Feed the Future Learning Agenda

Purpose: Through the Feed the Future Learning Agenda, we seek to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Feed the Future initiative, in the short and long term, by generating, synthesizing, and communicating evidence related to key questions. Evidence from the Learning Agenda will inform the design of Feed the Future-related strategies, programs, projects, and activities. We will share the evidence generated from the Learning Agenda with other international development actors—such as donors, implementers, governments, the private sector and beneficiaries—to inform their work. The Learning Agenda will also serve to address requirements laid out in the Global Food Security Act (Section 8 (a) 14) on sharing lessons learned from implementing the Feed the Future initiative and Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Section 312. Agency evidence-building plan).

Background: The Office of Management and Budget defines a learning agenda as a set of broad questions directly related to the work that an agency conducts. A learning agenda prioritizes and establishes a plan to answer short- and long-term questions across relevant program and policy areas. Answering these questions enables an agency to work more effectively and efficiently through better decision-making. The Feed the Future Learning Agenda is a set of strategic questions for which we intend to produce evidence, findings, and answers that we can apply to decision-making.

In 2012, we released the first Feed the Future Learning Agenda, which covered six themes:

1. Improved Agricultural Productivity
2. Improved Research and Development
3. Expanded Markets, Value Chains, and Increased Investment
4. Improved Nutrition and Dietary Quality
5. Improved Gender Integration and Women's Empowerment
6. Improved Resilience of Vulnerable Populations

The questions under these themes sought to determine which interventions had the greatest impact and were most cost effective in a given context, as well as what combination and/or sequence of interventions could best impact Feed the Future objectives. Each theme had a literature review and annotated bibliography to outline the state of knowledge at the time.

The Synthesis of Evaluations Related to the Feed the Future Learning Agenda (2016) used the Learning Agenda as a framework to summarize findings from 196 performance and impact evaluations from across the initiative. Based on findings from this report, we identified six common traits of successful Feed the Future projects. These traits point to encouraging, emerging trends in best practices in food security development programs. The traits include:

1. **Community** – results improve when programs involve trusted and transparent community organizations
2. **Empowerment** – when programs enable people to take ownership of their own advancement, they produce better results
3. **Time** – Large-scale impact in reducing poverty and hunger requires long-term effort, including investing in research and development
4. **Access** – Increasing agricultural productivity often hinges on farmers' access to markets and farm inputs like seeds
5. **Assets** – access to assets, from land to income, is critical to women's economic and social empowerment as well as the health and welfare of families and communities
6. **Training** – integrated as part of a project, quality training leads to success and lasting change

These higher level findings and their associated, more granular evidence fed into the development of the Global Food Security Strategy, which guides current Feed the Future efforts.

Vision: The second Learning Agenda will serve as the key Feed the Future platform for continuous learning across the initiative by allowing systematic organization of generated evidence. Developed through an iterative consultative process with stakeholders inside and outside of the U.S. Government, the Learning Agenda consists of questions in key areas for which the Feed the Future initiative intends to disseminate existing data, generate new evidence, and produce recommendations on how to improve design and implementation of interventions. Under this Learning Agenda, we will draw data, information, and knowledge from a wide array of sources that include research, monitoring data, and other analyses, in addition to performance and impact evaluations. This Learning Agenda will use and build on the evidence coming from other learning investments and learning agendas, such as the extensive research around water, sanitation, and hygiene efforts. These cross-sector collaborations will help to further strengthen and enhance the Feed the Future Learning Agenda. The Learning Agenda questions can serve as a framework for discussions with partners inside and outside the Feed the Future initiative.

The Global Food Security Research Strategy outlines the research investments that bring U.S. scientific ingenuity to bear on the greatest challenges presented by global food security. The investments outlined by the strategy will help also to generate evidence for answering Learning Agenda questions. The Research Strategy frames research programming in terms of a Research and Development pipeline, in which new technologies advance through phases of basic, applied, and adaptive research before being transferred to technology-scaling partners for dissemination and, ultimately, widespread adoption by developing country beneficiaries. Where it makes sense and funding is available, we will use the expertise of our existing research partners and activities to address questions. Research generates scalable products and practices that advance productivity and nutrition and mitigate risk in Feed the Future partner countries. Additionally, research increases understanding about how human behavior, the development context, and the enabling environment influence progress of food-insecure households, communities, and countries toward improved food security outcomes. In sync with the intent of the Learning Agenda, such knowledge is critical to guide the prioritization, design, and implementation of Feed the Future programming.

Goal: Ultimately, we want evidence from the Learning Agenda to help drive transformational change that helps the countries with which we work along their journey to self-reliance. Transformational change requires many components, and perspectives on what works best vary. Here, answering the questions of the Learning Agenda will help to address the broader question of "What interventions do we invest in, and to what extent, to create transformational change?"

Doing the Work: Since the Learning Agenda will use a variety of data sources and analysis methods to discover evidence, we will have flexibility in how we address identified questions. The Learning Agenda reflects work and research being carried out under the Feed the Future initiative. The analytical outputs from existing mechanisms and activities will feed into the process of finding answers to the Learning Agenda questions. The Learning Agenda will also serve as a guide for potential questions to include in impact and performance evaluations or other analyses that are conducted under Feed the Future.

We also recognize that many others outside of Feed the Future—including other donors, host country governments, academia, and the private sector—will generate evidence and knowledge that will move us closer to answering these questions. We will seek to collaborate and coordinate with others interested in participating in the Feed the Future Learning Agenda, which can serve as a point of discussion between parties when considering joint research activities.

Learning: Learning represents a core piece of the Feed the Future initiative. Through the "Synthesis of Evaluations Related to the Feed the Future Learning Agenda," we examined the findings of 196 evaluations, both impact and performance, completed during the first phase of Feed the Future. The findings from that report informed both the [Feed the Future Global Performance Evaluation](#) and [Global Food Security Strategy](#). With the next phase of Feed the Future and the updated Learning Agenda, we will continue to look for opportunities to put the knowledge we generate into practice. We will work to curate and disseminate knowledge generated under each Learning Agenda area so that anyone working on Feed the Future projects or in similar areas has the opportunity to benefit from the evidence. Depending on audience and need, we will employ different methods of knowledge delivery such as workshops, webinars, online forums, and others to make sure that those needs get met. The findings from the Learning Agenda questions will have application at all levels of the Feed the Future initiative to enhance decision-making and programming.

Learning Agenda Areas: The process of selecting and developing the eight Learning Agenda areas has taken an iterative approach. This has included working with technical experts inside USAID, getting feedback from U.S. Government Inter-agency partners and the public, reviewing questions from other sources such as USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategies, and discussing the current gaps in evidence with external partners. The areas selected through this process demonstrate continuity between the current Learning Agenda and the first phase of the Learning Agenda. At the same time, these areas elevate previously underrepresented questions that focus on gender and youth. The new Learning Agenda also contains more specific and intentional questions around technology adoption and risk and resilience.

The below eight chosen areas align with the Global Food Security Strategy Results Framework:

1. [Gender and Women's Empowerment](#)
2. [Market Systems](#)
3. [Nutrition](#)
4. [Policy Systems](#)
5. [Risk and Resilience](#)
6. [Scaling of Technologies and Practices](#)
7. [Water](#)
8. [Youth](#)

Each is outlined in more detail in an overview document below.

Gender and Women's Empowerment

Institutional Relevance: What is the importance of the identified area/topic to the Feed the Future initiative? How does it contribute to the accomplishment of the goals/objectives of the initiative?

The learning agenda questions for gender focus on two strategic themes emerging from the data and evidence collected by Feed the Future thus far, and that can leverage ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning. The themes do not represent the breadth of learning needs relevant to gender in the GFSS but instead focus attention on strategic issues that are relevant to a broad set of Feed the Future stakeholders and for which there exists a base of data and programmatic information. The iterative nature of Feed the Future Learning Agenda allows for opportunities to deepen understanding of these issues and to refine or move on from the questions as needed.

Evidence from the questions will shape technology development and agricultural programming to be more inclusive and more effective by (1) influencing what technologies and practices are developed and promoted and how they are scaled, and (2) identifying high-impact levers for increasing women's empowerment.

Feed the Future has made and will continue to make substantial investments in the developing and promoting the use of improved technology and practices throughout agricultural and food systems. Among Feed the Future participants, women are still applying agricultural technologies at a lower rate than men, despite near gender-parity in training and more women applying improved technologies and practices overall. Increasing application of agricultural technologies and improved practices, especially among women, is essential for reaching sustainable agricultural-led growth and to closing persistent gender gaps in access to resources.

More women are empowered in areas where Feed the Future works. Research and theory both indicate that women's empowerment should foster improved food security and nutrition outcomes. Emerging evidence suggests that women's empowerment is a source of household resilience against shocks. Programming that improves women's empowerment can enhance productivity and create more sustainable and equitable institutions and resource management, all of which are critical for countries' and communities' self-reliance. Among Feed the Future participants, the learning questions will (1) identify both structural factors and programmatic approaches that support women's empowerment so that they can be appropriately applied throughout programming, and (2) fortify evidence of how women's empowerment builds resilience and improves nutrition.

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

If women increasingly apply relevant improved technologies and practices, then:

- Women, households, and economies can have greater agricultural productivity and earnings
- Women's empowerment can increase through avenues such as access to resources, earnings, better workloads, and greater participation and leadership
- Agriculture and food systems can be more sustainable and resilient.

Improvements in women's empowerment among Feed the Future participants will both directly

contribute to improved nutrition and strengthened resilience and also indirectly amplify programs' effectiveness.

Learning Questions:

1. What factors substantially contribute to the gender gap in the application of agricultural technologies and practices? What are the most effective approaches and interventions that result in improved women's application of agricultural technologies and practices? What are the leverage points and tipping points at which approaches and activities will have lasting (over time) and far-reaching (over space) impacts for women in our target populations?

2. What effects does the application of agricultural technologies and practices have on women's and men's productivity and profit, time allocation and workload, participation in higher value activities, decision-making roles, and other relevant aspects of empowerment?

3. To what extent and through what pathways do women's application and men's application of agricultural technologies affect individuals' and households' nutrition behaviors and outcomes and resilience capacities?

4. What underlying factors, policy, and/or programmatic drivers are leverage points for women's empowerment as measured by the domains and indicators in the WEAI? What are the most effective programmatic approaches to catalyze lasting improvements in those factors/drivers?

5. How have changes in women's empowerment, as measured by the domains and indicators in the WEAI, strengthened household and community resilience and translated into food security and nutrition outcomes? How can Feed the Future effectively address gender-related challenges to improving nutrition?

Market Systems

Central to achieving agriculture-led growth is the existence of a competitive, inclusive, and resilient market. Without a dynamic agriculture and food market space that engages a variety of actors, sustainable poverty reduction cannot be realized. The agriculture and food market system is also foundational in achieving nutrition and resilience objectives, by providing consistent availability and access to goods and services to all. Achieving our goals through a market systems approach will maximize our impacts, creating sustainable solutions to challenges that are embedded in the local context. This approach evolved from the value chain approach, used extensively in Feed the Future phase one and based on learning that narrow focus can miss opportunities for durable systemic changes by ignoring cross-market functions and the broader enabling environment. Continued learning on this approach through Feed the Future phase two will promote efficiency and greater effectiveness of our investments.

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

Agriculture and food market systems are complex and dynamic. Through a facilitative approach, projects and activities addressing the underlying causes of poor market performance that matter to people living in poverty will create lasting impact through systemic change, leading to inclusive, resilient economic growth and sustainable poverty reduction and food security.

Inclusive market system development focuses on developing product-to-market systems by increasing incentives in the agriculture and food market system to achieve desired outcomes. The approach focuses on stimulating a change in behavior of market players – public and private, formal and informal – so that they are better able and motivated to perform important market functions effectively. It requires that donors and implementing partners play a facilitating role. As external agents, they seek to catalyze others within the market system while not becoming part of it themselves, thereby creating sustainable change embedded in the capacity of the local system. Impacts, then, reach further through indirect touch points and are multiplied in the local economy.

Learning Questions:

1. What methods, tools, or indicators work well to measure market system change and are cost effective in different country operating environments?

    a. How do we measure the resilience of a market system to shocks and stresses?
    b. How do we calculate multiplier effects of market system strengthening investments?

2. How can donors, governments, and other public sector actors most effectively facilitate private sector investment in ways that reduce poverty, hunger, and malnutrition?

3. Which cross-market functions (e.g., extension services, input suppliers) are key for strengthening market systems? In what context?

4. Which market systems development interventions have the largest positive impact on the poor? How are women, youth, and traditionally marginalized groups affected? Are there unintended negative (absolute or relative) impacts on these groups?

5. How does responding to urban and international demand impact availability and purchase of diverse nutritious foods in rural markets? How does this vary across wealth quintiles among rural consumers?

6. How does stability/strength in a market system affect household resilience? Do more resilient markets buffer shocks for households so that they are less impacted?

7. To what extent does smallholder access to input and output markets continue to grow and adapt after the intervention?

Nutrition

Nutrition is central to sustainable development and is required to make progress on issues such as health, education, employment, poverty, inequality, and girls' and women's empowerment. At the same time, a variety of multi-sectoral development issues contribute to poor nutrition. Available, affordable, safe, and nutritious food is essential to meeting food security and nutrition challenges.

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

Development programs that introduce/improve the following factors within a community will lower disease burden and increase the number of well-nourished individuals (with a focus on women and children in the 1,000 days period) within that community and at the population level:

- Access, availability, and utilization of nutritious and safe diets year-round (for example, through nutrition-sensitive agriculture programming)
- Direct, nutrition-specific interventions and services
- More hygienic household and community environments
- Women's empowerment

Other nutrition-sensitive interventions can provide further contributions toward sustainably achieving health and nutrition outcomes.

Learning Questions:

How can the U.S. government most effectively support the reduction of undernutrition and support a well-nourished population by addressing immediate and underlying determinants of stunting, wasting, and serious micronutrient deficiencies?

1. What are the most efficient ways to identify the determinants of stunting within the contexts where we work?

2. Which nutrition-sensitive interventions, especially in market systems and value chains, most effectively increase access to, availability of, and utilization of nutritious and safe diets year-round?

    a. What are the most effective means to drive individual, household, and community consumption of high-quality nutritious and safe diets from Feed the Future market systems and value chain investments?
    b. How does food market penetration and presence affect household access to and affordability of nutritious and safe foods?

3. What are the best ways to identify, deliver, and scale up proven nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions? How do they interrelate? Consider both public and private sector channels, as well as policy and diplomacy efforts.

a. What are the leverage points, thresholds, and/or tipping points at which programs and activities will have lasting and far-reaching (over space) impacts?

4. In places in which we anticipated better nutrition outcomes in Feed the Future Phase I (those achieving substantial progress in reducing poverty), what were the reasons for the sub-optimal nutrition outcomes?

5. How can we achieve greater programming efficiency and effectiveness to accelerate the reduction of wasting and stunting in all contexts by jointly addressing both manifestations of undernutrition?

6. How can development approaches further support and sustain reductions in wasting achieved through treatment services?

Policy Systems

Institutional Relevance: What is the importance of the identified area/topic to the Feed the Future initiative? How does it contribute to the accomplishment of the goals/objectives of the initiative?

Effective governance, policies, and institutions catalyze and accelerate the food and agricultural systems transformation required to reach our goal of sustainably reducing global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. They are crucial in ensuring countries invest strategically in their own development, improving the private sector enabling environment and building evidence-based participatory processes that will advance inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led growth, resilience, and nutrition.

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

If we effectively support partner countries in the development of:

- a prioritized policy agenda of key actions needed to drive inclusive agriculture-led growth, strengthen resilience, and improve nutrition that are informed by evidence and committed to by partner country governments
- institutional architecture for predictable, transparent, inclusive, and evidence-based policy formulation and implementation
- mutual accountability through a transparent, inclusive, and continual process of managing for development results, with local stakeholders supporting this process,

then we expect countries to achieve strengthened governance, policy, and institutions that further advance food security gains.

Learning Questions:

1. Theory of change: What is the emerging evidence on the relationship between policy systems (defined as policy agendas, institutions, relationships, and processes) and food security?

2. Promising policies: What is the emerging evidence on policies that promote agricultural transformation? What are the implications of this emerging evidence for our programming? How do we influence change at scale through programs and activities that lead to paradigmatic change in policy systems including the institutional architecture and mutual accountability subsystems? What are the leverage points, thresholds, and tipping points at which programs and activities will have lasting (over time) and far-reaching (over space and across marginalized populations) impacts that go beyond the program cycle and the geographic area and people directly targeted by our programs and activities?

3. Effective programming: What are effective programming approaches to generate improved policy and thereby strengthen policy systems to accelerate improvements in food security? What is the evidence that analysis drives policy decision-making?

4. Measuring progress: What are effective approaches to measuring gains that lead to good policy outcomes? What country-level policy indicators may signal that a country has food policy systems in place that enable the country to transition from relying on U.S. foreign assistance for food security?

Risk and Resilience

Institutional Relevance: What is the importance of the identified area/topic to the Feed the Future initiative? How does it contribute to the accomplishment of the goals/objectives of the initiative?

Resilience among people and systems is an essential condition for achieving our goal to sustainably reduce global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty as well as to reduce chronic vulnerabilities and reliance upon humanitarian assistance, including in fragile contexts. It protects progress on reducing hunger, poverty, and malnutrition in the face of shocks and stresses and helps partners and beneficiaries adapt to changing conditions.

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

In order to build resilience, several context- and shock-dependent resilience capacities need to be strengthened at the individual, household, community, national, and systems levels. This includes special consideration of investments in fragile contexts where bolstering resilience capacities and food security may also contribute to reducing sources of grievance and strengthening social patterns of resilience (including in contexts affected by violent extremist threats) when designed as a complement to programming that directly addresses conflict through focused efforts around conflict prevention, mitigation, and management. If resilience capacities are successfully strengthened and maintained, then people will be able to better protect critical assets that contribute to food security. Populations will sustainably escape poverty and vulnerability and will be well-nourished—even in the face of recurrent shocks and stresses.

Learning Questions:

1. What sources of resilience (at various levels) explain why some households, communities, and systems subject to recurrent shocks and stresses are able to manage these events without compromising current and/or future well-being, while less-resilient households, communities, and systems are not?

    a. How can these identified sources of resilience be strengthened and possibly expanded or replicated, particularly drawing from experience where recurrent shocks have otherwise resulted in repeat, large-scale humanitarian emergencies?

2. What role does inclusive, agriculture-led growth play in strengthening the resilience of households, communities, and market systems in the face of recurrent shocks and stresses? How can these contribution be leveraged, strengthened, and expanded to prevent or respond to humanitarian emergencies?

3. What individual, household, community, and systems-level resilience capacities are important for enabling poverty escapes in different contexts and what risks pose the greatest threats to sustaining these escapes over time?

4. How can these sources of resilience be strengthened and expanded to improve and maintain development outcomes of interest in the face of recurrent shocks and stresses?

5. In conflict-affected and fragile contexts (including areas affected by violent extremism), what are the key features of resilience and food-security focused policy and program design and implementation that foster conflict-sensitive and sustainable outcomes? (e.g., a focus on the "how")

6. In what ways have investments in building resilience capacities also contributed to preventing or managing conflict and reducing fragility, and why? Additionally, in what ways have investments in peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms contributed to improved resilience and food security outcomes, and why? (e.g., a focus on the "what")

7. How do we influence the enabling environment for systemic change at scale through resilience programs and activities? What are the leverage points, thresholds, and tipping points at which these programs and activities will have lasting and far-reaching impacts on improving well-being that go beyond those directly targeted by our investments?

Scaling for Widespread Adoption of Improved Technologies and Practices through Sustainable Delivery Pathways

Institutional Relevance: What is the importance of the identified area/topic to the Feed the Future initiative? How does it contribute to the accomplishment of the goals/objectives of the initiative?

Achieving the Feed the Future objectives of inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led growth, strengthened resilience, and improved nutrition at a population level requires a suite of efforts related to scaling. These efforts include effectively leveraging and partnering, supporting the multiplier effect (i.e., increases in the flow of income within the broader economy), and increasing momentum and motivation for a shared goal. In addition, an interrelated need exists to facilitate sustainable access to improved technologies and practices that are attractive to potential adopters and can achieve widespread adoption.

Given the role that adoption of improved technologies and practices plays in achieving GFSS Intermediary Results (see Table 1 for examples [1]), combined with the level of USG R&D investments in generating improved technologies and practices, the learning agenda questions in this section intentionally focus on scaling the adoption of improved technologies and practices through sustainable pathways.

Here we define scaling for widespread adoption of improved technologies and practices as the process of sustainably increasing the adoption of a credible technology or practice (or a package of technologies and practices) with quality, to retain or improve upon the demonstrated positive impact of the technology or practice and achieve widespread use by stakeholders. Sustainable delivery pathways are key for the process. Sustainable delivery pathways are the means through which technologies and information are made available for consideration by adopters, are composed of a diversity of actors, and may reflect private, public, or private-public partnerships. Widespread adoption means adoption by a high percentage of potential adopters (e.g., if the relevant target group is small, widespread adoption could be high even if the absolute number of adopters is low.)

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

If relevant actors collectively:

- assess and identify technologies/practices (including packages of technologies and practices) likely to have net positive and compelling impacts for inclusive development, including gender empowerment,
- further assess those technologies/practices to identify those likely to achieve widespread adoption through sustainable delivery pathways,
- facilitate a stronger enabling environment by relieving constraining factors and bolstering supportive factors related to delivery and adoption; and
- develop capacity, strengthen feedback, and demonstrate value among actors, starting in the R&D phase,

then widespread adoption of relevant and appropriate technologies/practices will be achieved to advance Feed the Future objectives and support country-led strategies.

1. What implementation models and interventions best support achieving widespread adoption of improved technologies and/or practices through private, public, or private-public partnership pathways?

   a. For improved technologies/practices projected to have the greatest potential impact on Feed the Future objectives, what is the tipping point range (i.e., the percent of potential adopters after which rate of adoption increases exponentially [1]), and what factors (e.g., rate of communication, purchasing power) have the strongest impact on decreasing time to reach the tipping point range?

   b. What are the optimal roles of USG agencies and their partners in promoting widespread adoption of improved technologies and/or practices? Conversely, what potential actions should be avoided?

2. What are the most effective methods for monitoring widespread adoption of an improved technology and/or practice? What indicators and metrics are most important for monitoring performance in consideration of the types of goods (technologies and services), types of pathways, the enabling environmental factors, and target population characteristics?

   a. How do we develop an estimate of the temporal and spatial pattern of diffusion of an improved technology and/or practice? What methods are required to develop an accurate estimate of diffusion and create evidence-based targets?

3. What are the most effective approaches for accelerating uptake of research efforts by private, public, or private-public partnership pathways? How should such findings be integrated into work plans by Feed the Future research partners?

[1] Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Technical Guidance on Scaling for Widespread Adoption of Improved Technologies and Practices https://www.agrilinks.org/post/guidance-and-tools-global-food-security-programs

Water

Institutional Relevance: What is the importance of the identified area/topic to the Feed the Future initiative? How does it contribute to the accomplishment of the goals/objectives of the initiative?

The sustainability of food security investments depends on environmentally-sound and sustainable management of production systems which include water management. Water is an agricultural input and is necessary for human health. Water has multiple functions (irrigation, livestock watering, human consumption, industry, environment, etc.). In many contexts, irrigation accounts for large demands on water resources and can directly impact the timing, amount, and quality of water availability. Water resources have the potential to become a conflict issue and may impact food security and resilience. Agricultural water management prioritization and coordination between different uses will become more important, given climate variations and projected decreases in overall and per capita water availability. Additionally, improved access to adequate amounts of clean and safe drinking water, food, and sanitation services, along with overall hygiene practices, is critical to improving nutritional status and child health.

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

If Feed the Future focuses on the following theories, then target zones will see an improved stewardship of water resources, leading to increased economic growth, improved wellbeing and resilience of communities:

- If we promote equitable policies and implement sound agriculture water management (including technologies, services, and practices), we will achieve sustainable agricultural productivity, improve resilience, enhance nutrition outcomes, and reduce negative impacts.
- If we promote collaboration and coordination among water stakeholders, if we build their capacities to avoid conflicts and peacefully manage unavoidable ones, and if we promote multiple use systems where appropriate, communities will be able to manage water resources efficiently, effectively, and equitably.
- If we target water (quality and quantity), sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), as well as animal husbandry and horticulture to improve access, efficiencies, and behaviors, we will simultaneously improve economic, health, and nutritional outcomes among beneficiaries.

Learning Questions:

How can agriculture water management, water supply, sanitation, and hygiene technologies and practices be best leveraged to achieve sustainable growth, resilience, and improved nutritional outcomes? What are the leverage points, thresholds, and tipping points at which programs and activities with agricultural water management interventions will have lasting (over time) and far-reaching (over space) impacts?

1. What are the best ways to increase agricultural productivity and improve resilience and simultaneously support sustainable and equitable water management?

2. What are the key lessons from engagement with market systems that could be applied to help to ensure the successful adoption and sustainability of agricultural water management technologies?

3. What conditions and capacities support multiple use water systems in a safe and sustainable way (both economically and ecologically) as well as increase collaboration among diverse water users?

4. What are the effects of different WASH interventions (type of intervention, context, and scale) on stunting and other nutrition indicators, including on the resilience of these well-being outcomes in the face of shocks and stresses?

Youth

Institutional Relevance: What is the importance of the identified area/topic to the Feed the Future initiative? How does it contribute to the accomplishment of the goals/objectives of the initiative?

Youth in developing countries play a critical role in achieving the overarching GFSS goal of sustainably reducing global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. The working-age, rural population in Feed the Future target countries is young, and we need to harness their creative energy. Most youth in Feed the Future target countries live in rural areas and will be making a transition from economic dependence on their parents to an independent livelihood, many within the agri-food system. Like adults, youth in rural areas face challenges related to access to resources and technology, underdeveloped market systems, and coping and mitigation mechanisms for negative shocks. They may also struggle with participation in rural economies, owing to a lack of productive assets, savings, access to credit or land, and/or empowerment, and young women may be disproportionately affected by these factors. Further, youth may lack important technical or life skills that hinder their full participation in agri-food systems. Feed the Future program implementation aims to: (1) help youth *transition* into economic independence, and (2) *empower* youth to participate in local activities designed to achieve Feed the Future goals. Research on how well previous programming achieved youth specific goals is limited because youth participation was not tracked.

Development Hypotheses/Theories of Change: What is the hypothesis or theory of change tied to this LA area/topic?

Feed the Future programming can support youth with their transition to economic empowerment and independence, improving their economic future through increased incomes, resilience, and improved nutrition. If we:

- Engage youth in Feed the Future activities, helping them build skills and networks, connect with mentors, access resources, and overcome certain youth-specific and broader social and cultural barriers, youth will be better prepared to productively engage in and earn livelihoods from diverse areas of agri-food systems as they transition to economic independence, which will positively contribute to GFSS outcomes of improved agriculture-led economic growth, resilience, and better nutrition.
- Identify new opportunities that attract or facilitate increased capital investment, on- or off-farm, job opportunities in which youth are especially suited (agricultural service provision, input and output markets, transport, and marketing) will be more plentiful, leading to progress in achieving GFSS outcomes.

Learning Agenda Questions:

1. What are the key youth-specific opportunities and constraints to engaging in agri-food systems?

   a. Do those differ by gender, socio-cultural, and enabling environment factors [1]?
   b. What economic opportunities in agri-food systems are most effective at attracting youth?

2. What programmatic approaches work to overcome youth-specific constraints so that youth can productively participate in agri-food systems?

   a. When Feed the Future programs succeed, do youth share proportionately in this success? Why?

b. How can such programs be scaled? What are the leverage points, thresholds, and tipping points at which programs and activities will have lasting (over time) and far-reaching (over space) impacts for youth?

3. Which areas of agri-food systems are best suited to engage youth, and how can Feed the Future support youth to participate?

4. How can Feed the Future collaborate with other key actors (e.g. health, education, democracy and governance, private sector, etc.) to best support and empower youth?

[1] Including, but not limited to: youth age cohort, food security and/or nutritional status, ethnicity, religion, poverty, social support network, sexual orientation and gender identity, access to health and other services, education level, technical and non-cognitive skills, climate events or other shocks, areas of high violence or conflict, political enabling environment, supply chain challenges, legal structures and land tenures, economic geography, cropping system, knowledge of and access to technology, etc.