries and forests, and cultivate and promote traditional, local, neglected and underutilized but nutritious and resilient crops.
 - Mitigate post-harvest losses and food wastage: The action items are: establish strategic post-harvest facilities and infrastructure, review of permit application cycle to encourage private sector to invest, and incentivize and maximize the collection and utilization of organic waste.
 - Enhance the capacity of the public to secure safe and nutritious food: This will cover public awareness campaigns on food systems and promotion of nutritious foods, enforcements of the existing policies (such as the First 1000 Days Law, Milk Code, Bio-fortification, Food Fortification

Law, National Feeding Program, Food Safety Act, and the Conditional Cash Transfer and other social protection programs), and inclusion of fresh produce in food relief packs.

- Provide equitable and sustainable food production: This will be around strengthening food, nutrition, and agricultural policies, programs, and fair-trade relations at all levels, integration of population programs in food systems-related development activities, local peace making and development, and implementation of the Organic Act. This also includes enforcing international-level standards and quarantine measures for imported food and on local producers by trading partners, promoting LGU support through the allocation of at least 10% of their National Tax Allotment to agriculture and fisheries, and including demand-driven agriculture and fisheries in the government strategies. Also, this ensures the continuous effective collaborations between the agriculture and health sectors in food regulations and implementation of food safety measures in accordance to the Food Safety Act of 2013.
- **Shift to healthy and sustainable consumption patterns**
 - Enable and motivate people to enjoy healthy and sustainable options: There would be increased responsible consumer education and promotions on nutrition-seeking behavior, empowerment of farmers to produce healthier crops, pursuance of policies that patronize locally produced food products, improvements in access to healthy foods, and strengthened enforcement, and monitoring and evaluation of policies on nutrition and food safety.
 - Slash food losses and waste: This targets to improve post-harvest processing through capacity building and post-harvest support for farmers and fishers, establishment of a national baseline and periodic assessment on food loss and wastage, and aggressive promotions to reduce food loss and waste along the food value chain. These align with advocacies on farm clustering, professionalizing community-based organization, and establishment of food banks.
 - Address malnutrition: Interventions related to this will include zero hunger and good health and well-being, among others.
- **Boost nature-positive production at scale**
 - Promote inclusive nature-friendly production: The suggested actions were to highlight the benefits of environment-friendly, agro-ecological, integrated, bio diversified organic farming practices and food production processes; develop eco-friendly technologies that provide concrete and attractive benefits to producers; manage natural resources sustainably; and support the full implementation of sustainable upland development in small island provinces. Other priority recommendations are around water security and water-use efficiency, proper nutrient management, data generation and analysis related to soils/farmlands, agro-ecology and organic agriculture, and proper waste management systems.
 - Empower IPs, fishers, farmers, and communities towards sustainable food production systems: Priority interventions identified are on awareness campaigns and culture-sensitive capacity building activities benefitting Indigenous Peoples (IPs), implementation of more gender-inclusive projects, assistance for upland communities/tenure holders, support from LGUs in issuing local policies supportive of this endeavor, and provision of incentives to family farmers, fishers, forest-dwellers and IPs.
 - Give attention to farmers and fishers needs and growth
Priority interventions would include institutionalizing the participation of family farmers in the formation and operation of National Committees of Family Farming at national and local levels to implement the Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming in the context of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming; institutionalizing global environment facilities at the local and national levels, creating monitoring and information management mechanisms at various levels, with proper budget allocations, to look out for farmers' growth, strengthening support for mentoring and coaching, and community involvement and engagement, and continuing dialogues to engage farmers, fishers and IPs.
 - Achieve economies of scale and ecosystem services valuation for a market-driven, value chain-oriented, efficient food system: This will entail farmers and fishers clustering with productivity and income monitoring mechanisms in place and where empowered farmer clusters are engaged in more effective business models. Interventions will also be around mitigating post-harvest losses and food wastage along the value chain, fiscal incentives to private firms, and improvements in the government's policies on investments.
 - Improve the role of SUCs in professionalizing Philippine agricultural food systems: This will entail support for research and technology initiatives, tools and facilities of states, universities, and colleges (SUCs), revisions of the reward system to university researchers/technology innovators, and synergy among various sectors for agri-fishery initiatives. Other priority interventions include strengthening of agri-business incubation centers, multi-sector involvement in the technology development, adoption, and commercialization processes.

- **Advance equitable livelihood and value distribution**
 - Review government's procurement regulations to include purchase of farmers and fisherfolk produce/catch: This covers market linkage, promoting fair trade, and farmer professionalization, accrediting farmers and fishers as suppliers, and streamlining procurement processes for relief goods purchased from farmers and fisherfolks.
 - Strengthen micro entrepreneurs and cooperatives: Capacity building activities and farmer consolidation and clustering would be prioritized so farmers can access support for input supply, credit, machineries, among others, and help diversify markets and eliminate. The support of national and local government units is critical to harness the full potential of local products.
 - Improve competitiveness of local farmers: Interventions would include capacitating farmers, fishers, and forest users on technologies and entrepreneurship, examining current wage rates of farm workers, removing labor discrimination, improving living and working conditions, establishing measures that would protect the health and safety of agricultural workers, creating opportunities for increased private sector engagement, putting focus on post-harvest infrastructure, and improving access of subsistence farmers to livelihood programs such as DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program.
 - Influence the efficient use of inputs and adoption of modern technology: This covers support to policies that promote and secure land tenure of farmers, fisherfolk and Indigenous Peoples (IPs), and establishment of community seed banks. Specifically, these entail full and speedy implementation of laws such as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with reforms, Amended Fisheries Code especially the delineation of 928 municipal waters, Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Funds, the passage of the Indigenous Communities Conservation Act (ICCA), Alternative Minerals and Management Act, and enactment of the National Land Use Act.
 - Establish strong market linkage based on the whole-of-society approach: This requires providing platforms and opportunities for meaningful and on-the-ground multisector conversations, providing incentives, and providing skills and capacity building for vulnerable groups. This could also provide further support for the provision of basic physical, health, communications, market infrastructures in the rural areas.

- **Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses**
 - Reduce and prevent risks in the food systems: This focuses on the sustainable use of natural resources, innovations on location-specific sustainable technologies, adoption of appropriate technological and socio-economic practices, and promotion of community-based, disaster-resilient food systems facilities. Interventions also include enhanced support to community-based service providers, research and development on yield improvements, and production failure risks reduction that are adapted to local conditions. Priority actions would also be around better watershed management, soil conservation measures, rain and flood water harvesting, promotion of salt-tolerant crops, transforming food production groups into climate-resilient businesses, and increased youth engagements in food systems.
 - Strengthen disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation governance in agriculture and fisheries: Interventions will be around building capacities, policies, and institutional frameworks and plans for disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and low-carbon facilities, food safety, and pests and diseases management. This could include increased investments in public good and integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation for food systems into the Provincial Physical Framework Plans and Comprehensive Land Use Plans.
 - Enhance knowledge management and finance-based forecasting and early warning systems: Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation information systems would be enhanced in terms of monitoring and early warning systems or rapid alert systems of multiple threats. Climate information service also needs to be institutionalized at municipal level and provided to farmers and fisherfolks.

OPERATIONALIZING THE PATHWAY

For the Philippine Department of Agriculture which is mandated to promote agricultural development by providing the policy framework, public investments, and support services needed for domestic and export-oriented business enterprises, this transformation is guided by the OneDA Reform Agenda and Food Security Framework. This reform agenda is anchored on modernization, industrialization, value chain-based consolidation, and professionalization being undertaken through a whole-of-nation and whole-of-government approach. To cover all the elements of the food systems, the current Food Security Framework is being expanded to initiate a

transformational change that will result in a more resilient, inclusive, competitive, and environmentally-sustainable agricultural sector.

Critical Actors for Food Systems Transformation

The pathway towards the Philippine food systems transformation will pursue a good governance perspective that promotes harmonization, alignment, ownership, transparency, and mutual accountability of national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, research and academe, medical groups and practitioners, farmer and fisher groups, and international organizations. This transformation process will require long-term commitments, balancing of risks, rewards, and trade-offs, and management of conflicts, tensions, and political battles, with the government at the helm, and ensures that various government agencies are aligned towards achieving the overall goals. The roles of each sector will further be identified when the plans are finalized, monitoring mechanisms are established, and task forces and committees are set up. The local government units (LGU), for one, will also play major roles in acting as food security czars in their areas, given the Mandanas ruling¹, consequently, the national government will have to invest in supporting the LGUs to perform their tasks. The investment in research for development is highly encouraged and we call for support for global research groups such as the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), which continue to develop technologies relevant to food systems.

Global coalitions and international cooperation also play important roles in building partnerships among member states, and facilitating alliances and technical assistance will further support the operationalization of this pathway while contributing to global goals. The Philippine government is supporting the Coalition of Actions including the Zero Hunger, School Meals, Healthy Diets, Family Farming, Agroecology, and Sustainable Productivity Growth (SPG).

The implementation of this pathway will also largely depend on a country's ability to access and adequately utilize funding for food systems transformation. In this, the role of the private and public sectors and donor agencies are critical.

Follow-through Actions Needed

This Pathway towards a transformed Philippine food system is envisioned to be solidified by well-interpolated budget allocations that are integrated in the Work and Financial Plans of various government agencies and local government units. To ensure that the plans in this Pathway will be enhanced, finalized, institutionalized, and implemented, the following activities need to be carried out:

- Pathway Review and Finalization
- Pathway Institutionalization; Incorporating the Pathway in national plans and institutional documents
- Creation of Food Systems Consortium with committees and subcommittees
- Data Generation, Consolidation, and Analysis (Database Creation and Review of legislations and policies)
- Creation of Program Plan of Action including short-, medium-, and long-term goals, budget support requirements, monitoring frameworks, and sustainability mechanisms
- Creation of Resource Mobilization Plan and Communications and Engagement Plans, Rationalize the investment requirements vis-a-vis available government funds and international community support
- Development of progress tracking, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms
 - Apart from reporting via the Voluntary National Review wherein countries assess and present progress made in achieving the 2030 SDGs, specific indicators are intended to be established and/or integrated in existing M&E and information management systems.
 - This can be done through an M&E Committee under the proposed Food Systems Consortium, which may be managed in collaboration with the existing Inter-Agency Task Force on Food Security.

¹ Supreme Court (SC) decision on the Mandanas case specifies that the just share of LGUs, also known as Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), must be computed based on all national taxes, and not just from National Internal Revenue Taxes (NIRT). This includes other taxes such as those collected by the Bureau of Customs and agencies that are authorized by law to collect NIRT.

Connections between the Pathway and other planning documents

The Philippines food systems pathway must be incorporated in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) which serves as the country's overall development blueprint, as well as in the other existing policies such as the Pilipinas AmBisyon Natin 2040, Export Development Plan (EDP), Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming, Public Investment Program (PIP), National Food Policy, Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN), and other climate change related policies.

Further, this would be reinforced in forthcoming global dialogues such as the COP26, and the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit. In pursuing SDG No. 17, the Philippine Government may highlight the importance of strengthening regional and international cooperation for a robust and meaningful new normal, and the renewal of the ratified agreements. Specifically, the CIRDAP Establishment Agreement under the aegis of the UN FAO in 1979 is a durable instrument requiring a fresh look on its Mission to promote regional cooperation on poverty eradication, agrarian reform, and rural development.

Journey Beyond the Pathway

The Philippines Food Systems Transformation Pathway aims to provide guidance in reviewing and expanding existing policies and plans while remaining aligned with Philippine Development Plan, and being conscious of efforts towards the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

This Pathway requires a high level of governance and cooperation, supported by the country's democratic processes, which manifest the Filipinos' shared humanity. Operationalizing this Pathway requires a multi-level, multi-sector, and multi-disciplinary approach and commitment to expound on the priority areas and strategies enumerated in this document and develop a more comprehensive, integrated, mutually reinforcing, and collaborative national policy and plan of action.

Moreover, with the uncertainty of societal and environmental events, the various programs of action to implement the Pathway would need to be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. There should be room for mindset shifts or behavioral changes as well as resilience building that will allow Filipinos to adapt responsibly and effectively in the event of shocks and disruptions.