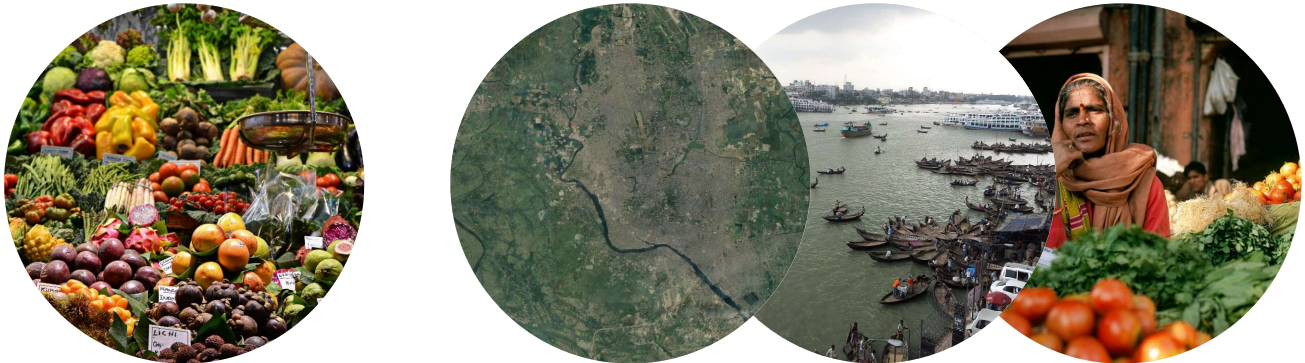


# Lessons Learned from Implementation of the Dhaka Food System Project

Dissemination Workshop Learning experiences from dealing with complexity, December 12th, 2023

*Marion Herens, Haki Pamuk, Lotte Roosendaal, Mashiati Hossain  
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Information and/or data as presented in these slides are collected as part of the DFS project. These slides can be downloaded for free at <https://doi.org/10.18174/673767> or at the DFS project page: <https://www.wur.nl/en/research-results/research-institutes/centre-for-development-innovation/show-cdi/improving-dhakas-food-system.htm>



This research project has been carried out by Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) and Wageningen Economic Research (WEcR), Social Sciences Department, Wageningen University & Research (WUR). PO box 88, 6700 AA Wageningen, The Netherlands, T + 31 (0)317 48 68 00, E [info.cdi@wur.nl](mailto:info.cdi@wur.nl).

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## Aim of today's presentation

- Present findings from the DFS project lessons learned exercise
- Share reflections about how this may advance food system approaches in projects



## Dhaka Food System (DFS) project

The Dhaka Food System (DFS) project was developed to ensure more resilient, equitable, and sustainable urban food systems from 2018 to 2023. The project was led by the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development (MoLGRD & C), together with four City Corporations (Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur and Narayanganj) in Dhaka Division, with technical support from Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Wageningen University and Research (WUR).

The project sought to support the Government of Bangladesh at different levels to develop an appropriate food agenda for the DMA. On one hand by building urban food planning capacity by developing appropriate planning tools (e.g. Dhaka Food Agenda 2041) and support skills development, on the other by implementing concrete activities to improve access to and the distribution of safe, healthy and nutritious food within the DMA, reduce urban food waste and encourage consumers at all levels of society to make more informed food choices. The DFS project was implemented in two phases. DFS Phase 1 (2018-mid 2021) focused on three key output areas:

- Output 1: the food system modelled for the DMA; The food system for the DMA being mapped through fields assessments (markets); an interactive GIS tool developed to determine the proximity of people to markets, the flow of commodities from producers to consumers and to understand the web of food value chains and how they serve the current population of Dhaka; selected value chain studies (onion, mango, beef), a consumer behaviour study, and the prototype for the socio-economic modelling of the DMA was developed (foresight dashboard).
- Output 2: a strategic food agenda 2041 for the DMA; Key players at city level brought together in in City Working Groups in the four City Corporations, the formation of a Consultative Group on Urban Food Systems Strategies (CGUFSS), and thematic working groups (TWGs) to draw on the expertise available from universities and research institutes, government departments, the private sector and civil society.
- Output 3: interventions to improve the performance of the food system for the DMA; Real-time pilot innovations have been implemented relating to the safe handling, storage and distribution of food; improved waste management; the establishment of direct producer-consumer and institutional market linkages; programmes on consumer awareness; and strengthening the capacity of local government and the four city corporations to manage the food system in the DMA.

Following a mid-term evaluation (2021), DFS Phase 2 continued in a restructured fashion. The three output areas were programmatically redefined as six thematic cluster areas:

1. Strengthening food system planning and governance (FSPG)
2. Promoting nutrition and food security (NFS)
3. Upgrading fresh markets (FM)
4. Reducing food loss and waste (FLW)
5. Improving food safety and consumer awareness (FSCA)
6. Strengthening food value chains (FVC)

## Capturing learnings: objectives

- ❖ Build insight into how an urban food systems approach has been put to practice in the context of the greater Dhaka area under the Dhaka Food Systems Project and generate lessons learned.
- ❖ Specific objectives:
  - Harvest lessons learned and reflections on our food systems approach taken to support Dhaka's food system
  - Harvest lessons learned and reflections on the approach taken to develop the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041



### Learning in the DFS project: experiences from dealing with complexity

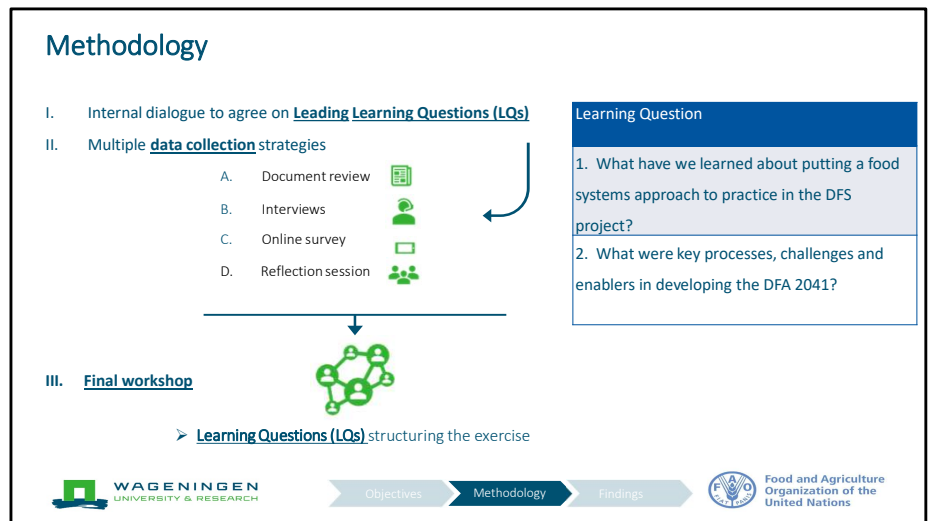
From the start, the DFS project intended to adopt an urban food systems approach in order to be responsive to the inherently complex and dynamic nature of an urban food system; working with many stakeholders with varying interests, seeking leverage points in a complex urban food system with many different drivers, causes, feedback loops and impacts of a wide variety of issues in Dhaka's food system. In such work, change is not likely to be achieved in a linear way but rather through learning by doing and adapting our approach as we go (Van Mierlo et al. 2010; Dozois et al. 2010). Creating space for reflection and learning is key in this process, meaning that we critically reflect on our own actions but also exchange in dialogue to learn from each other and make tacit knowledge based on experiences explicit (Brouwer et al. 2016; Van Mierlo et al. 2010). Apart from personal and internal project learning, it is important to share our learnings in a digestible format with a wider audience, including our respective organizations for the sake of organizational learning, so to serve others in their effort to strengthen urban food systems in Dhaka and other cities (Herens, Tezzo, ten Hove and Kusters, 2021, McClory, Read & Labib, 2017. Argyris & Schon, 1996).

Over the course of the project period, insights have emerged which are sometimes explicitly documented in project outputs and oftentimes captured in the minds of project staff involved in project activities. In this report lessons learned of the DFS project are captured with a focus on two learning questions, covering our food systems approach and the process of developing the DFA 2041.

#### Objectives of the study:

Build insight into how an urban food systems approach has been put to practice in the context of the greater Dhaka area under the Dhaka Food Systems Project and generate lessons learned. Specific objectives:

- Harvest lessons learned and reflections on our food systems approach taken to support Dhaka's food system
- Harvest lessons learned and reflections on the approach taken to develop the Dhaka food agenda 2041



## Methodology

Lessons from the DFS project were harvested and documented in the last phase of the project, during the no-cost extension phase between July and December 2023. The focus and methodology of this effort were shaped by a series of guiding learning questions. To distill crucial insights from a forward-looking perspective aimed at enriching forthcoming projects through a food system lens, the learning framework embraced the concepts of single loop, double loop, and triple loop learning. In the context of this framework, single loop learning corresponds to 'adaptive learning,' wherein individuals viewing from a singular standpoint, adjust to the tasks at hand by resolving tangible problems or issues; double loop learning refers to 'generative learning' where, from multiple viewpoints at the project or program level, a continuous learning process unfolds. This involves a critical review of existing processes and parameters, leading to adaptations that align with the overarching objectives (Fillion et al., 2015). Fillion et al. (2015) characterize triple-loop learning as 'transformative and creative learning at the organizational level.' This extends beyond individual projects or programs, encompassing the organizational culture, values, and goals within the realm of a learning organization. The focus is on identifying lessons learned throughout the entire project/program cycle, from planning through delivery to closure, all oriented around clearly defined learning goals.

### Guiding framework: learning questions

Expanding upon the above-mentioned concepts, a joint reflection with the project team led to the formulation of a comprehensive set of potential learning questions. These learning questions were guided by the project objectives and what the team considered as new or innovative elements in this project that would offer interesting areas for learning. It was then agreed to keep a metalevel perspective, rather than diving into the specific project activities, and to focus on two main learning questions:

1. What have we learned about putting a food systems approach to practice in the DFS project?
2. What were key processes, challenges and enablers in developing the DFA 2041?

A combination of methods was used including a review of existing documents, interviews with key resource people, an online survey and reflection sessions. We expect that so additional data needs to be collected to when looking at the larger picture.

- Document review to record the project's initial plans, the activities implemented throughout the project, and the methodologies employed. The document review was supplemented by semi-structured key informant interviews to fill any gaps and to enrich reflections captured in existing documentations.
- Key informant interviews representing FAO, WUR and the Government of Bangladesh to capture reflections on why things happened as they did in the project and what were challenges and enablers. These interviews were conducted along the lines of appreciative inquiry and, depending on the interviewee, covered learning question 1, 2 or both (Whitney & Cooperrider, 2011)
- Online survey to capture reflections from a wide circle of stakeholders involved in the DFS project and in particular in the development of the DFA 2041, such as members of the city working groups, of the CGUFSS, of the technical working groups, and other government representatives engaged in the project. A short survey was shared with stakeholders who were engaged in the process of developing the DFA 2041 to harvest their reflections on the process and the DFA 2041 itself.
- Reflection session to capture reflections from the WUR team engaged in the DFS project. Using a timeline technique, the team explored their experiences working with the DFS project (Wielinga & Herens, 2013).

LQ1: Learnings about putting a food systems approach into practice in the DFS project



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### **Putting a Food systems approach into practice**

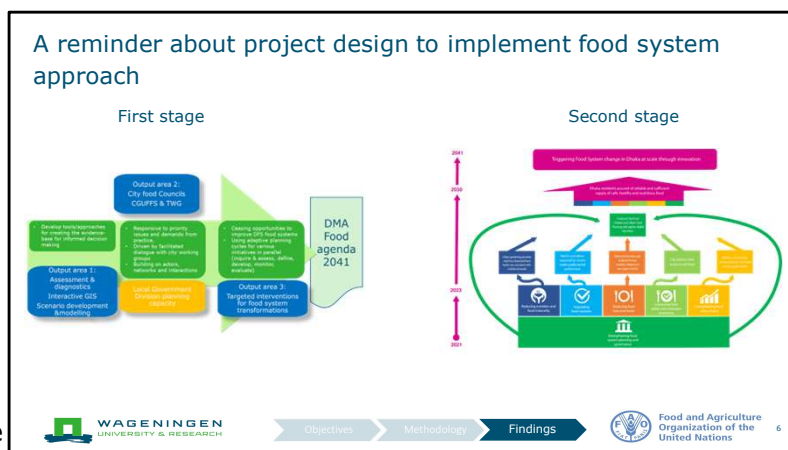
Lack of infrastructure and good technology and resilience of the poor to the shock has been two challenges in the food environment in Dhaka. The initial project proposal states that the food system in Dhaka has infrastructure and technology challenges Dhaka lacks resilience in ensuring food access for the urban poor. Rising prices can severely impact disadvantaged groups, highlighting the need for a more equitable system.

To effectively develop new policies, regulations, and interventions for the Dhaka system, it was important to initiate a project that takes a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, so called food system approach, recognizing the rural-urban interlinkages and consider the roles of producers, consumers, retailers, government actors, and other stakeholders. To fully comprehend the food system of Dhaka, it is first crucial to understand the relationship between the rural and urban areas. In Bangladesh, food is mainly produced in rural regions and then transported to the capital city. Therefore, it is essential to consider the movement of food items and how they interact with consumers, particularly in urban centers. Second, to address the challenges of unhealthy food outlets, retail environments, and other factors, it is not only the producers but also the consumers, civic organizations, and retailers who need to bring about the necessary changes. Furthermore, to develop a strategic food agenda for the DMA that aligns with national commitments, multiple ministries and government departments need to be involved in the food sector and assist local governments. Last but not least, to overcome these challenges, it was necessary to mobilize other actors involved in food value chains, such as the private sector (particularly through a Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS), farmers' groups, and the Food Safety Network. These actors can help implement interventions that address the challenges of the food system.

## Phases of project implementation: Stage 1

The project was implemented in two phases. DFS Phase 1 (2018-mid 2021) focused on three key output areas (Figure 1):

- Output 1: the food system modelled for the DMA; The food system for the DMA being mapped through fields assessments (markets); an interactive GIS tool developed to determine the proximity of people to markets, the flow of commodities from producers to consumers and to understand the web of food value chains and how they serve the current population of Dhaka; selected value chain studies (onion, mango, beef), a consumer behaviour study, and the prototype for the socio-economic modelling of the DMA was developed (foresight dashboard).
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In August 2021, following a mid-term evaluation, DFS Phase 2 continued in a restructured fashion. For the second phase a more integrated approach is adopted having (food system) analysis, outreach and engagement, interventions, and policy development and advocacy more closely linked around priority themes resulting from phase 1. The three output areas were programmatically redefined as six thematic cluster areas:

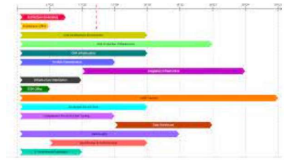
1. Strengthening food system planning and governance (FSPG)
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3. Upgrading fresh markets (FM)
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5. Improving food safety and consumer awareness (FSCA)
6. Strengthening food value chains (FVC)

**Phases of project implementation: Stage 2.** In August 2021, following a mid-term evaluation, DFS Phase 2 continued in a restructured fashion. For the second phase, a more integrated approach is adopted having (food system) analysis, outreach and engagement, interventions, and policy development and advocacy more closely linked around priority themes resulting from phase 1. The three output areas were programmatically redefined as six thematic cluster areas:

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## Parallel implementation in the second stage with its positive and negative sides

- To address feedback and requests from CWGs, the project shifted from implementing three output areas sequentially to implementing six thematic clusters in parallel
  - short-term interventions adapted according to the short-term needs of the city corporations.
- A strength, demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness to community needs, increased popularity of the project.

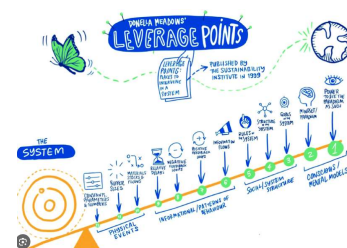


### Parallel implementation of several initiatives

During the second phase of the project, implementing multiple initiatives in parallel helped it achieve its objectives and gain popularity. To address feedback and requests from CWGs, the project shifted from implementing three output areas sequentially to implementing six thematic clusters in parallel. This allowed for more on-the-ground activities, including short-term interventions such as farmers' markets, urban and rooftop gardening, and various training programs on nutrition and food security for different stakeholders. These short-term interventions were carried out simultaneously with long-term strategic initiatives such as the Dhaka Food Agenda. Additionally, these short-term interventions were adapted over time according to the short-term needs of city corporations. Interviewees noted that this adaptive process management of the project was a strength, demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness to community needs. As indicated in the final evaluation report and by interviewees, those short-term tangible intervention make the food system project more relatable and impactful for stakeholders, generated excitement, increased visibility, and engaged the local community.

## Parallel implementation with its positive and negative sides (2)

- Parallel implementation: A challenge for the implementation of the food system approach
  - Limited prioritization of intervention as required to implement the food system approach → lacks the feasibility to address everything at the same time.
  - Creating challenges to implement long-term actions for food system transformation in parallel with short-term initiatives. Different projects, different dynamics: potential bias towards implementing short-term tangible tasks



### Parallel tracking challenging implementation

The implementation of the food system approach encountered some challenges due to its parallel structure. The original project design focused on three outputs, with an emphasis on a "systems" approach, to develop a long-term strategic urban food agenda. The project's novelty was attributed to this systems approach, which brought diverse perspectives into developing a strategic agenda. The aim was to address broader issues in the food system and move beyond small-scale initiatives. The sequential implementation of the output areas identified leverage points in the system for significant impact potential on food system transformation. However, in the second stage, parallel implementation was preferred, which resulted in the effort being spread across several initiatives, each with a smaller impact on the food system change individually. This had two negative consequences. Firstly, interviewees acknowledged the impossibility of addressing all priorities simultaneously, recognising the diverse mandates and priorities of different ministries. Secondly, it took time to find the right balance between the implementation of specific short-term interventions and long-term strategic interventions (e.g., DFA). Each intervention is a project in itself and they have different dynamics. In project implementation, there also may be a bias among implementers to focus on short-term tangible tasks instead of interventions with long-term outputs.



## Capacity building a must in implementing food system approach

- Training to strengthen knowledge of Dhaka's food system in institutions for sustainable output,
  - improving the capacity of the government bodies at national and local levels.
  - in comprehending food systems and utilizing food system modelling for long-term planning and policy development.
- A wider range of stakeholders transformed
  - Understanding food system as a comprehensive approach
  - Achieving sustainability through capacity building

### CAPACITY BUILDING



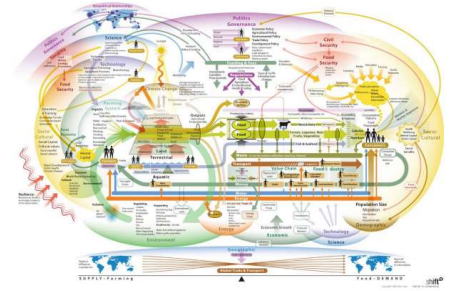
### Capacity building as a must in implementing food system approach

Implementing food system approach requires a capacity building effort among project stakeholders. The project stakeholder need to engage in a personal learning trajectory before they are able to act for a food system transformation action. Mid-term evaluation report also emphasized the need for capacity building through practical project implementation and training to strengthen knowledge of Dhaka's food system in institutions for sustainable output. According to the report the focus should be on improving the capacity of the government bodies at national and local levels, particularly in comprehending food systems and utilizing food system modelling for long-term planning and policy development.

Stakeholders beyond the usual participants should be targeted to build their capacity to embrace a comprehensive food system approach and address urban food-related frameworks gaps, leading to positive achievements and impacting ground-level initiatives. The project needs to engage with stakeholders beyond the usual participants and make them aware of their role in the food system. Those stakeholders should embrace the food system as a comprehensive approach to the food system which is challenging conventional project norms focused on specific aspects as a result of the capacity building. They should distinguish the difference between adopting a comprehensive food system approach and concentrating on specific products within the food value chain. The stakeholder must understand their focus must not be only on health outcomes but also on creating a sense of belonging and improving the liveability of urban areas. Enhancing practical experience and understanding is a crucial step towards achieving sustainability, enabling practitioners to apply their knowledge beyond the project life cycle. The project tried to address this the project focused on bridging knowledge gaps and enhancing stakeholder capacities. This approach has led to achievements, impacting both ground-level initiatives. Thanks to this, the project established City Working Groups (CWGs), which have been positively received and continued to play a pivotal role in addressing a notable gap in urban food-related frameworks.

## Food system approach: Where is the boundary?

- Food produced in rural areas, consumed in cities → rural-urban linkages
  - Food as an urban matter: an innovative concept
- Question among the project team: Where are the project boundaries? Where do the rural and urban start?
- Focus shifted to the urban food environment including activities on food loss and waste management, policies and governance, and food quality promotion and monitoring → city related concerns
- What is the role of peri-urban here, involving both food production and consumption as a city expansion zone here?



## Putting a boundary to the urban food system?

The implementation of a food system approach project poses spatial boundary challenges. The project proposal acknowledged that most food production happens in rural areas, but the focus was on understanding how food products flow and interact with consumers in urban areas. This approach is crucial for developing a safe, sustainable, and resilient food system for the DMA. However, considering food produced in rural areas as an urban matter is an innovative concept that challenges norms and provides new ways to think about cities and urban food systems. Since the beginning, there were questions among the project team members regarding defining boundaries between urban and rural areas. Dealing with complexity and the interaction between urban and rural activities was also a challenge. During the project's lifetime, delineating the food system, including setting clear boundaries, remained unclear for some project staff. Recognizing the significance of scaling in both time and space, the project focused more on the urban food environment, including aspects of food system governance, food safety, and waste management, rather than rural areas surrounding the city. There is therefore a need to clarify the role of peri-urban, involving both food production and consumption as a city expansion zone in a food system project.

## Using traditional M&E approaches to evaluate food system projects: not a good idea

- Several criticisms about the traditional M&E used in the project:
  - Misalignment and weak logical connection between outputs and outcomes,
  - The complexity of the project's theory of change,
  - Limited attention to uptake and ownership of project outputs.
  - ...
- Several project interventions with different outputs and outcomes
- How to measure their contribution to food system transformation.
- New approaches are needed.

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### The impossibility of using traditional monitoring and evaluation tools

Interviewees and external monitoring evaluation teams have raised several critics towards the traditional monitoring and evaluation of the project based on project theory of change (ToC) and logframe including project outputs, outcome and impact indicators:

- Project's ToC was complex at the initial stage of the project not aligning seamlessly with the three project outputs used for reporting and budgeting. The complexity of the ToC raised concerns about its effectiveness as a guiding framework for the project.
- There was a confusion between the three overarching project objectives and the four objectives within the ToC and difficulty to track them in the
- The logical connection between the output indicators and the overarching outcome indicator was deemed weak. This weak link can impede the ability to measure progress accurately and understand the project's impact on the intended outcome.
- Project indicators, targets, and measures were predominantly focused on project activities, giving little attention to assessing the uptake and ownership of new skills, knowledge, and approaches by stakeholders.

These criticism also show that the challenges to evaluate the impact of a food system project due to the multiple interventions involved, which result in different outputs and outcomes contributing to food system transformation. Traditional monitoring and evaluating tools may not be effective in such cases. Even though the project intervention was theoretically grouped into certain clusters with the second stage of the project, it did not affect how the M&E was conducted. Thus, new tools and methods are necessary to assess the impact of a food system project on various socioeconomic, environmental, nutrition related outcomes including food safety, access, and utilization.

LQ2: What have we learned from the processes in developing the DFA 2041?

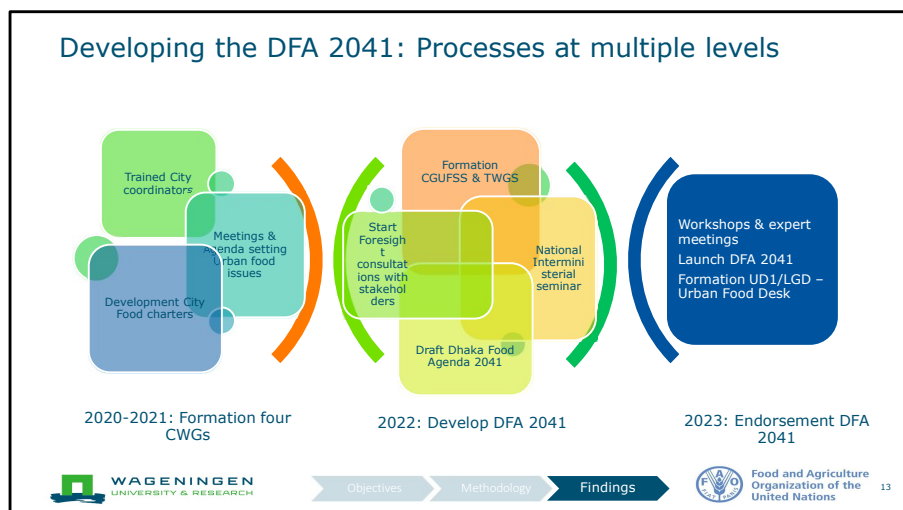


### Rationale of developing a strategic food agenda

From the start, the DFS project foresaw bringing key players in the City Corporations, Government Ministries, utility and waste management agencies, the private sector, consumers and civil society onto a common platform with the aim to influence policy at a local government level and to develop a comprehensive and strategic food agenda for the DMA. This initiative, developing a Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 (DFA 2041) involved both developing a *document* and a *process*, aiming to establish a long-term vision for the city's food agenda by engaging and committing various stakeholders, including National and local governments. In achieving greater coordination in urban food planning between the various actors, new institutions needed to be formed, such as a Consultative Group Consultative Group on Urban Food System Strategies (CGUFSS) and the Urban Food System Planning Unit to support an inclusive and participatory process. In addition, thematic working groups (TWGs) were convened to draw on the expertise available from universities and research institutes, government departments, the private sector and civil society to address important issues which have a direct impact on the urban food system.

Assisting the local government in developing a strategic food agenda for the DMA serves multiple purposes. It aligns with the Government of Bangladesh's commitments under the New Urban Agenda, providing insights into the complex relationships within the food system involving various stakeholders from production to consumption. This understanding helps the government target policy interventions effectively, conserving resources, addressing institutional impediments, and ensuring food safety without burdening smallholder producers. Additionally, by trialing instruments that encourage informed consumer choices, the government can combat rising rates of obesity and non-communicable diseases. Lastly, a deeper understanding of food choices in informal low-income settlements enables the government to enact policies that enhance access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food for households at the bottom of the pyramid.

The initial strategy for crafting a food agenda aimed to leverage the findings of Project Component 1, which involved mapping and modeling to gain a thorough understanding of the food system in the DMA, thus providing input to the CGUFSS to produce a draft food agenda for the DMA



## Developing the DFA 2041: Processes at multiple levels

The development of the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 was designed as a participatory foresight approach. A participatory process with key actors in the food system including the city corporations, government ministries, utility and waste management agencies, the private sector, consumers and civil society, guided by five Thematic Working Groups. Overall coordination was provided by the CGUFSS bringing together representatives from the thematic working groups, local and national government (City corporations, LGD, and aligned ministries).

The overall foresight framework used to develop the DFA 2041 translated this into a step by step (but iterative) process, each step using a set of methods and tools which support the analysis

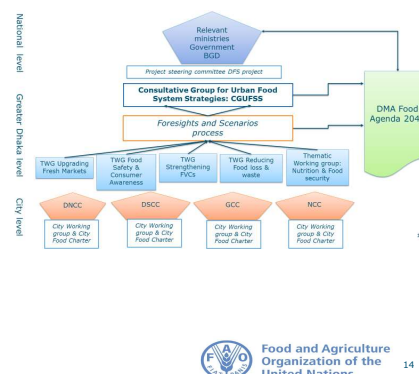
- Scope the Process: Understand actors' interests and concerns; identify key questions; outline process
- Map the Food system: Map key elements and relationships of food system and collect and visualize key information
- Assess trends and uncertainties: Identify key drivers of food system change, key trends and critical uncertainties
- Construct Scenarios; Use scenarios to identify plausible food system futures give different uncertainties
- Assess Implications: Assess the implications of different scenarios on food system and for actors' interests
- Explore System Changes: Explore directions for change to improve food system given actors visions and scenario implications
- Design Pathways for Change: Select pathways for change that are desirable and feasible and develop change strategies

Working with LGD involved working with and understanding diverse officials, their roles, and interests, including frequent changes in leadership. Although this required a lot of time, building knowledge and relationships, involving knowledgeable organizations like FAO and WUR, and organizing study trips contributed to mutual understanding and joint learning. The collaboration enhanced relations between the project, LGD and other ministries, providing valuable insights for the project into government systems and fostering continued cooperation. These insights proved to be indispensable in the further elaboration of the development and endorsement process for the DFA 2041.

## What enabled the development of the DFA 2041 (1)

### GoB level

- Fostering national government ownership and leadership, with LGD being the lead of the initiative.
- Investments in capacity building and learning related to food systems approaches
- City-Level Systems Thinking: well established CWGs able to promote systems thinking.
- Ministry-Level Systems Thinking and Collaboration, fostered by learning visits to the Netherlands and Australia
- Collaboration for Budget Provision
- Advocacy through the Ministerial Inauguration Shaping Mindsets



## What enabled the development of the DFA 2041

- **National Government Ownership and Leadership:** Engaging the Ministry of Local Government (LGD) leading the development of DFA 2041 was strategic, as it possessed the authority to influence municipal-level decisions, a power lacking in other ministries. Through the CGUFSS representatives from input supply industries, producers, wholesalers and traders, retailers, restaurants and food processors, and consumer advocates were also engaged. Despite the initial challenge of explaining food system concepts this collaboration allowed for budget allocation for crucial activities, including the formation of city working groups. This achievement might not have been possible without involving the Ministry of Local Government. To enhance the project's engagement with the National Government, particularly with the Local Government Division, the role of a National Project Coordinator focusing on building relationships and providing support to the Ministry was indispensable.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** To build the capacity of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) at both national and local levels, Wageningen University introduced a food systems training approach in 2021 for CWGs addressing gaps and enhancing CWG members' comprehension. The focus was on understanding food systems, thereby responding to the midterm evaluation to emphasize building understanding and practical experience for achieving sustainability, enabling practitioners to apply their knowledge beyond the project's life cycle.
- **City-Level Systems Thinking:** In 2019/2020, CWGs were formed at the city level to instill systems thinking. Initial challenges arose as mayors and officials lacked understanding, focusing on specific activities. This fed into the capacity building described above. The example of fresh markets highlighted various aspects of the food system, and this comprehensive perspective is now ingrained in CWG activities.
- **Ministry-Level Systems Thinking and Collaboration:** Systems thinking extended to the ministry level, emphasizing the interconnectedness of urban issues. Learning visits to the Netherlands and Australia, along with collaboration on urban gardening with Proshika, enriched understanding.
- **Collaboration for Budget Provision:** Ongoing collaboration between the Project Director (PD) and Local Government Division (LGD) focused on establishing a budget provision for urban food systems. This is ongoing. If successful, LGD will receive an annual budget, marking a structural change and progress towards sustainable urban food systems.
- **Advocacy through the Ministerial Inauguration Shaping Mindsets:** A notable project milestone was reached with the official inauguration attended by the minister, secretary, city mayors, and policymakers. The strategic plan presented played a pivotal role in influencing decision-makers' mindsets, highlighting the project's success in delivering a valuable document for policymakers.

## What enabled the development of the DFA 2041 (2)

### Project level

- Building capacity in multistakeholder processes and facilitation skills:
- Situational Leadership fostering team growth
- Adaptive Project Management responding to feedback from City Corporations and City Working Groups (CWGs).

### Foresight and Scenario Process

- Unified FAO-WUR collaboration in foresights process
- Dynamic and engaging Foresight and Scenario Process
- Bringing the right people together
- Celebrating key achievements and milestones
- Fostering learning and building critical mass through trainings

## What enabled the development of the DFA 2041

### **Project level**

The Multi-Stakeholder Processes (MSP) training has proven to be highly effective, enabling participants to share knowledge more efficiently. Additionally, situational leadership, involving strategic stepping back to encourage team growth and independence, facilitated successful progression through the Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing phases. In addition, the project's adaptive process management, notably after the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), stands out as a strength. In response to feedback from City Corporations and City Working Groups (CWGs), the project transitioned from three output areas to six thematic clusters, allowing for increased on-the-ground activities. This adaptive approach highlights the project's flexibility and responsiveness to community needs.

### **Impactful Foresight and Scenario Process**

*Unified Collaboration in Foresights Process:* Emphasizing the importance of operating as one team, the collaborative efforts during the foresights process between WUR and FAO were underscored. Clear roles, tasks, and effective prework played a crucial role in ensuring a united and impactful approach.

*Dynamic Foresight and Scenario Process:* Engaging participants physically, the foresight and scenario process employed dynamic exercises, effectively utilizing data and stocktaking to comprehend food system dynamics comprehensively. Collaborative efforts with FAO and other stakeholders played a pivotal role.

*Bringing the right people together:* Success stories included online and face-to-face workshops, capacity development for modeling with CEGIS, and cross-government participation in training. The focus was on creating a learning environment and fostering collaborations.

*Celebrating key achievements and milestones:* Several achievements, such as a successful National Seminar in April 2022, the presentation of the first draft to CGUFSS in December, and the initiation of foresight scenarios, clarified uncertainties, built confidence, and gained acceptance.

*Fostering learning and building critical mass through trainings:* Ongoing trainings aimed to build a critical mass around key topics, addressing the challenge of instilling a learning mentality. The project recognized the importance of being deliberate and explicit about learning within its framework.

## Learnings Stakeholder Engagement in developing the DFA 2041

- Stakeholder engagement: through expert meetings, city stakeholder sessions, consultations, and validation and workshops.
- The Government of Bangladesh (GoB), MLGRD&C, LGD, and other actors actively engaged in expert meetings and endorsed the DFA 2041 through in-depth discussions on sustainability, resilience, and socio-economic inclusion.

consultation cooperative consultation expert meeting  
involved  
Expert meeting different  
sharing  
meeting attended  
endorsement process contributing workshops Food

### Stakeholder Engagement in developing the DFA 2041

City corporations actively participated in expert meetings and city stakeholder sessions focused on themes like food safety and waste. Development organizations contributed to expert meetings, consultations, and validation workshops, also engaging in city-level working group meetings. Development organizations were engaged in expert meetings, consultations and validation workshops relating to the development and the endorsement of the DFA 2041 and the independent dialogue that the DFS project team organized in 2021 as part of UN FSS preparation.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB), including MLGRD&C, LGD, and various ministries, joined expert meetings and endorsed the DFA 2041 through in-depth discussions on sustainability, resilience, and socio-economic inclusion. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB), and more specifically MLGRD&C, LGD and other ministries and departments were engaged in expert meetings, consultations and validation workshops relating to the development of the DFA 2041. These meetings allowed for in-depth discussions on various thematic areas, including sustainable agriculture, supply chain resilience, and socio-economic inclusion. GoB representatives provided their expertise in various domains (dairy, nutrition, food value chains). GoB representatives actively engaged in endorsement processes where key stakeholders reviewed and supported the final draft of the DFA 2041. This involved discussions on the practicality and feasibility of the proposed initiatives in alignment with existing policies and practices.

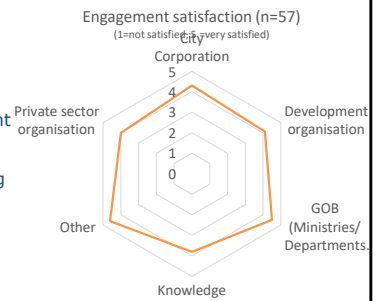
Knowledge institutes offered expertise in agriculture, research, and nutrition during expert meetings. Private sectors, like the Bangladesh Restaurant Owners Association, participated in discussions and workshops for the development and endorsement of DFA 2041.



## Stakeholder engagement satisfaction

High level of satisfaction relating engagement

- Well-managed, transparent, and conducive nature
- inclusive, actively considering diverse perspectives
- Adherence and contributing to Sustainable Development Goals
- Visibility of contributions of different actors contributing to a well-rounded, resourceful DFA 2041, i.p through endorsement process
- Challenges relate to
  - High frequency of meetings for stakeholders
  - Shaping follow up steps, strategic and meaningful participation needs ongoing attention



### Stakeholder satisfaction about engagement in the DFA 2041 development

High level of satisfaction were expressed (overall average score of 4.2 out of 5 (n=57), indicating strong appreciation for the efforts put into the engagement processes by the DFS project. Respondents commended the well-managed, transparent, and conducive nature of the engagement process. They praised the DFA 2041 engagement process for its inclusive nature, actively considering diverse perspectives, contributing to a well-rounded, resourceful and sustainable food agenda in the context of greater Dhaka and Bangladesh. It emphasized commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, fostering a collaborative atmosphere that allowed constructive dialogues and meaningful exchanges. A key aspect appreciated was the DFS project's focus on the future, particularly its importance in shaping future food habits, consumption patterns, and raising awareness about safe and nutritious food. Trends and issues such as population growth, food security, urban development, climate impacts, and youth employment were underscored.

The endorsement processes ensured visibility and acknowledgment of different actors' contributions in the final draft, enhancing overall satisfaction by indicating the integration of efforts into the broader food system agenda.

However, challenges were identified, including the high frequency of meetings, making it difficult for experts to participate consistently. Knowledge institutes could be more involved, and practical programs at the city level needed development. City corporations emphasized the necessity for follow-up actions, including the development of field-level activities, subsidies, awareness programs, and enforcement arrangements to ensure the reach of DFA 2041 to city dwellers and market societies. The engagement process is considered satisfactory overall, but strategic and meaningful participation needs attention, and continuous efforts are required for a sustainable food system by 2041.

## Learnings resulting from engagement strategy

- City corporations: Personal learning and skill training, with topics ranging from safe food consumption to organic waste management
- Development organizations: the participatory way of identifying challenges and solutions, approaches and tools applied in view of translation in policy documents, how to address food systems transformation with a focus on urban landscape without losing sight on the urban - rural connectivity
- Government of Bangladesh: learnings involve collaborative initiatives and sustainable food system development, recognizing the comprehensive approach needed for a food agenda. Interconnectedness of sectors within the food system, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and strategic advocacy.
- Knowledge institutes gain a better understanding of collaborative initiatives and the phenomenon of DFA 2041, emphasizing experiential peer group learning
- The private sector learns about planning for Dhaka's food supply, the importance of safe food processing, and the need for alternatives in processed food.



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## Learnings engagement strategy

Diverse learnings and insights emerged from different stakeholders engaged in the process of developing the DFA 2041. City corporations focus on personal learning and skill training, with topics ranging from safe food consumption to organic waste management. The development organizations emphasize the participatory nature of the DFA 2041 process, addressing challenges, and solutions with a focus on policy documents and urban-rural connectivity. They recognize the potential of City Working Groups (CWGs) as powerful platforms.

For the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), learnings involve collaborative initiatives and sustainable food system development, recognizing the comprehensive approach needed for a food agenda. Interconnectedness of sectors within the food system, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and strategic advocacy emerge as crucial aspects.

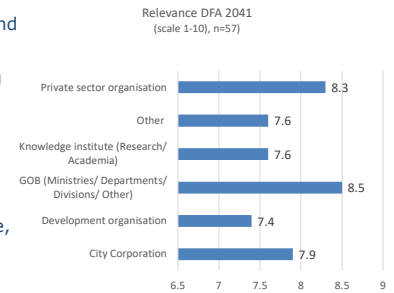
Knowledge institutes gain a better understanding of collaborative initiatives and the phenomenon of DFA 2041, emphasizing experiential peer group learning. The private sector learns about planning for Dhaka's food supply, the importance of safe food processing, and the need for alternatives in processed food.

Challenges identified include tension between project ambition and timelines, advocating for longer processes, and building capacity. Future efforts should focus on building mass awareness, reducing food loss and waste, engaging youth and entrepreneurs, sustaining stakeholder collaboration, and establishing a digital platform for CWGs. The survey underscores the complexity and interconnectedness of food system dynamics, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies and continued engagement at multiple levels.

## DFA 2041's importance in shaping food futures and urban lifestyles

Relevance considered high (7.8): DFA 2041 addresses critical issues for all, offering:

- CWGs: Insights for planning, policy development, and practical approaches like mobile court monitoring
- Development organizations: Alignment with existing programs in the face of future food systems, incl. initiatives on resilient and green cities
- GoB: Alignment with commitments on food and nutrition security. For LGD i.p. crucial for supporting food policy at the city level.
- Knowledge institutes: Alignment with their expertise, research agenda and educational activities, and opportunities for network expansion.
- Other & private sector: Alignment and joint interest in providing safe and affordable food.



## DFA 2041 relevance for day-to-day work of stakeholders

One respondent: 'DFA's goal and my organization goal is the same'

The relevance of DFA 2041 to various stakeholders scored in the survey an overall average score of 7.8 out of 10 (n=57), suggesting that it addresses critical issues applicable to all respondents' work. City corporations find DFA 2041 highly relevant in their efforts to enhance city food systems, offering insights into planning, policy development, and practical approaches like mobile court monitoring. Development organizations appreciate DFA 2041's contribution to understanding ongoing work on food and nutrition security, safety, and community engagement. Alignment with existing programs and goals is noted, such as initiatives on resilient and green cities.

Government officials in agriculture sectors perceive DFA 2041 as highly relevant, aligning with their commitment to ensuring food and nutrition security. The Local Government Division (LGD) views it as crucial for supporting food policy at the city level. Knowledge institutes value DFA 2041 for its alignment with their expertise, research agenda, and educational activities, providing opportunities for exploration and network expansion. The private sector finds DFA 2041 very relevant, emphasizing a joint interest in providing safe and affordable food. Overall, respondents recognize DFA 2041's importance in shaping future urban lifestyles, enhancing city livability, and addressing food system challenges collaboratively.

## Challenges in the development of the DFA 2041 (1)

### Initially

- Delayed project approval process lingering into 2021
- The Covid-19 pandemic
- Limited attention for policy advocacy

} Late establishment of key platforms, in particular CGUFSS and TWGs



Methodology Findings

## Challenges in the development of the DFA 2041

### **Starting up**

Challenges relating to starting the DFA 2041 development process were the delayed approval process, particularly with the mid-2021 TAPP approval, and the impact of external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges. Earlier approvals and minimized pandemic-related disruptions could have facilitated more extensive project activities and engagement. In addition, the project could have given greater attention to policy advocacy. While planning for policies such as rooftop gardening and street food, time and capacity constraints limited the extent of advocacy efforts, highlighting an area for potential improvement. These factors combined resulted in the delayed establishment of key platforms. The belated creation of the CGUFSS, a national-level consultative group, was identified as a potential improvement. Emphasizing the platform's importance from the project's inception could have enhanced its role as a crucial engagement and coordination mechanism.

## Challenges in the development of the DFA 2041

During the DFA 2041 development process:

- Kick off the engagement with the Ministry of Local Government Engagement
- Overcoming Ministry Engagement Challenges
  - Time investments in Stakeholder Engagement:
  - High frequency of meetings for stakeholders
- Navigating challenges in DFA 2041 Endorsement
- Challenges related to the DFA 2041 Launch
- Challenges in Modeling Work
- Establishing Urban Food Planning Unit
- Leadership and navigating trust and power dynamics in the process



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Food and Agriculture  
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## Challenges in the development of the DFA 2041

### **During the DFA 2041 development process**

*Kick off the engagement with the Ministry of Local Government Engagement:* Engaging with the Ministry of Local Government posed challenges due to a lack of prior interaction and unfamiliarity with its role in food issues. Starting from scratch, catching up took two years.

*Overcoming Ministry Engagement Challenges:* Initiating engagement with ministries for the CGUFSS and food agenda faced initial hurdles. Overcoming this involved leveraging existing connections, clarifying roles, and enhancing meeting credibility through official invitations. Variable participation and knowledge continuity were addressed through document sharing, adaptability, and a simple, flexible process.

*Time investments in Stakeholder Engagement:* Engaging stakeholders to understand project objectives and embrace the entire system proved time-consuming. Convincing national-level stakeholders with administrative limitations was a significant challenge, formally acknowledged by the government in mid-2021 after initially being a local initiative.

*High frequency of meetings:* For stakeholders engaged in the DFA 2041 development process challenges included the high frequency of meetings, making it difficult for experts to participate consistently. Knowledge institutes could be more involved, and practical programs at the city level needed development. City corporations emphasized the necessity for follow-up actions, including the development of field-level activities, subsidies, awareness programs, and enforcement arrangements to ensure the reach of DFA 2041 to city dwellers and market societies. The engagement process is considered satisfactory overall, but strategic and meaningful participation needs attention, and continuous efforts are required for a sustainable food system by 2041.

*Navigating challenges in DFA 2041 Endorsement:* The project encountered complexities during the endorsement process of the DFA 2041, engaging numerous ministries. The ministry sought technical support due to internal capacity limitations. Challenges included providing technical partners, inviting all 22 ministries, managing logistical-political issues during launch, and handling discussions on interests and logos. Also the launch, while symbolically significant, faced challenges like logistical-political issues and discussions on interests. Emphasizing PR over substantive discussions left some feeling less engaged and underwhelmed.

*Challenges in Modeling Work:* Connecting modeling with stakeholder engagement was challenging. Efforts to understand modelers' perspectives and translate their work for stakeholders were crucial but only partially successful in creating joint learning opportunities.

*Establishing Urban Food Planning Unit:* Establishing an urban food planning unit faced challenges, taking over eight years for a similar unit in the Ministry of Food. While a full unit wasn't achieved, a dedicated desk for food planning was established for continuity.

*Other challenges identified include tension between project ambition and timelines,* advocating for longer processes, and building capacity. Future efforts should focus on building mass awareness, reducing food loss and waste, engaging youth and entrepreneurs, sustaining stakeholder collaboration, and establishing a digital platform for CWGs. The survey underscores the complexity and interconnectedness of food system dynamics, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies and continued engagement at multiple levels.

*Leadership and trust Issues throughout the process:* Challenges arose when leadership didn't fully buy into the project or consider advice from on-the-ground experts. Power imbalances, egos, and silos within leadership were demotivating. Lack of trust, expressed openly, and a gap in expectations were significant frustrations. Additional, often more personal, frustrations included language barriers, challenges in delivering results, time constraints, ad hoc changes, lack of a proper sharing system, and difficulties in collaboration and shared language.



## City Working Group a model for other cities

- City corporations recognize CWG's crucial role and advocate for its further operationalization (continued meetings, raise awareness, anchor in the CC)
- CWGs committed to advocating for preparation of action plans building on the DFA 2041
- Dedicated office support and relevant manpower are highlighted for efficient functioning
- LGD support solicited at the national level
- CWGs committed to sharing their experiences:
  - underscoring importance of coordination with the public and private sectors, civil society, and other responsible entities,
  - emphasizing active participation and stakeholder representation at all levels in CWG initiatives



### The City Working Group is a model for other cities

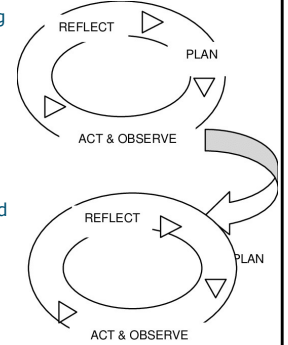
City corporations and CWGs plaid and will continue to play a key role in carrying further the strategic intentions of the DFA 2041. The CWGs The mechanism demonstrated significant influence and should be continued, recognizing its positive outcomes in fostering collaboration and engagement. The City corporations are committed to continue meeting regularly for effective execution and envision CWG working collectively under CC's leadership. Successful involvement was attributed to embedded city coordinators, champions within city corporations, strong city working groups, and collaboration among stakeholders. This role and position needs to be consolidated in future CGW endeavors.

CWGs are ready to share experiences and achievements of their respective City Working Group (CWG) with other cities and to advocating for the development and preparation of action plans for CWGs. Recognizing the CWG as a model for other cities, the CWGs emphasize the importance of stakeholder representation at all levels for successful outcomes. City corporations aim to inspire other cities to create similar multi-stakeholder platforms, bringing together stakeholders to collectively contemplate their city's food systems. This involves devising joint action plans, implementing effective strategies, and coordinating various organizational activities. They underscore the importance of coordination with the public and private sectors, civil society, and other responsible entities, emphasizing active participation in CWG initiatives. Dedicated office support and relevant manpower are highlighted for efficient functioning.

Overall, CWGs are considered essential for implementing DFA 2041, prompting every City Corporation to establish its own CWGs for comprehensive city food system management.

## Consolidating CGUFSS and ministerial involvement

- Fostering linkages between City corporations and CWGs providing key input and recommendations to the national level
- Responds to need for consolidating a coordinated mechanism emphasized continued involvement of government entities and other key stakeholders
- Encouraging digitization to gain insights into various aspects of the food system, including growth, transportation, consumer interactions, and seller dynamics. This digital approach is deemed crucial for comprehensively understanding the business perspective and ensuring that sellers prioritize consumer welfare alongside their business interests.
- Establishing monitoring systems



### Consolidating CGUFSS and ministerial involvement

City-level seminars organized with City Working Groups (CWGs) have proven instrumental in providing essential input for recommendations ahead of CGUFSS and Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) meetings. Upcoming action planning workshops at the city level are deemed crucial not only for shaping actionable plans but also for fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders. Ongoing, collaboration will be required between ministries and key resource organizations, including academic institutions, FAO, government institutions, and community organizations.

The need for consolidation a coordinated mechanism such as the CGUFSS is emphasized involving government entities, such as the Ministry of Food and the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU), but also other ministries such as the ministry of commerce playing a significant role in business engagement, to ensure safe and nutritious food for all.. Stressing the importance of having a designated coordinator at the ministry level was highlighted. Similar to city coordinators at the city level, a ministry-level coordinator can facilitate effective coordination and implementation.

Encouraging digitization is emphasized for gaining valuable insights into various aspects of the food system, including growth, transportation, consumer interactions, and seller dynamics. This digital approach is deemed crucial for comprehensively understanding the business perspective and ensuring that sellers prioritize consumer welfare alongside their business interests.

Furthermore. effective coordination and monitoring systems were identified as key components for successful implementation



## Leveraging the DFA 2041 for national impact

- DFA 2041 has potential to set strong examples for other cities. Advocacy efforts needed to establish a connection with food system transformation National Pathway plans, and as a reference for national action plans.
- Enhance LGD's understanding and build capacity of urban food systems and of City Corporation activities, particularly in the context of food systems work.
- Safeguard / foster established elements such as the Urban Food Desk, UD-1, at the LGD Urban Wing and the efforts to issue budget allocation for urban food policy development
- Foster further investment in tools like GIS for spatial planning and economic modeling providing a basis for solid planning for the urban food future. This also includes creating and sharing knowledge products for wider use.



## Leveraging the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 for National Impact

DFA 2041 stands as a valuable and confidence-boosting resource when presented at forums. Its recommendations, designed with broader applicability, have the potential to set strong examples for other cities. Advocacy efforts are actively in progress to establish a connection between DFA 2041 and the National Pathway plans, positioning it as a pivotal reference for national action plans. Ministries are recognizing the resource value of DFA 2041, and ongoing endeavors aim to establish links between CEGIS mapping and modeling tools and ministries, facilitating effective follow-up.

Despite effective collaboration between the Local Government Division (LGD) and City Corporations on specific initiatives, a challenge lies in LGD's awareness of City Corporation activities due to the autonomy of these organizations. Ongoing efforts aim to build capacity and enhance LGD's understanding of City Corporation activities, particularly in the context of food systems work.

Elements such as the established urban Food desk, UD-1, at the LGD Urban Wing the efforts to issue budget allocation for urban food policy development, Dhaka Food Agenda 2041, and tools like GIS and economic modeling were identified as essential components that should continue. These foundational aspects provide a basis for sustained progress. This also includes creating and sharing knowledge products for wider use was emphasized. Disseminating information, particularly by the established desk, ensures that the knowledge generated during the DFS project and the DFA 2041 development process remains accessible and beneficial.

# Thank you for your attention

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