



# Understanding midstream actors in informal sectors of the food system

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## Background and objectives

Today's food system challenges in the Global South cannot be addressed without involving the masses of midstream actors operating in informal sectors. Yet, informal businesses, which are very diverse and employ many, are poorly understood. As a result, informal actors are not adequately considered when policies and interventions are designed.

Our main **research questions** are: what are the incentives and drivers of innovation for midstream actors in informal sectors? And how to connect with, motivate, and support them to contribute to improved food system outcomes?

Our **objective** is to support decision-makers to better understand the informal organization of food systems and to engage and empower informal midstream actors to transition to more sustainable and innovative food system outcomes.

## Methods

We approach the research questions from different angles:

- Literature reviews on the subjects;
- Developing a framework of analysis for research and policy;
- Case studies and comparative analysis around themes including practices of doing business and technological, food system innovation, transaction costs in informal sectors and governance interventions; and
- Collecting cases, viewpoints and policy advice from development professionals. Making use of the WCDI alumni network.

We share our findings in various ways:

- Peer-reviewed papers in journals;
- Expert and expertise development meetings among WUR colleagues and professionals from the Global South;
- White/Position papers; and
- Participation in external knowledge transfer



In 2024 we will design and build a web-based platform to host all research and related published work by WUR on midstream actors in informal economies.

## Partners

This project is carried out by:

- Wageningen Economic Research;
- Wageningen Center for Development Innovation;
- Wageningen Food and Biobased Research;
- Development professionals from the Global South;
- University of Parakou, Benin; and
- University of California Davis, US

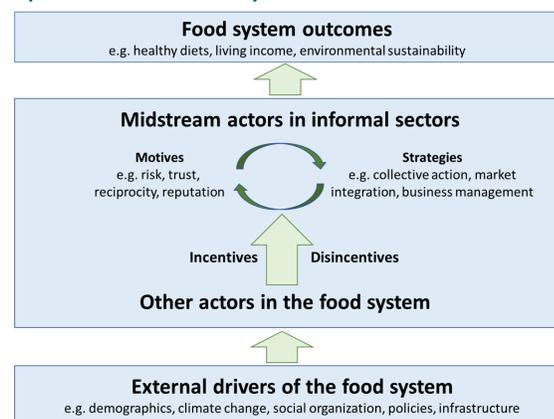


## Outputs to date

Various peer-reviewed papers are in the pipeline for publication in relevant academic journals:

- Dijkxhoorn, Y., Talabi, J., McGuire, E., Termeer, E., Jarman, E., Ndayitabi, S., de Steenhuijsen Piters, B., 2023 (submitted). Towards Food System Innovation: Engaging Midstream Actors in Informal Vegetable Value Chains.
- Steenhuijsen Piters, B. de, Termeer, E., Dijkxhoorn, Y., Berkum S. van, and Ruben R., 2023 (submitted). Identifying incentives for midstream actors in informal sectors to enhance food system outcomes.

Figure 1: Developed framework to identify incentives for actors in informal sectors of the food system

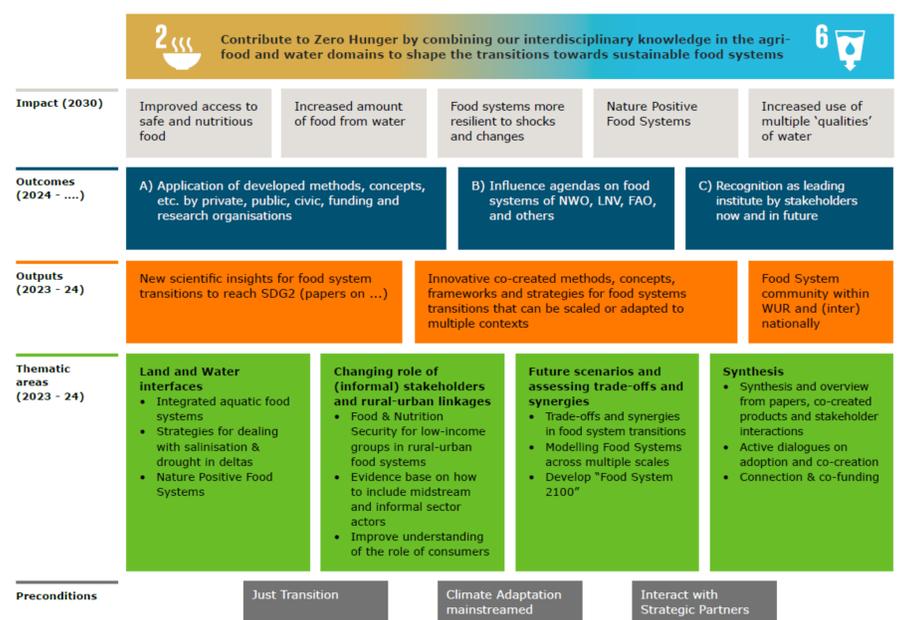


Source: Steenhuijsen Piters et al (submitted)

## Link to Theory of Change KB35

Through our research and consultations we are creating new insights and a useful framework that help policymakers, researchers practitioners understand the important role of midstream actors in informal sectors, as well as how to support them in the processes of food system transformation. In addition, we develop our expertise on the topic to meet current and future knowledge demands.

### Theory of Change Food and Water Security



## Reference

Steenhuijsen Piters, B. de, Termeer, E., Dijkxhoorn, Y., Berkum S. van, and Ruben R., 2023 (submitted). Identifying incentives for midstream actors in informal sectors to enhance food system outcomes