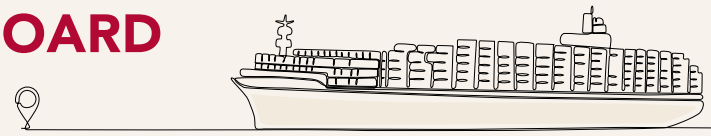
Impact Story 4:

THE FOOD SYSTEMS DASHBOARD



THE OPPORTUNITY

Food systems are complex. They combine all the decisions governments, businesses, agencies, families, and individuals make about food: what, where and how to grow, process, store, transport, market, advertise, prepare and eat. To find data on food systems, policymakers, business leaders and analysts have to look at least 30 different sources. The sources are poorly documented and the data of differential quality, and poorly displayed and visualised.

If the costs of assembling and using such data are high, then food systems decisions are less likely to be evidence based. This inevitably will mean that scarce resources that have alternative uses will be squandered. The world simply does not have the time nor the resources for that to happen as so many food system indicators on hunger, nutrition, climate, biodiversity, jobs and resilience are moving in the wrong direction for people, planet and prosperity.

THE SOLUTION

Supported initially by the Dutch Government and the Rockefeller Foundation[1] and launched in the journal Nature Food in June 2020, GAIN, along with Johns Hopkins University, FAO, CIAT, the University of Michigan and Ag2Nut decided to create a platform that pulled together all the high-quality data available, organise it by food system component and make it easy to analyse, compare and visualise.

Figure 1: About the Food Systems Dashboard (click image to view video).

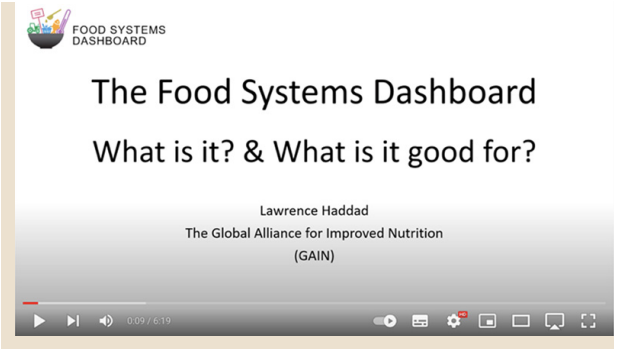


Figure 2: The Food Systems Dashboard: how it could be used by governments and businesses (click on link to view video)

The Food Systems Dashboard was born.

The Dashboard contains over 200 indicators that measure components, drivers, and outcomes of food systems at the country level. As new indicators and data become available, the Dashboard is updated. Most data used for the Dashboard is open source and available to download directly from the website. Data are pooled from FAO, Euromonitor International, World Bank, and other global and regional data sources.

The Dashboard can be used by governments to help understand how, say, they can increase vegetable consumption in Bangladesh, how businesses can decide which countries to invest in because transactions costs of doing business are reasonable and how businesses can decide where to produce and sell healthy snacks for teenagers (see Figure 2 for examples).

1 And subsequently by support from the Making Markets Work programme which was funded by BMZ, IDRC, Irish Aid, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and SDC

THE IMPACT

It is too early to map direct impact of the tool which feeds into new planning, but evidence of take up and early use is strong:

- In September 2020, **Winsight Grocery Business**, the premiere source of information, ideation and inspiration for retail decision-makers in the US says "The Food Systems Dashboard is Remarkable"
- In 2020, the winner of the first place of the Food Systems User Prize, Ramya Ambikapathi at Purdue University used the Dashboard to analyse food security and stability indicators in countries affected by inter- and intra-annual shifts in climate and weather, more specifically identify how countries can focus on decision-making around food access during re-occurring climate shocks.
- In 2020, **Harvest Plus**, another winner of the Food Systems Dashboard User Prize, reported that the Dashboard has been instrumental in understanding biofortification's potential in nourishing and sustaining agri-food systems and to support the development of their Sahel strategy, as it provides solid data on the primary value chain nodes as well as the current nutrition security/policy status.
- In 2020, two of the winners of the Food Systems User Prize were using the Dashboard to teach children about food. In Nigeria Jayne Arinze-Egemonye of the Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network in Nigeria was using it to **write an illustrated book for African children**, and in Iowa the Dashboard was being used Riley Wilgenbusch, Iowa State University **to teach elementary school children** (ages 6-8) in Story City, Iowa, and around the world, about food.
- In 2021, the **Food Systems Countdown Initiative**, based on the Dashboard, emerges from the UN Food Systems Summit to track food systems performance on an annual basis.[2]
- In 2021, Emily Ma, Head, Food for Good at **Google** says "The Food Systems Dashboard has quickly established itself as a premier source of high quality, easily accessible macro-level food systems data and insights. It represents a vision of what is possible with information, and I see its potential to become an indispensable tool for stakeholders to make better decisions that will lead to more sustainable and nourishing food systems."
- In 2021, the Dashboard was identified as a useful resource to prepare for the **UN FSS Member State Dialogues** and used to inform the National Food Systems Dialogues in Ethiopia and the development of national pathways in Ireland.
- In 2022, **6 Country Dashboards** (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria) are funded to provide subnational food systems data for the first time. More are in the pipeline (Ethiopia and India).
- In 2022, **Tufts University** researchers assess 13 different food and nutrition platforms. The Food System Dashboard is ranked number 1.[3]
- In 2022, the AGRF, "the world's premier forum for advancing Africa's agricultural agenda" invited the Dashboard team to work with them to prepare a food systems scorecard for Africa for the September meetings.

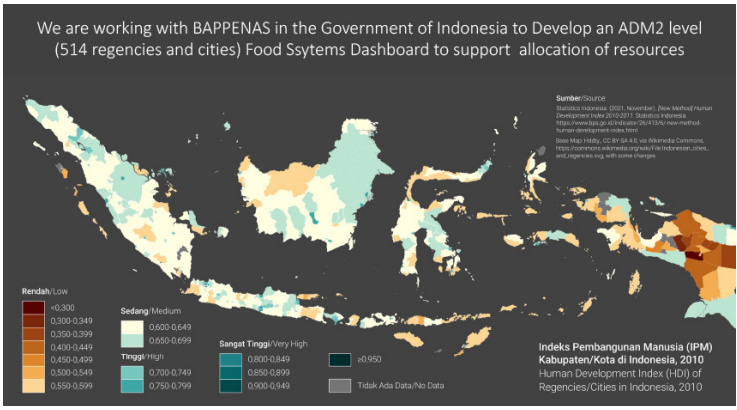


Figure 3: A Food Systems Dashboard for Indonesia is being developed at this level of disaggregation

1 Difference in Difference compares the changes in outcomes (e.g. anaemia rates) over time between a population enrolled in a program (the intervention factories) and a population that is not (the comparison factories).

2 Fanzo, Jessica, Lawrence Haddad, Kate R. Schneider, Christophe Béné, Namukolo M. Covic, Alejandro Guarin, Anna W. Herforth et al. "Rigorous monitoring is necessary to guide food system transformation in the countdown to the 2030 global goals." Food Policy 104 (2021): 102163

3 Zhou, Bingjie, et al. "Food and Nutrition Systems Dashboards: A Systematic Review." Advances in Nutrition (2022).

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
Rue de Varembé, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland
T: +41 22 749 18 50 E: info@gainhealth.org
www.gainhealth.org

GAIN@20 Better Nutrition for All