

Nestlé's Farmer Family Nutrition initiative

December 2021

Nestlé's Farmer Family Nutrition (FFN) initiative aims to improve the lives and wellbeing of smallholder farmers' families by increasing food availability and diet diversity among communities, including smallholder farmers, in Nestlé's priority sourcing locations. It does this by, for example, improving nutrition at household level with nutrition education programs, helping farmers to set up their own kitchen gardens, and providing entrepreneurial training to sell surpluses if available.



Scope

FFN has been piloted in five countries. The beneficiaries are coffee farmers in Kenya, Mexico, and the Philippines, cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire and cocoa and dairy farmers in Indonesia. This case study focuses on the program in Kenya. Nestlé works with local partner NGOs and companies (such as Coffee Management Services and Simlaw Seeds) to deliver appropriately tailored assistance.



Motivation

As delivering good nutrition is core to Nestlé's purpose, the company understood the need for and significance of acting on nutrition in the supply chain without the need for a formal business case. However, the company also recognises that a stable, long-term supply chain requires healthy farmers and communities, and improving their diets is an important contribution to achieving that.



Timeline

Initial research in priority countries took place in 2016, and the Farmer Family Nutrition pilot was launched in 2017. The activities were meant to run until 2020 but have been extended into 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Impact

Preliminary results from 2017 to 2020 indicate successes, including high numbers of farmers who have received nutrition education, lower rates of food insecurity, increased rates of households with kitchen gardens, and increased dietary diversity. The company is currently finishing collecting results on the pilots and will make decisions for scaling up accordingly.



Motivation

There was no need for Nestlé to make a business case to convince leadership to invest in workforce nutrition: as a nutrition company, Nestlé has both the responsibility and the expertise to take action on workforce nutrition in supply chains. Therefore, when the company understood that farmers in the supply chain were facing nutrition challenges, it was self-evident that the company would work to solve these issues. Nestlé also considers the success of its business as being reliant on the successes of these rural communities, and thus shares an interest in their development.

In 2015, Nestlé published its Rural Development Framework, which provided insights to guide its approach. The analysis in the framework identified significant shortfalls in nutrition among the smallholder farmers in its supply chains in many countries, undermining the wellbeing and resilience of the farmers, their families, and communities. In particular, the Framework identified significant seasonal variation in access to good nutrition, with up to **70% of farmers spending up to three months of the year without sufficient food**, prior to harvest time. Diets also often lack diversity, supplying insufficient protein, dairy, fruit and vegetables.

The project

Farmer Family Nutrition (FFN) is currently active in five countries. The beneficiaries are coffee farmers in Kenya, Mexico, and the Philippines, cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, and cocoa and dairy farmers in Indonesia. This case study focuses on the FFN for coffee farmers in Kenya. The FFN is part of a broader initiative, FOSEK (Food Security through Improved Resilience of Smallholder Coffee Farmers in Ethiopia and Kenya), led by [Solidaridad](#)¹, a project that aims to make farming attractive and provide decent livelihoods.

The FFN looks specifically at **improving nutrition at household level**, initially talking to community leaders to gather information on access to and availability of food and then implementing a series of practical initiatives:

- The first step was a **nutrition education program**, through which it rapidly became clear that there were significant gaps in families' knowledge of nutrition. Information was provided on a balanced diet and on how to cook vegetables and other foods. For example, fish was unfamiliar and unpopular, but

About Nestlé



Nestlé, a Swiss multinational food and drink manufacturer, is the world's largest food & beverage company. The company has around 270,000 employees and 376 factories in 81 countries, and its 2020 sales revenue was around 84 billion CHF.

learning about cooking helped to overcome this barrier. FFN also worked with market vendors as conduits for information, and also developed posters containing guidance on nutrition.

- The nutrition education program was combined with lessons on **how to grow a kitchen garden to grow food for family consumption** and provision of a planting calendar. Many of the farmers had small plots of land that could be converted into kitchen gardens. Nestlé worked with [Simlaw Seeds](#)² to identify and provide seeds that are appropriate to begin a garden. The seeds chosen included many indigenous vegetables, such as amaranth, that were formerly part of a traditional Kenyan diet and would have been familiar to older generations but have gotten lost in transitioning to recent diets.
- Some families established kitchen gardens so successfully that they produced more than they needed for their own family. **Entrepreneurship training** was provided to those families on how to access a market for their surplus produce and assistance was given on connecting farmers to local markets. Through self-provision of vegetables and potentially selling surplus, the extra income appeared to have enabled the purchase of more diverse and nutritious foods, such as eggs and meat.

Impact

The Kenya FFN was monitored and evaluated by [Rural Outreach Africa](#) with the following outcomes:

- In the period 2017 to 2020, 657 farmers have been trained in **basic nutrition and management of kitchen gardens**, and 535 have been trained in cooking healthy meals.

¹ Solidaridad is an international civil society organization that aims to develop socially and ecologically sustainable supply chains where farmers and workers earn a living income, shape their own future, and produce in balance with nature.

² Simlaw Seed Company Limited is a subsidiary of Kenya Seed Company, a vegetable seed marketing company producing, processing and marketing horticultural seeds in Kenya and the Eastern Africa region.



- The **proportion of households with inadequate food for three months of the year fell** from 57% to 40% from baseline.
- The proportion of **households with a kitchen garden increased** from 52% to 87%, with over 90% welcoming the training on kitchen gardens as being useful. More than three-quarters of the farmers are now able to meet their vegetable needs from their own gardens.
- **Dietary diversity improved:** fish consumption rose from just 1% of households to 15%, meat from 22% to 43%, legumes from 62% to 89%, and eggs from 10% to 58%.

initiatives because of concerns that by trying to solve one health challenge (poor nutrition) another health concern (COVID-19) could inadvertently be exacerbated.

- Many **challenges turned out to be practical or logistical**. For example, cooking classes were often held in schools and could therefore be held only on weekends, reducing the willingness of farmers to attend. Additionally, equipment had to be transported to these (sometimes remote) locations on suboptimal roads.
- An important positive knock-on effect mentioned by Nestlé was **working with local partners** such as [Coffee Management Services](#), as a way of capacity building. This gives room for these local partners to take the learnings beyond Nestlé to other partners, shaping potential for future projects and sustainability of the current one.

Challenges and lessons learned

- **Gender roles can cause difficulties** in some communities. Although women are more likely to understand and act on nutrition needs within their household, it is often men who control the family finances and are more willing to talk to outside parties that are trying to assess the realities of family nutrition. **Local partners are particularly important** here, as they are more likely to be able to speak directly to the women. Inviting men to the cooking and nutrition classes ensured that they also understood the importance of good nutrition for good health, which is important for sustainable results. However, the younger men, particularly, eventually welcomed the opportunity and the couples participated in a competition to develop a nutritionally balanced plate. Working with younger couples on nutrition education was particularly beneficial as many had considered food only as fuel rather than as core to good health for themselves and their children.
- **COVID-19 reportedly increased food insecurity** through income reduction, but 81% of recipient coffee farmers surveyed in Kenya reported that the **FFN program had helped them to maintain dietary diversity** in 2020. The pandemic has also made it harder to implement, monitor and evaluate

Next steps

Nestlé initiated pilots in three countries (Kenya, Mexico and the Philippines) in which the company had pre-existing strong, trusting relationships with suppliers and farmer cooperatives. The objective was to improve food availability and dietary diversity in five priority sourcing locations based on the results of the company's Rural Development Framework and, where possible, connected to existing Nestlé farmer outreach programs. The pilots were planned to run until 2020 but have been extended to 2021 due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This extension will also allow the company to **consolidate results of the pilots and design next steps for replication and scaling up**. Nestlé sees extension of the activities as a natural next step and is currently exploring ways to utilise the successful approach from the pilots and take learnings further.

More information and tools

Nestlé, 'Improving farmers' diets' (undated) <https://www.nestle.com/csv/impact/rural-livelihoods/farm-nutrition>

Nestlé, *Creating Shared Value Report and Sustainability Report 2020* (2021), p. 30

<https://www.nestle.com/sites/default/files/2021-03/creating-shared-value-report-2020-en.pdf>

Solidaridad, 'Promoting food security among smallholder coffee farmers in East Africa' (2020)

<https://www.solidaridadnetwork.org/news/promoting-food-security-among-smallholder-coffee-farmers-in-east-africa/>

Video on a cooking demonstration in Kiria-ini, Kenya: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZHsjV7Jn9Q&app=desktop>

World Business Council for Sustainable Development, *Taking action on nutrition: Addressing the nutrition deficit in agricultural supply chains* (2019) <https://www.wbcsd.org/Programs/Food-and-Nature/Resources/Taking-action-on-nutrition-Addressing-the-nutrition-deficit-in-agricultural-supply-chains>

