



DHAKA FOOD AGENDA 2041

For a healthy, resilient and sustainable urban food system





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MESSAGE



I am delighted to know that Dhaka's Food System Project under Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives has prepared the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041. Bangladesh will be a developed country by 2041. The food habit of the people will be changed. For the necessity of the future, this agenda will be useful to formulate policies or acts related to urban food system, food management etc. by various ministries and divisions in Bangladesh.

Coinciding with the national goal of becoming a developed nation, the "Dhaka Food Agenda 2041" aims to ensure nutritious and safe food for the city-dwellers, which is substantial for our people to be in good health and contribute to the economy and society as whole. It is a matter of pride that the Dhaka Food System project, has taken this timely initiative to develop a food agenda, given Bangladesh's transition from a rural-agrarian economy towards an urban and industrialized nation.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh formulated under the visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, states that it is a fundamental responsibility of the State to secure for its citizens through planned economic growth, the provision of basic necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care. It states that raising the level of nutrition and improvement of public health are among the primary duties of the State. These have laid the foundation for the formulation of multisectoral national policies and strategies for sustainable development and economic growth.

I would like to pay my gratitude and thanks to the officers and staffs from LGD, FAO, DFS Project and others who were achieving involved in formulating the "Dhaka Food Agenda 2041".

Joy Bangla,
Joy Bangabandhu.

Md. Tazul Islam, MP
Hon'ble Minister
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

MESSAGE



'The Support for Modelling, Planning and Improving Dhaka's Food System' Project under the Local Government Division is being implemented in Dhaka North City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation, Narayanganj City Corporation and Gazipur City Corporation. One of the objectives of this project is to formulate the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041. The agenda includes ways and directions for a secure and sustainable urban food system for a developed, prosperous and smart Bangladesh by 2041. The agenda creates the opportunity to be used in the future as a guideline by different ministries and divisions of the government in making policies and laws related to safe food management, food production, supply, storage, etc.

The Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina presented the National Pathway Document on Sustainable Food Systems in Bangladesh at the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 held on September 23, 2021. The presentation emphasized taking the needs of the city-dwellers seriously. The formulation of Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 is a timely step in line with the National Pathway Document as a guideline for setting strategies to make the urban food system more inclusive, secure and sustainable.

I would like to thank Dhaka North City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation, Narayanganj City Corporation and Gazipur City Corporation; Food and Agriculture Organization, Bangladesh (FAOBD); various ministries, divisions and agencies; academics of different universities; officials from the Local Government Division and Dhaka Food System project as well as the other stakeholders for their tireless efforts to prepare Dhaka Food Agenda 2041. I hope this Agenda will be a milestone for future food-related interventions in the urban areas of Bangladesh.

Joy Bangla
May Bangladesh live forever.

Muhammad Ibrahim
Secretary
Local Government Division (LGD)
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 was developed with the support members of the urban food system platforms and their respective chairpersons who provided their time, experience and expertise to events, which included the Consultative Group for Urban Food Systems Strategies; the five Thematic Working Groups; and the Food System City Working Groups in the four City Corporations of Dhaka South, Dhaka North, Narayanganj and Gazipur. The platforms gathered over a hundred organizations from all walks of life with a stake in urban food systems including ministries, national agencies, city corporations, academia, civil society organizations, town federations, the corporate and private sector, local and international development partners.

The initiative was undertaken thanks to the full support provided by the Hon'ble Minister of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Md. Tazul Islam, MP, and that of the Hon'ble Mayors (Md. Atiqul Islam, Mayor, Dhaka North City Corporations; Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, Mayor, Dhaka South City Corporations; Dr Selina Hayat Ivy, Mayor, Narayanganj City Corporations; Ashadur Rahman Kiran, Mayor (Acting), Gazipur City Corporations) to the process and Ward Councillors of all City Corporations. Finally, we would like to thank everyone for the comments received during the final stages of the consultation process.

The document was collaboratively drafted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Wageningen University and Research as part of the project: Support for Modelling, Planning and Improving Dhaka's Food System, which was led by the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, together with Dhaka Division's four City Corporations (Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur and Narayanganj). Financial support was provided by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

3R	reduce, reuse and recycle	LGD	Local Government Division
BADC	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation	MEFWD	Medical Education and Family Welfare Division
BARC	Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council	MMC	Market Management Committee
BCCSAP	Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan	MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
BDP2100	Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100	MoCommerce	Ministry of Commerce
BFSA	Bangladesh Food Safety Authority	MoDMR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
BIDA	Bangladesh Investment Development Authority	MoEducation	Ministry of Education
BIRTAN	Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition	MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
BLRI	Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute	MoFinance	Ministry of Finance
BNNC	Bangladesh National Nutrition Council	MoFL	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
BSTI	Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution	MoFood	Ministry of Food
CAB	Consumers Association of Bangladesh	MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
CC	City Corporations	Mol	Ministry of Industries
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research	MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
CGUFSS	Consultative Group for Urban Food Systems Strategies	MoLGRD&C	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
CWG	City Working Group	MoPowerEnergy&MineralResources	Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension	MoRailways	Ministry of Railways
DAM	Department of Agricultural Marketing	MoRoadTransport&Bridges	Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges
DDM	Department of Disaster Management	MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
DFA	Dhaka Food Agenda	MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
DFS	Dhaka Food System	MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
DGHS	Directorate General of Health Services	NARS	National Agricultural Research System
DLS	Department of Livestock Services	NFNSP	National Food and Nutrition Security Policy
DNCC	Dhaka North City Corporation	NGO	Non-governmental organizations
DoE	Department of Environment	NNS	National Nutrition Services
DoF	Department of Fisheries	NPO	Non-profit Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	NSSS	National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh
FLW	Food loss and waste	OMS	Open Market Sale
FYP	Five Year Plan	PoA	Plan of Action
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices	PP2041	Perspective Plan 2021-2041
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	RAJUK	Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (the Capital Development Authority of the Government of Bangladesh)
GOB	Government of Bangladesh	SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
INGO	International non-governmental organizations	SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
IPH	Institute of Public Health	WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
IPHN	Institute Of Public Health Nutrition	WUR	Wageningen University and Research



Executive Summary

Why an urban food agenda?

Rapid urbanization of a growing population has challenged established efforts to ensure access to sufficient, affordable, nutritious, safe and sustainably sourced food. Improvements to income have brought about transformational changes and opportunities. However, the associated evolution of food consumption patterns in this dynamic environment have translated into the “triple burden” of overweight and obesity, under-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Moreover, major uncertainties that are linked to climate change, natural disasters, environmental degradation, pollution, biodiversity loss, the environmental footprint, unequal income growth, disease outbreaks, price volatilities, and unstable global food markets have added complexity to the trajectories of change. Responding to such a myriad of challenges and ambitions requires a holistic approach to food systems and cannot be addressed by a single discipline, institution, department or sector. An urban food agenda offers directions and pathways for the coordination, collaboration, collective vision, innovative policies, and leadership that are essential to transforming Dhaka’s food system so that it can be a leading example of a dynamic and sustainable metropolis.

What is the Dhaka Food Agenda?

The Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 (DFA 2041) is a stakeholder-created and evidence-informed long-term **collective vision**, a **resource document** that supports policymaking and urban planning. The document is a synthesis of key challenges and aspirations for meeting Dhaka’s food needs and forward-looking **pathways to accompany transformation** that complement existing policies and development goals in Bangladesh. The DFA 2041 is guided by the vision of Dhaka’s food system to:

“Meet Dhaka’s future food demands in an equitable and inclusive manner, to ensure nutritious and safe food for all through a food system that is sustainable, resilient, environment-friendly, and guided by collaborative stakeholder engagement and learning.”

How was the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 developed?

The Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 evolved by engaging a wide range of stakeholders active in Dhaka’s food system through a participatory and consultative process. Development of Dhaka’s Food Agenda has been driven by foresight and scenario analysis, considering the longer-term implications of current trends and the potential consequences of future uncertainties. In this process, data and projections were used to guide stakeholder discussions. In addition, existing policies, and examples from urban food agendas in other cities were used to guide the thinking. This process has enabled the development of a set of possible future scenarios, their implications, and desirability, and has supported the formulation of strategy and planning.

The process was guided by the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, and was supported by the four City Corporations of Dhaka Division: Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur and Narayanganj. The process was facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Representation in Bangladesh, Wageningen University and Research and Foresight4Food.

The key directions foreseen for Dhaka’s Food systems are outlined in the table.

Key directions for Dhaka's Food System

Key directions for Dhaka's food system	Key areas of action (strategic pathways)
Consumption of healthy and nutritious food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure consumers are aware of and have access to healthy diets and nutrition information • Enhance consumers' access to affordable, diversified, healthy diets • Ensure physical access to foods for all
Meeting Dhaka's future food demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure responsiveness to changing market dynamics in production and supply, including strategies for urban food production • Ensure safe and healthy food production, transport, processing, handling and distribution throughout the food value chain • Invest in shortening food value chains and increasing their efficiency in providing affordable healthy diets • Reduce food loss and waste throughout the food value chain, from farm to fork
Optimizing people's livelihoods in the food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance promotion of safe food production, processing and handling as a strategy to improve the working conditions of food sector actors • Support avenues to facilitate investment and create economic opportunities in the agrifood sector • Ensure the adaptive capacity of fresh markets and informal sector vendors to change • Ensure livelihoods and benefits (economic or other) for low-income communities active in food-related waste businesses when shifting from low-to high-value waste management
Protecting Dhaka's population from shocks to the food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategize to improve the resilience of enhanced food security and food safety, given the impacts of climate change, trade and other conditions • Support the development of a resilient business environment • Improve the resilience of the food outlet landscape (food markets, vendors) to adverse weather conditions and the impacts of climate change • Ensure that low-income and vulnerable groups become more resilient to stress and shocks
Feeding Dhaka in a nature positive way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift towards nature-positive consumption and food behaviour • Promote nature-positive production to improve soil health, water and air quality and enhance food safety • Ensure there is a more efficient, environment friendly, and sustainable food transportation system • Develop clean and safe food markets (fresh, wholesale, supermarkets, others) and distribution that strengthens natural habitats
Strengthening Planning and Governance of Urban Food Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue, consolidate, and anchor the key urban food system governance platforms • Scale-up and replicate good practices and create an enabling environment • Monitor, reflect, learn, and reformulate policies and plans



Introduction

What is the Dhaka Food Agenda?

The Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 (DFA 2041) is a stakeholder-created and evidence-informed long-term **collective vision**, that outlines how Dhaka's food system can contribute to safe and nutritious food, health and well-being, livelihoods, and the environment for Dhaka's population. This Agenda is to be used as a **resource document** to support policymaking and urban planning by the National Government and Dhaka Division's City Corporations, while guiding all stakeholders towards a common set of goals. The DFA 2041 is a synthesis of key challenges and aspirations to meet Dhaka's food needs and forward-looking **pathways to accompany transformation of its urban food system**.

The DFA 2041 is aligned with, and complementary to, existing policies, development plans, and goals set out by the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). Highlighted are the United Nations Food Systems Summit, the National Pathway (2021), the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (NFNSP) (2020), the Bangladesh Eighth Five Year Plan July 2020 – June 2025 (Eighth FYP) (2020) and the Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021–2041 (PP2041) (2020). Specifically, DFA 2041 seeks to address current and emerging urban issues.

Why an urban food agenda?

"We have a national aim to scale-up our country to a developed nation by 2041. For Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's "Shanor Bangla" and our Hon. Prime Minister's target to be a developed nation by 2041, we are all working cordially. For this, we need to have a food agenda. The Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 will be the guideline to follow for city dwellers and respective stakeholders... to address the issues.

I advise all to work actively to bring cohesiveness, as we are faced with further challenges. Stakeholders will sit together, and attempt to work out solutions. If we do not work together then the loss is ours. So I invite all to align with the government's decisions and work together to move our country forward."

Md. Tazul Islam, MP
Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Local Government,
Rural Development and Cooperatives

By 2041, Dhaka will have an estimated urban and peri-urban population of 40 million. It will be challenging to ensure sufficient, affordable, nutritious, safe, and sustainably sourced food for this large population. The challenge is compounded by the risks and uncertainties of climate change, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and unstable global food markets. For Dhaka, and Bangladesh at large, the potential social and economic costs of failing to achieve a healthy, sustainable, and resilient food system are huge. It may seem that 2041 is a long way off; however, the consequences of taking action in the short-term or not will have an impact on the future of Dhaka's food system.

Bangladesh has had a highly successful trajectory of development, and by 2041 aims to be a high-income country. Rising incomes and changing lifestyles can radically shift people's consumption patterns. Meanwhile, inequality and poverty will remain critical issues, requiring innovative policies to ensure that those less fortunate in society are not further burdened with poor nutrition. In 2041, without the right measures in place, Dhaka could be confronted with the scenario of the significant "triple burden" of overweight and obesity, under-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Good health requires safe food and proper nutrition, much remains to be done to ensure all citizens of Dhaka have access to such food, in terms of how it is produced, processed, transported and retailed.

The way we produce, distribute and consume food is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and environmental degradation, including loss of biodiversity and pollution. Food systems will need to change dramatically over the coming decades to reduce these impacts. With 40 million people, Dhaka's environmental footprint will be substantial, within the city, across Bangladesh and globally. Dhaka has the potential to be a leading example of how a dynamic metropolis can reduce its environmental footprint by the way it manages its food system.

Food is culture and is often the thread that connects people. For a country with such a rich and diverse culinary heritage, finding pathways to ensure the supply of good food is part of Dhaka's identity, and is also an important long-term ambition. Yet, there are plenty of uncertainties, such as how fast or slowly the population will grow, or people's consumption patterns in 2041. In addition, another uncertainty is to what extent the city will be able to adapt to climatic issues or future shocks to the food system (such as a pandemic). These are a few of the key dimensions that will shape Dhaka's food system and consumer behaviour. The myriad challenges faced and ambitions require an holistic food systems approach, as these cannot be dealt with by a single discipline, institution, department or sector. Coordination, collaboration, collective vision, and leadership is essential. An urban food agenda offers directions and pathways to guide the coordination and transformation of Dhaka's food system into one that is healthy, sustainable, inclusive and resilient to shocks.

How was the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 developed?

The Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 was developed by collecting ideas from representatives at a wide range of organizations. The content is based on various stakeholder consultations and has been discussed with over one hundred national government officials and representatives; policymakers from ministries; city corporation urban planners; professional networks; experts from research organizations; development partners; advocates from international and national non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs); non-profit organizations (NPO); community based organizations (CBO); voluntary foundations; market committees; private sector associations; urban gardeners; entrepreneurs; retailers; vendors; and residents throughout Dhaka's food system.

The thinking behind the Dhaka Food Agenda has been driven by foresight and scenario analysis. It is impossible to predict the future. However, it is possible to consider the longer-term implications of current trends and imagine the consequences of future uncertainties, unlikely events or shocks to the system. This enables us to develop future scenarios that support strategy and planning in two ways. First, they offer a guide to what would be desirable future states, helping to create the insight and motivation to steer toward a more desirable, and away from less desirable, future situations.

Second, they enable consideration of how to respond if we do end up in a particular scenario. Scenarios are developed by looking at critical uncertainties and asking, "what would happen if...?"

The process for creating the Agenda was developed during participatory meetings, interviews and consultations from February 2022 to April 2023. The process was guided by the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (MoLGRD&C), and supported by the four City Corporations (CC) of Dhaka Division: Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur and Narayanganj. The process was facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representation in Bangladesh, Wageningen University and Research (WUR) and Foresight4Food. In addition, existing policies, and examples from urban food agendas in other cities were used to guide our thinking such as Bangkok, Melbourne and several European cities. Final revisions were made to the Agenda after conversations with members of the Consultative Group for Urban Food Systems Strategies (CGUFSS) and the City Working Groups (CWG) in November 2022, as well as with civil servants from various policy departments. The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives endorsed the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 in June 2023



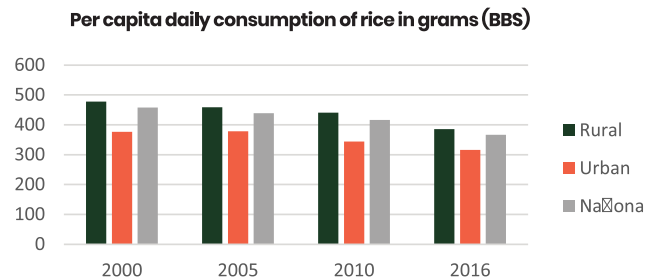
Figure 1: Current trends

Average Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Bangladesh 1950–2021 (in BDT, 2021)



Income has been steadily growing...

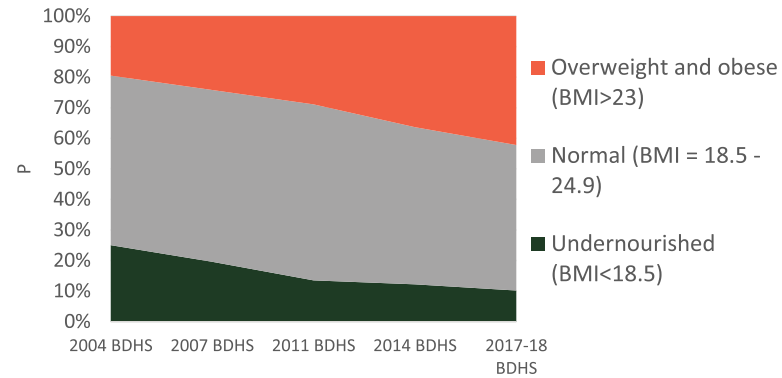
Source: World Inequality database. No date.
Website : <https://wid.world/country/bangladesh/>



Food habits are changing...

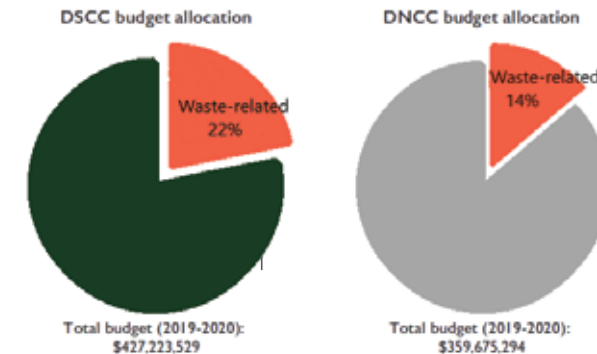
Source: Yunus, Rashid and Chowdhury. 2019. Integrated food policy research program. Working paper 003. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
<https://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/133124/filename/133336.pdf>

Nutritional status of women in urban areas



Nutrition is affected, with more people suffering from overweight and obesity...

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program. No date. Website: <https://dhsprogram.com/>

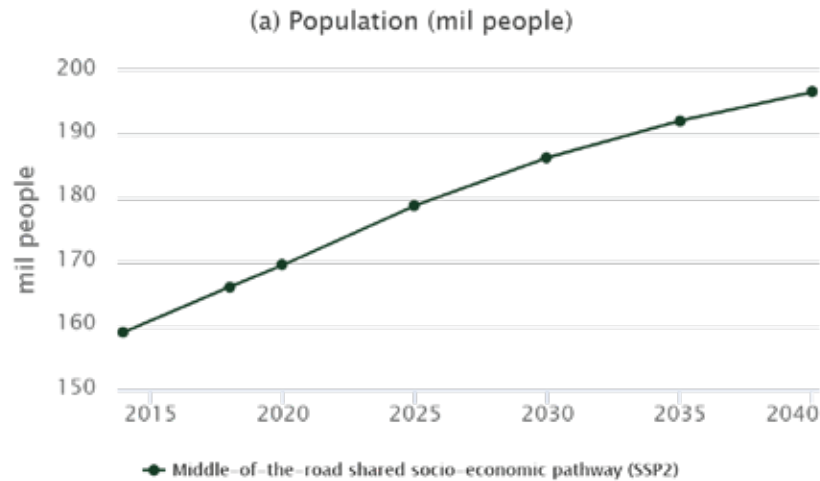


Waste is a burden on cities' budgets...

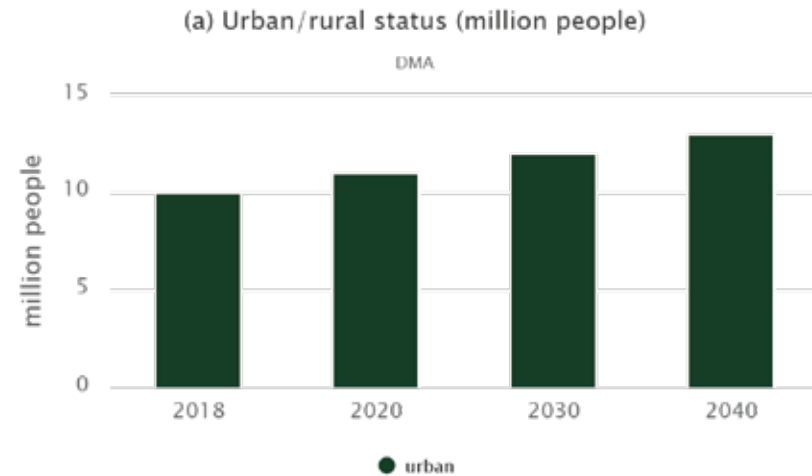
Source: GOB. Dhaka North City Corporation Waste report 2018–2019.
https://dncc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dncc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/6693c776_0dde_49da_b85b_1928d398a7f4/2020-07-07-15-04-0388efe51e61d331efb81045a0648dd2.pdf

Figure 2: Looking ahead

Moving from current trends to projections for the future, a consistent increase in population can be projected, reaching a population of nearly 200 million.¹



Source: SSP database



Source: SSID model

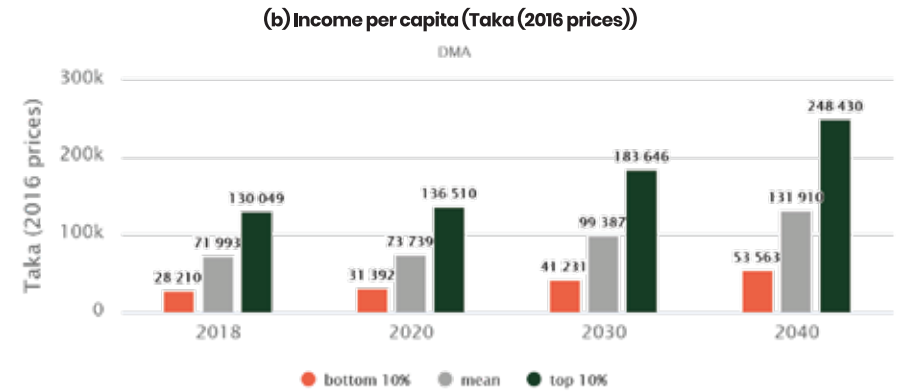
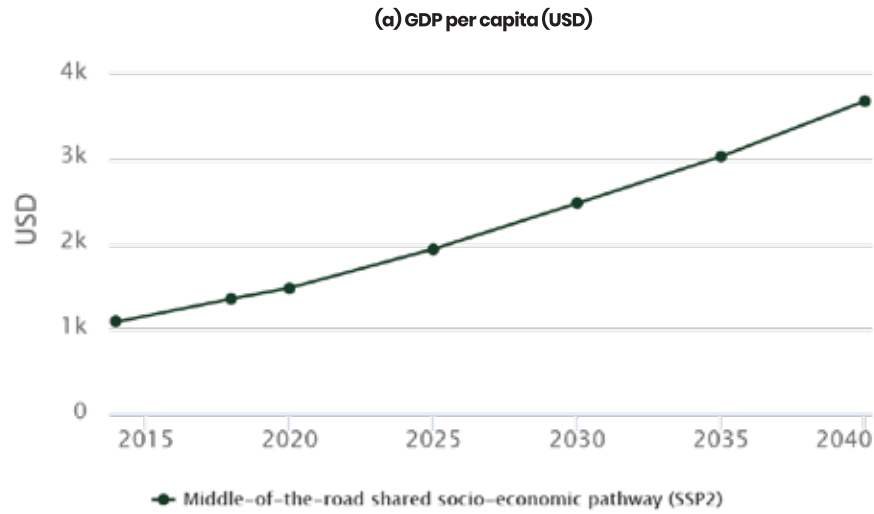
Among the eight divisions in the country, Dhaka has the highest annual population growth rate at 1.74 percent (1.22 percent national)

Source: Population and Housing Census 2022. Website: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2022/07/27/bangladeshs-population-size-now-1651-million>

Population growth in the Dhaka Metropolitan Area is comparable to the national average, and the region is expected to have an urban population of about 13 million in 2040.

The assumed gross domestic product (GDP) per capita growth rate is expected to increase constantly in the period 2018 to 2040. Bangladesh is expected to have a larger pickup in growth of GDP from 2030 to 2040.

Figure 3: Household incomes



Source: SSID model

The average yearly income (GDP) per capita in the City Corporations of Dhaka Division is projected to grow at a similar rate as the baseline scenario. Both the bottom and top 10 percent of household incomes will increase, but income inequality is expected to remain in 2040. Income and population growth patterns are important drivers of the outcomes of the projected model for food consumption and dietary change.

Figure 4: Composition of food groups

The current consumption pattern is based on an import–domestic production ratio that is expected to evolve, depending on the evolution of volume and the nature of demand. As shown by the changes in quantities and proportions of given food groups, the defining factor is whether consumption patterns will evolve into healthy or unhealthy diets, alongside the evolution of domestic agricultural production.

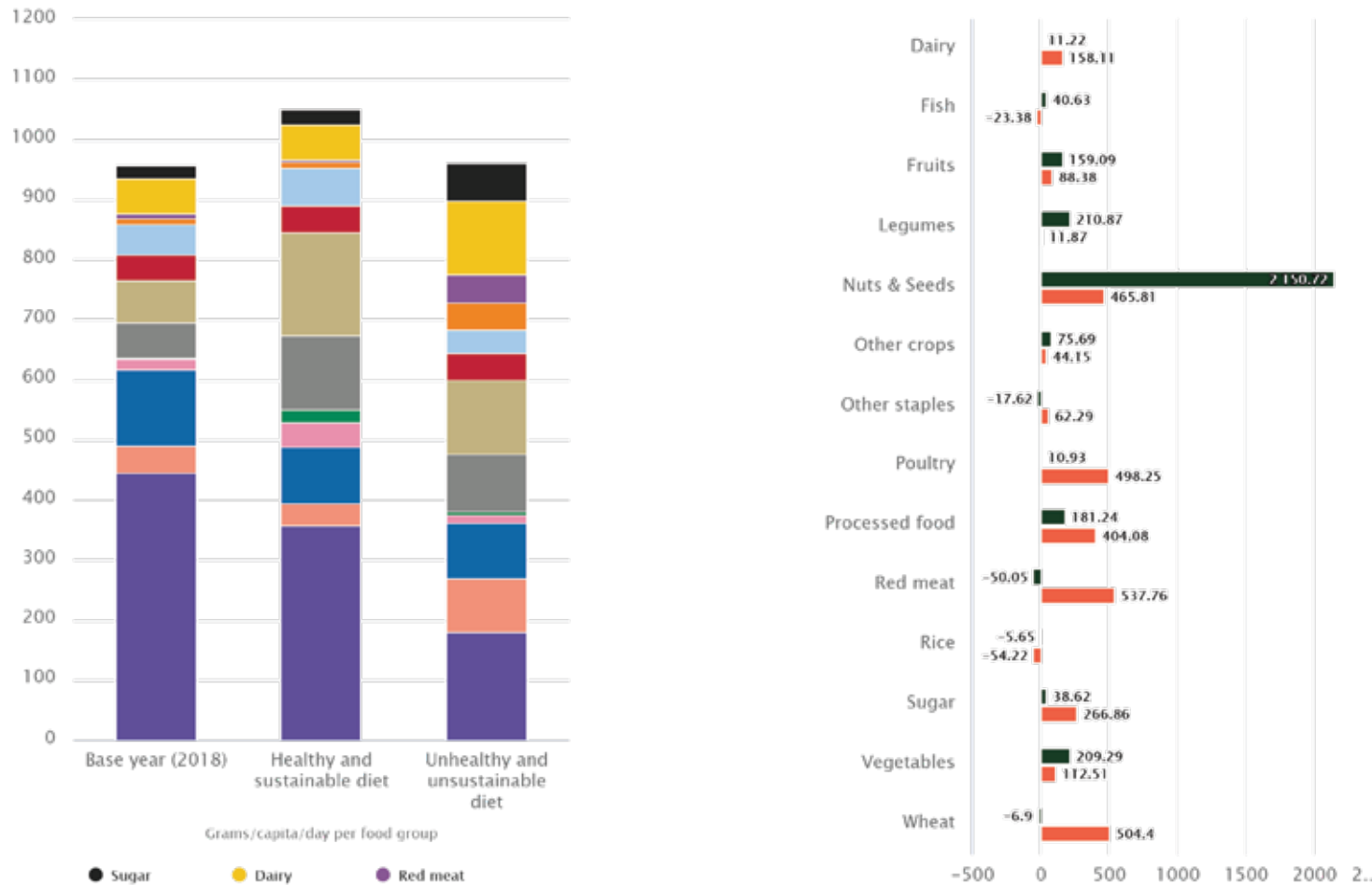
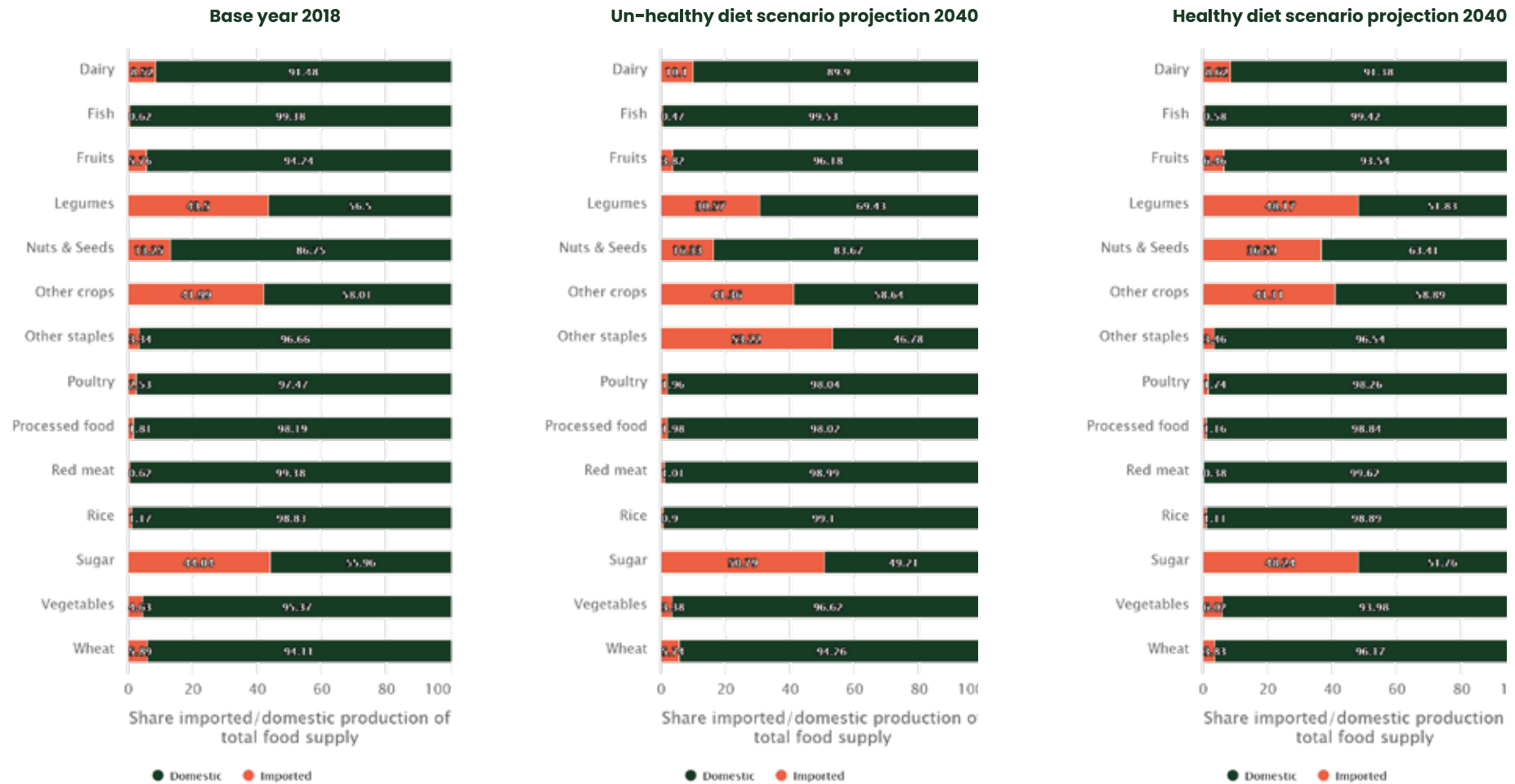


Figure 4: Continued

In Figure 4 The top figures represent: **(left)** the composition of food groups in the Bangladesh daily caloric intake per capita for the base year 2018 and the two projected changes that could develop in alternative diet scenarios, one “healthy and sustainable”, and the other “unhealthy and unsustainable” for Bangladesh in 2040; **(right)** the percentage change in the total demand for each of the food groups compared to the base year 2018. The bottom figures show the base year 2018 **(left)** and the model projected shares of domestic production and import to meet the reported projected demand for each food groups in 2040 for an unhealthy diet scenario **(middle)** and healthy diet scenario **(right)**. These projections are based on the price and competitiveness between domestic and global markets. The diet scenarios are based on the Bangladesh specific EAT-Lancet diets.



Source: MAGNET model

Source: MAGNET model

Source: MAGNET model

Critical uncertainties

A series of critical uncertainties were identified that will likely shape the transformation of the Dhaka food system through the participatory process as shown in Figure 5. Currently, moving forward, the Government of Bangladesh is integrating a few of the uncertainties by formulating long-term plans and policies. As such, the uncertainties remain but are beginning to be articulated into the key future visions and policies.

Figure 5: Identified critical uncertainties



Climate resilience: A number of questions arise such as whether food will be produced reliably, and whether it will be accessible and affordable, despite climate change, coupled with other challenges such as declining soil quality, possible impacts on agricultural productivity resulting from the rise in salinity, extreme weather conditions, heat stress, loss of biodiversity, pollution and environmental degradation. Part of the answer may come from the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP2100), which seeks to address climate vulnerabilities and improve the management of water, land, ecology, and environment through addressing risks directly at the source, and through strategies, policies, investment programmes and institutions. Accordingly, the associated strategies for flood control, water storage, irrigation, land-agriculture-forest resource management, and ecological balance are the major elements of the policy package, which aims to reduce poverty and improve environmental management under the Perspective Plan 2021-2041. The Eighth Five Year Plan (Eighth FYP) also proposes a sustainable development pathway to enhance resilience to disasters and climate change.

Trade: In the long term, will Bangladesh rely positively on an open web of trade relationships or will the country need to respond to the geopolitical setbacks of globalization? For the near future, PP2041 supports trade that is more open, diversified and export-oriented. Trade liberalization is set to continue, with trade facilitation aimed to reduce costs and increase the speed of trade.

Business structure: There are pressing questions as to which businesses will be selling food, whether there will be a diversified set of retailers or if business will be concentrated in a few hands. On the one hand, policy as per PP2041 emphasizes industrialization, and a more intensified structural transformation and transition from agriculture to manufacturing and service-based industries. On the other hand, in the agrofood sector, the current National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (NFNSP) (2020) underscores the empowerment of small producers and non-farm small and medium enterprises (SME) and encourages the growth of self-supporting, financially viable small, medium and large commercial agrifood units capable of adopting the latest energy-efficient technologies, including processing and value-addition. With a largely deregulated market economy, such as that supported by the PP2041, the smallholder-dominated agriculture sector may face several challenges.

Equity: The growth trend for incomes is very strong, but will it translate into shared prosperity or growing inequalities? This will depend on the policies in place today and in the future. Currently, PP2041 and the Eighth FYP underpin inclusive and poverty-reducing growth with lower income inequality.

Policy priorities include: strengthening the human capital base of the poor; developing agriculture to alleviate poverty; promoting labour-intensive exports including agrobased and manufacturing SMEs; eliminating inequalities related to access to services and finance; and ensuring social protection benefits for those who are most disadvantaged and marginalized – in an attempt to guarantee income, employment, and a minimum quality of life for all. These priorities have been developed further in National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh (NSSS).

Consumption patterns: Consumption trends are paramount to shaping the food system. However, is consumption going to be healthy and sustainable? Trends, as identified by PP2041, suggest that the rapidly growing middle-class is strengthening domestic demand and, as a result, domestic markets are expanding rapidly. At the same time, the NFNSP recognizes that Bangladesh is undergoing dietary diversification from energy-rich cereals towards nutrient-rich foods, although the pace has been slow, with globalization, urbanization and income growth being the major drivers of dietary changes. The NFNSP further recognizes that these drivers may negatively impact dietary patterns, as consumption of convenience foods with little nutritional value has increased over time.

Food prices: Will prices be stable or reasonably predictable in the future? Will food remain affordable? The current PP2041 planning instrument recognizes that high inflation especially that led by food price inflation, directly hurts poor people. Thus, the target is to reduce the rate of inflation so that it can be maintained around 4 to 5 percent per year. This will be achieved by ensuring well-coordinated monetary and fiscal policies, improving productivity, augmented supply that emphasizes food security, the enhanced role of the public sector in infrastructure, strengthened competition policies in a largely deregulated market economy, and macro-economic management to achieve low inflation and inclusive growth. Improving access to safe and nutritious food at an affordable price is also one of the objectives of NFNSP.



Imagining the future of Dhaka's food system

Consumption patterns, and the business structure, were selected as the two critical uncertainties that would have the most significant impact on the future of Dhaka's food system. The future food system will look very different, depending on what people are eating. Diets are changing, for example, per capita consumption of rice is decreasing while the consumption of fast foods, carbonated drinks and wheat-based products are becoming more common. How far and how quickly will this change occur? As incomes are growing, demand for animal-based proteins is on the rise. Looking into the future, we need to consider how much of Dhaka's food will be produced domestically, how much will be imported, and how this will be influenced by diets.

These questions were explored by foresight and scenario analysis, resulting in development of the four scenarios in Figure 6. Depending on government policies, changing consumer understanding and attitudes, food prices, and advertising, it is plausible to imagine two extremes of consumption (the vertical axis in Figure 6). On the horizontal axis, for example, which is influenced by foreign direct investment policies, the competitiveness of small-scale enterprises, and changing shopping preferences, we can imagine two different extremes for the business structure. Thus, four different scenarios are shown in Figure 6.

The current business structure of the food system, as identified during stakeholder consultations, is dominated by many micro SMEs and producers. Food is purchased predominantly from fresh markets, local shops and street traders. Supermarkets still have limited penetration. The consumption pattern, although improving, remains cereal-dominated and environmentally unsustainable. By comparison, in North America and Europe, a few large firms dominate the agrifood sector and employment in the sector is relatively low, compared to other sectors. This consolidated and centralized model is gradually increasing in many low and middle-income countries and may well be Bangladesh's future.

What might the situation be like in Bangladesh in 20 years, what will be the implications for food purchasing outlets, livelihood opportunities, equity and sustainability?

Clearly, the scenarios at the bottom of Figure 6 are undesirable, given Bangladesh's overall development goals and its food and nutrition security strategies. However, it is plausible that Dhaka may end up in either one of these scenarios, depending on the force of political economic drivers and the effects of policy. The participatory process foresees that, if we do not intervene, in the future Dhaka's food system will move towards the bottom-right quadrant, where centralized large-scale firms promote unhealthy and unsustainable diets to maximize short-term profits.

The scenarios at the top of the diagram are more desirable, in terms of consumption patterns, food security and nutrition. The consultative process foresees that Dhaka desires the business structure or market to remain dominated by MSMEs, with a narrow percentage of market share for the larger-scale consolidated firms serving high-income people living in urban areas.

Given the small-farm based agrarian economy of Bangladesh, this is desired because small producers and enterprises can better contribute to our culture, diversity, and environment, if they receive the right education and training. This stance will also create more employment and job opportunities in rural areas, protect smallholders, and ensure that they receive fairer prices and there is better control over markets with stronger institutions.

The dominance of smaller or larger-scale enterprises in the food system can be positive or negative, and requires careful consideration. Recognizing that the agrifood sector provides a large share of employment, the food system needs to maximize fair economic opportunities for as many people as possible.



Figure 6: Four possible scenarios

Scenario A: “Diversified and viable small-scale entrepreneurship for healthy people and planet”

Consumers have shifted to healthier diets that are resource efficient. Food demands are being met by many micro, small and medium-scale enterprises working in partnership with larger firms, with good food safety and quality standards in place. Appropriate technology plays an increasing role in sustainable business operations. Farmers are paid a fair price, and incentives are in place to protect the environment. Healthy food is available and affordable for both poor and wealthy consumers and there is a diversity of retail options.

Many micro, small and medium-scale enterprises



Healthy and environmentally sustainable diets

Consumption patterns

Scenario B: “Responsible larger-scale companies drive sustainability and health”

High consumption of healthy diets and fewer resource-intensive inputs, aside from dominance of larger companies and firms. Smaller farmers and enterprises find it difficult to compete and achieve viability, the consumption of diverse local food declines. Business marketing heavily influences consumption patterns. All food is increasingly purchased at larger supermarkets and online, with significant levels of imports.

Dependence on larger-scale and consolidated firms



Business structure

High consumption of unhealthy and/or resource intensive diets. Food sector is dominated by many micro, small and medium enterprises operating with poor standards and low returns. Growing food inequalities between those who can afford better quality, healthier food and those who cannot. Small retailers have limited power over types of food to sell and pricing. Growing difficulties in domestic production and increased reliance on the international market.

Scenario C: “Fragmented, uncoordinated and unsustainable agri-food sector hangs on”



Unhealthy and resource-intensive diets

Scenario D: “Profit driven larger-scale companies drive unsustainable and unhealthy consumption”

Unhealthy and resource intensive food consumption is driven by high dependency on larger-scale firms with low levels of responsible marketing and procurement. Increasing nutrition related health issues. Small-scale farmers and enterprises are heavily exploited by a few larger-scale companies that monopolize the market. Purchasing from supermarkets becomes more prevalent, many of which provide cheap, poor quality food products with low nutritional value. Food inequalities increase.



Envisioning the Dhaka food system

Envisioning the Dhaka food system

Bangladesh is committed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), where people, planet, peace, prosperity and partnerships are at the heart of our development drive. The need to transform agriculture and food systems to achieve the SDGs has been re-established by Bangladesh's participation in the United Nations Food System Summit 2021 and the formulation of the National Pathway as presented by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Summit. The Pathway sets out the development of the urban market infrastructure with backward and forward linkages, investment and strengthening capacity of all actors in government institutions at the national and subnational levels, with coordinated governance through an integrated multistakeholder, multisectoral and multilevel approach.

A long-term comprehensive Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 has been formulated that focuses on economic growth, environmental conservation, and enhanced climate resilience. The Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021-2041, which was formulated to realize Vision 2041 of becoming a prosperous, developed nation by 2041, also adds a paradigm shift in agriculture to enhance productivity and ensure nutrition and food security, strong and effective institutions with good governance, sustainable urban transition, urban governance reform, efficient energy and infrastructure, resilience to climate change and other environmental challenges, so as to establish Bangladesh as a knowledge hub to promote a skills-based society as a key strategic goal and milestone.

Given the possible future scenarios for Dhaka's food system and Bangladesh's overall vision for sustainable growth and development to encompass food and nutrition security, the vision of Dhaka's food system is to:

“Meet Dhaka's future food demands in an equitable and inclusive manner, to ensure nutritious and safe food for all through a food system which is sustainable, resilient, environment-friendly, and guided by collaborative stakeholder engagement and learning.”

To realize this vision, and to steer or “nudge” Dhaka's food system towards a desirable future scenario, the following five key directions for action were identified during stakeholder workshops:

1. Consumption of healthy and nutritious food
2. Meeting Dhaka's future food demands
3. Optimizing people's livelihoods in the food system
4. Protecting Dhaka's population from shocks to the food system
5. Feeding Dhaka in a nature positive way

The following section outlines each direction and provides specific actions to follow over the immediate, short and long-term.

However, given the uncertainties identified, and an increasingly turbulent international context, transforming Dhaka's food system will not be a simple or linear process. How to achieve the full set of desired food system outcomes is not fully known and ongoing research with technical, institutional and political innovation will be critical to bringing about the desired change. Furthermore, there will be inevitable trade-offs between nutritional, economic, social, and environmental outcomes that should be managed, along with potentially conflicting interests between different actors in the food system.

Best bet actions can be identified today, but how well they work will need to be assessed constantly and modifications made. New pressures on Dhaka's food system will emerge; unexpected shocks are inevitable, which will require new responses and changes in direction.





Key directions for Dhaka's Food System

The key directions of change identified for a healthier, sustainable and more resilient urban food system were elaborated during stakeholder consultations on the interlinked immediate, short-term, and long-term areas for action. Each action will contribute to change in the key directions. Immediate actions (within the next twelve months) were defined to contribute to quick wins. Long-term actions (for 2027 to 2041) aim to be sustained by immediate and short-term actions (for 2024 to 2026). Reference is made to actions that cannot be implemented easily or may simply require longer periods to mature. In addition, putting the Dhaka Food Agenda into action, and enabling a responsive approach to an uncertain future, will require new forms of governance and stakeholder collaboration and learning across government, businesses, consumers, civil society and research.

1. Consumption of healthy and nutritious food

Around the world, diets are changing, especially in urban areas; consumers tend to change their consumption patterns. Considering the projected increase in welfare, it is safe to say that, in Dhaka also, diets will continue to change. However, what these diets will look like, or how they may differ across income groups represent significant uncertainties. What Dhaka's population will consume has many implications. If diets start mimicking other middle and high-income countries, issues such as overweight, obesity and related non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and type-II diabetes should be anticipated. Navigating away from this scenario requires that healthy and nutritious food become accessible and affordable to all, through reliable and adequate food outlets in each neighbourhood, and that consumers are able to make informed choices: knowing what foods are healthy, safe and fitting for their dietary needs. The food environment should support consumers in making healthy choices.

Therefore, the following three key areas of action are proposed:

1. Ensure consumers are aware of and have access to healthy diets and nutrition information
2. Enhance consumers' access to affordable, diversified, healthy diets
3. Ensure physical access to foods for all

Regardless of what business structures will dominate Dhaka's food system, these three actions will ensure that appropriate foods reach all consumers in a transparent and affordable way. At the same time, demand is shaped by ensuring consumers can make informed choices and act accordingly.

1.1 Ensure consumers are aware of and have access to healthy diets and nutrition information

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Conduct targeted good food campaigns and training in healthy diets, correct cooking procedures, consumption practices,¹ food labelling, and food safety, engaging producers, buyers, end consumers, private sector, media and monitoring institutions for responsible food offers and choice.²
- Promote healthy foods more attractively, by engaging the private sector.³

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Incorporate nutrition education in the academic curriculum.⁴
- Test food items regularly,⁵ check nutritional facts and publish results publicly.⁶
- Widely disseminate age- and key-group-specific dietary guidelines based on local foods (e.g. for pregnant and lactating women, children, adolescents); engage and strengthen capacity of all field-level organizations and staffs under Medical Education and Family Welfare Division (MEFWD) in this regard.⁷

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Ensure consumer rights through policies and their implementation.⁸
- Ensure proper labelling of food items (in easy terms, in Bangla) with food facts and nutritional values.⁹

Leading actor: Ministry of Food (MoFood)

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- MoFood/Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA): Raise awareness (especially for children and youth so as to change their mindset) and enforce laws.
- Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE)/ Department of Fisheries (DoF)/ Department of Livestock Services (DLS) (Ministry of Agriculture [MoA], Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock [MoFL], Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)): Raise awareness and formulate policies.
- MoEducation: Integrate nutrition and safe food in curriculum
- Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI): Ensure proper labelling.
- MoHFW (BNNC, IPH, IPHN, DGHS), Research organization/CGIAR: Conduct evidence-based research
- CC, MoHFW (MEFWD): Ensure access to information at the community level; integrate nutrition awareness in development plans, with special attention to pregnant and lactating women and children.
- Access to Information Programme, MoHFW (MEFWD): Produce/ develop and disseminate information.
- Other actors: Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MoWCA), Consumers' Association/civil society organizations, NGOs.

1.2 Enhance consumers' access to affordable, diversified, healthy diets

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Ensure nutritious, affordable food by setting price ceilings for basic food items/major food groups.¹⁰
- Increase transparency and competitiveness by displaying daily product prices in fresh markets, and monitoring markets for prices, unethical stocking and syndicates, and enforce laws.¹¹

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Engage restaurants and hospitality industry to promote nutritious foods.
- Establish area-based weekly farmers markets, or allocate space for farmers inside fresh markets, to sell quality fresh products at reasonable price.
- Invest in basic infrastructure that supports nutrition and health such as safe drinking water and sanitation for all.¹²

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Implement the existing nutrition and food security policies, Plan of Action (PoA), guidelines and multisectoral urban and nutrition strategy.¹³
- Policy planning and monitoring by Interministerial coordination body.¹⁴
- Make city corporations the primary regulatory authority to ensure nutrition and food security in cities,¹⁵ with budget allocation.

Leading actor: Ministry of Food

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM) (MoA): Monitor markets.
- City corporations: Monitor markets and educate consumers.
- Other actors: Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC), National Nutrition Services, MoHFW, MoA, Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW), Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

1.3 Ensure physical access to foods for all

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Increase efficiency in market management and accessibility through strengthened collaboration with market management committees and residential societies.
- Encourage consumers to buy from regulated markets, vendors and shops.

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Allocate space for nutrition corners in city corporations (inside fresh markets and low-income communities).
- Develop and implement plans or guidelines to manage and properly expand food outlets, including regulating street markets, and street or mobile food vending.¹⁶
- Enable online shopping facilities at fresh markets to increase access to nutritious food in areas with fewer food outlets.¹⁷

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Develop long-term plans to gradually improve fresh markets and informal markets and establish new fresh markets (including suitable location, permanent designated space, days and times to operate, training facilities for vendors and actors) through proper spatial planning and design.
- Establish at least one registered fresh market in each Ward, and one standardized model market in every City Corporation.

Leading actor: City Corporation

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- CC, Market Management Committee (MMC), law enforcement agencies and consumers' association: Monitor markets and ensure compliance of fresh markets with standards.
- CC: Develop market infrastructure, regulate functioning of markets, establish and maintain grievance mechanisms, and encourage coordination among stakeholders.
- District administration/CC: Allocate land for new markets.
- DAM: Provide guideline on field level activities for farmers' market.

2. Meeting Dhaka's future food demands

The number of people living in urban areas of Bangladesh is expected to rise to over 90 million in the next two to three decades. This will create an increasing urban food demand while production capacity will be constrained, especially as a result of the loss of agricultural land. Such trends raise the question of how Dhaka will be able to meet future food demand given the uncertainties in how diets will change. Besides cereals, grains, pulses, and vegetables, animal protein is indispensable for human health. According to BLRI, the availability of milk, meat, and eggs are respectively, 208 ml/h/d, 147 g/h/dd, and 136 nos/h/year. By 2041, 300 ml/h/d of milk, 160 g/h/d of meat, and 208 nos/h/year of eggs will be needed. Dietary patterns may evolve into demand for more unhealthy and unsustainable diets, or for healthier and sustainably produced diets. Steering towards healthy and sustainably produced diets translates into a higher demand for certain foods, such as fresh fruits, vegetables, and sustainably produced foods. This requires actions targeting sourcing (domestic production or imports), market dynamics, market infrastructure and logistics to ensure business structures that reach all city dwellers equitably. The following four key areas of action are proposed:

1. Ensure responsiveness to changing market dynamics in production and supply, including strategies for urban food production
2. Ensure safe and healthy food production, transport, processing, handling and distribution throughout the food value chain
3. Invest in shortening food value chains and increasing their efficiency in providing affordable healthy diets
4. Reduce food loss and waste throughout the food value chain, from farm to fork

These action areas focus on the need to organize for and uphold adequacy, safety standards and efficiency in any food value chain, and to diversify options to meet future food demands. Actions seek to closely monitor food related uncertainties and help strategize accordingly.

2.1 Ensure responsiveness to changing market dynamics in production and supply, including strategies for urban food production

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Map suitable urban spaces and raise awareness about urban farming.¹
- Map the food sourcing strategies of consumers.
- Generate and share market projections and modulate imports-exports/fiscal policies accordingly to mitigate price volatility.²

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Support climate resilient and regenerative agricultural strategies for diversified food production, including the use of vacant urban land for gardening, support urban agriculture (e.g. with subsidies), and incentivize conservation of agricultural land,³ e.g. with tax rebates.
- Develop policy guidelines for urban farmers and gardeners and support the expansion of rooftop and urban gardening, building on good agricultural practices (GAP).⁴
- Monitor food environments for consumers' alternative food sourcing behaviours.⁵

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Integrate climate resilient and regenerative agricultural strategies, including urban gardening and farming, for diversified food production in long-term coordinated policy plans and appropriate policy or legislation frameworks for implementation and monitoring.⁶
- Integrate food-sourcing strategies in multisectoral urban and nutrition strategy and ensure implementation of long and short-term nutrition and food security action plans.⁷
- Develop implementation schemes to improve the sustainability of urban farmers' markets.
- Encourage agricultural research, training and technology adaptation to improve crop varieties; enhance productivity; invest in research and development of sustainable animal feed production methods including from food waste; mechanize, digitalize, commercialize, and diversify agriculture; utilize land and productive resources by well-trained farmers; use and promote high-yield varieties, breeds, and species; adopt smart modern agricultural techniques including for urban and peri-urban agriculture.⁸

Leading actors: Ministry of Agriculture, through DAE and DAM

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- Ministry of Agriculture: Develop necessary policy and monitoring mechanism.
- LGD: Develop land-use mapping,
- DAE/National Agricultural Research System (NARS): Provide training, implement and promote good agricultural practices, innovative or smart practices and modern technologies, uptake research programmes to increase urban production.
- MMC: Ensure quality of food and mitigate conflicts in the markets.
- CC: Coordinate with relevant stakeholders such as BFSa, MMC, Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM).
- Other actors: MoCommerce, Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh Institute of Research and Training on Applied Nutrition (BIRTAN) to ensure markets are dynamic, I/NGOs.

2.2 Ensure safe and healthy food production, transport, processing, handling and distribution throughout the food value chain

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Include food safety as a key responsibility of City Corporations in the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009.⁹
- Strengthen food inspection and testing procedures in fresh markets, hotels, restaurants and other food businesses.¹⁰
- Build awareness of consumers to accept frozen or processed animal-sourced foods in fresh markets.

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Invest in awareness campaigns and capacity-building of all actors in the food value chains from farm to fork on natural preservation methods, hygiene practices, food safety standards (including food-borne diseases, radiation, toxin, allergens, bio-hazards) and health impacts.¹¹
- Review food safety policies, identify gaps at the city level and establish coordination of responsibilities among the various authorities involved in food production and safety.¹²
- Develop standard operating procedures and monitoring for safe food processing, storage including cold chains, and handling for fresh markets, hotels, restaurants and other food businesses, and ensure adequate compliance and grievance management mechanisms.¹³
- Gradually phase out sales of live birds and animals in fresh markets to reduce zoonotic disease transmission and prevent antimicrobial resistance and develop their capacity (processing, storage) to sell frozen animal-sourced foods.
- Develop viable business models for safe, organic food production, processing and handling including mechanisms to intensify the certification and licensing of food-related businesses.¹⁴

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Develop joint action plans on food safety and hygiene in food distribution and marketing in cities to strengthen coordination among implementing agencies, ministries, the private sector, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders.¹⁵
- Develop an appropriate (academic) curriculum and strengthen enforcement mechanisms in the Food Safety Act and other regulations: train law enforcement agencies and food safety personnel to utilize the existing food testing protocols, capacities, infrastructure.¹⁶
- Implement national policies and legislation to limit the use of pesticides, chemicals, and preservatives, and incorporate them in development projects, enhance accountability.¹⁷
- Create a safe food rights charter to empower consumers and enhance the access, availability and affordability of safe foods.¹⁸

2.2 Ensure safe and healthy food production, transport, processing, handling and distribution throughout the food value chain

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- DAE, DoF, DLS, DAM, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), MoI (BSTI): Ensure a healthy, safe standard of food behaviour in production, post-harvest management, processing and handling; structurally improve food safety conditions throughout the food value chain with BFSA; conduct mobile courts with City Corporation and BFSA.
- BSFA, MoHFW, MoI: Raise awareness, train actors (especially mobile and street food vendors, restaurants), enhance monitoring.
- CC, MoHFW, BSTI: Strengthen city food safety governance and promote multi-stakeholder collaboration (e.g. by forming a monitoring cell, Food Commission, Standing Committee, including CC Health and Sanitation Officers, Zonal Executive Officers, BFSA, BSTI) to implement food safety guidelines, ensure compliance with food safety regulations, raise awareness, prevent adulteration, monitor markets (government, privately owned), and ensure licensing.
- Law enforcement agencies: enforce laws and acts.
- Private sector: Play a key role to ensure food safety, traceability and provide necessary information to consumers.
- Development partners: Raise awareness, support street vendors to improve hygiene, perform with CCs in an action-based approach for result-oriented outputs.
- Other actors: Ministry of Education, producers' groups, cooperatives, traders' associations, MMC, Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection, CAB, and sector-related regulatory bodies.

2.3 Invest in shortening food value chains and increasing their efficiency in providing affordable healthy diets

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Explore and identify roles of actors in prioritized food value chains, selected for nutritional value, dietary diversity, affordability and access, to reduce intermediaries' costs and risk of adulteration.¹⁹
- Sensitize consumers on consumption of locally produced foods.²⁰
- Strengthen food inspection and quality control in the food value chain (FVC) by grading, sorting, cleaning, and proper storage and transportation.²¹

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Encourage research to map and test solutions to shorten the food value chain (e.g. continue farmers' market).²²
- Train and engage food value chain actors in multi-stakeholder platforms to support information exchange and joint action, promote product aggregation, contract farming, and value addition to agricultural products.²³

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Develop joint action plans on shortening food value chains to strengthen coordination and feedback mechanisms among implementing agencies, ministries, private sector, farmers, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders.²⁴
- Develop viable business models to balance shortened food value chains and good pricing for consumers, including mechanisms to strengthen agrifood MSMEs, and regulate intermediaries and large traders/enterprises.²⁵

Leading actor: DAM and Ministry of Commerce

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- DAM, DLS, DoF, MoCommerce: Lead initiatives to shorten food value chains.
- CC: Develop capacity of stakeholder groups involved in food trade at different levels.
- Other actors: Department of Cooperatives, BIRTAN.

2.4 Reduce food loss and waste throughout the food value chain, from farm to fork

Immediate actions (steps in next the 12 months)

- Sensitize all actors (farmers to consumers) on good practices concerning food loss and waste (prevent, minimize, manage), through SBCC, educational curricula, mass media campaigns and training.²⁶
- Encourage research to map and test solutions to reduce food loss and waste during harvest, processing and retail, and to increase product shelf-life at the retail level.²⁷
- Invest in an improved waste disposal and upcycling system such as allocation of disposal places for organic waste, expansion of waste segregation efforts, and animal feed production from food waste (e.g. with the technology developed by BLRI).²⁸

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Promote responsible business and develop standard operating procedures and monitoring to reduce food loss and waste in processing, storage – including cold chain technologies – and handling in fresh markets, hotels, restaurants and other food businesses, and ensure adequate compliance mechanisms.²⁹
- Experiment with nudging behaviour towards portion control in restaurants and at large ceremonies.³⁰
- Review food loss and waste policies and related legislation, identify gaps at the city level and establish coordination of responsibilities among the different authorities involved.³¹
- Promote large-scale food processing and related technology transfer (especially for seasonal fruits and vegetables, fish, milk), better utilization; improve packaging.³²

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Develop joint action plans on food loss and waste to strengthen coordination and feedback mechanisms among implementing agencies, ministries, the private sector, farmers, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders.
- Ratify and establish revitalized urban FLW management policies and segregated waste processing system, including implementation force.

Leading actor: DAE, DAM, DoF, DLS, BLRI (MoA and MoFL), CC, producers' associations, and MMC

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- DAE, DoF, DLS, BLRI and DAM: Monitor FLW from farm to market, ensure compliance with food safety issues, cooperate with ministries to formulate FLW policy, promote seafood, and support food processing enterprises.
- CC: Develop markets to reduce FLW, enforce relevant laws, support waste to animal feed or energy conversion initiative (e.g. biogas) with relevant infrastructure and equipment, promote responsible business, and ensure consumers are informed.

3. Optimizing people's livelihoods in the food system

What Dhaka's food system will look like will influence the types of food-related jobs in the cities. Moving towards the establishment of a desirable scenario where food safety standards, good agricultural practices and sustainability standards are upheld implies an extension of standards in monitoring and enforcing efforts. This again may affect curricula in education and capacity development activities for actors throughout food value chains. In addition, whether the food system comprises a diverse business structure, or alternatively, large-scale companies, has very different implications for the level of competitiveness and needs for structures to support such businesses. An important issue in Dhaka, which requires attention, is how to respond to the large numbers of informal jobs on which Dhaka's food system depends. Regardless of the future direction, optimizing people's livelihoods in the food system requires action to support fair incomes across all sectors and actors within the food system, and decent work conditions for all workers. Four key areas of action are proposed:

1. Enhance promotion of safe food production, processing and handling as a strategy to improve the working conditions of food sector actors
2. Support avenues to facilitate investment and create economic opportunities in the agrifood sector
3. Ensure the adaptive capacity of fresh markets and informal sector vendors to change
4. Ensure livelihoods and benefits (economic or other) for low-income communities active in food-related waste businesses when shifting from low-to high-value waste management

These areas of action focus on improving working conditions and fair income throughout the value chain, with a special focus on those currently working in the informal sector and in low-income jobs.

3.1 Enhance promotion of safe food production, processing and handling as a strategy to improve the working conditions of food sector actors

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Raise awareness and improve skills on workplace safety, among food businesses, farmers, workers, employers, and law enforcement.¹
- Assess workplaces (agriproduction, markets, processing plant, and transport) to identify weaknesses (infrastructure, safety, hazards) and barriers for a healthy work environment.²
- Develop standard operating procedures for safe workplaces in the food sector, including informal sector, and appropriate monitoring mechanisms.³

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Map and pilot test solutions for improved workplaces, and support investment in improving workplace conditions (tax rebate, favourable loans).⁴
- Engage with food sector associations to develop joint action plans on workplace conditions in the food sector, and strengthen coordination and feedback mechanisms among implementing agencies, ministries, private sector, farmers, NGOs, CBOs and other stakeholders.⁵

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Introduce and invest in automation and technology in the agrifood sector that can enhance safety and reduce hazards.⁶
- Designate a department or division, as required, for workplace safety and workers' rights.⁷
- Ratify and establish workplace policies and legislation for the food sector, to monitor agrifood sector workplaces for compliance to standards and develop intensification and certification schemes.⁸

Leading actor: Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), BFSA, and private sector

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- BFSA, Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) and associated labs: Ensure safe food production.
- MoLE: Assess and develop workplaces and capacity of workers, employers and inspectors.
- Private sector and corporate organizations: Cooperate with government for collective effort.

3.2 Support avenues to facilitate investment and creating economic opportunities in the agri-food sector

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Map potential investors in Bangladesh and abroad.⁹
- Identify the barriers and gaps in agribusiness financing and investment for existing policy and practices.¹⁰

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Develop a roadmap to improve investment climate and business opportunity in food sector, including a particular focus on support to small (house hold-based) food processors, and medium and large-scale food businesses¹¹
- Improve market linkages, develop marketing channels and transport arrangements to enhance farmers' (especially the marginalized) access to markets.¹²
- Enable farmers to purchase (safe) inputs with interest-free or soft government loans,¹³ repay agriloans by agri-produces and loan products.

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Enhance accessibility to financial services by facilitating and simplifying service delivery, e.g. one-stop service desk under one department.¹⁴
- Upgrade, ratify and implement revitalized investment policies and legislation, to establish a favourable and supportive investment climate.¹⁵
- Develop central data management system to monitor the economic contribution of the food sector.¹⁶
- Gather emerging sectors under a specialized business category, e.g. beef-meat processing.¹⁷

Leading actor: Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA)

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- BIDA, Bangladesh Bank, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Create enabling environment for investment.
- Designated Branch/ Desk of Urban Development Wing of LGD, DAE, DoF, DLS, BSTI, BFSa, Ministry of Commerce, agro processing industries: Coordinate policies to support the investment environment.

3.3 Ensure adaptation of fresh markets and the informal sector in the realm of changing market structures

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Raise awareness of actors (MMC, vendors) on ways to improve the efficiency of markets and ensure they are consumer-friendly.¹⁸
- Explore the potential of fresh markets and market management committees to respond to shifting market dynamics and identify solutions.¹⁹
- Strengthen the capacity and technical knowledge of vendors/low-income/informal food sector actors on business management, value addition, standards, services, and income-generating activities.²⁰

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Provide for and facilitate resources (public space) and regulatory framework to support implementation of solutions and innovative market models, including mechanisms to include informal sector actors, ensure minimum wage for food sector workers and upgrade market infrastructure.²¹
- Promote gender and social inclusion in the urban food economy (e.g. support Community Development Committees of Town Federations or women to install organic food stores in communities).²²
- Promote peer-to-peer and CC personnel for sharing of grassroots level knowledge to enhance outcomes of capacity and awareness building activities.²³

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Develop (urban) policy instruments and implementation strategies to support the inclusion of the informal food sector in urban policies for social development and well-being, and equip seasonal workers to take part in the informal food sector.²⁴
- Ensure compliance of traders and workers with market regulations (CC, urban planners and market officers).²⁵
- Connect informal food sector actors with the private sector (e.g. to source raw materials, grade, sort, outsource processing, check quality, market and distribute) so as to formalize them.²⁶

Leading actor: CC, DAE (MoA), MoFood, LGD

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- Designated Branch/ Desk of Urban Development Wing of LGD, MoA, MoFood: Adapt necessary policies.
- CC: Enforce and implement policies, ensure monitoring.
- MMC: Support in enforcing rules and ensuring compliance
- MoLE: Empower workers' unions to gain bargaining power
- Other actors: RAJUK, BFSa, CAB, I/NGO

3.4 Ensure livelihoods and benefits (economic or other) for low-income communities active in food-related waste businesses when shifting from low-to high-value waste management

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Advocate (re)use of solid waste by selling, recycling and creating alternative income through SMEs.²⁷
- Identify and analyse business opportunities for the highest waste producing products or sectors (e.g. shell to ornament).²⁸

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Map and pilot test alternatives to reuse and recycle organic food wastes.²⁹
- Introduce and promote small-scale waste recycling technologies or methods to informal food loss and waste (FLW) sector workers and provide vocational training on waste reuse and recycling.³⁰

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Establish business support package for entrepreneurs on the reuse or recycling of food waste.³¹
- Connect informal food sector actors with the private sector (e.g. to source waste, grade, sort, clean, outsource processing partially) to formalize them.³²

Leading actor: CC, MoA (DAM, DAE), MoFL (DLS, DoF)

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- CC: Facilitate the process of moving towards high-value waste treatment, and provide waste segregation support to markets.
- DAE, DAM, DLS, DoF: Provide technical support, awareness-raising and training, implement policies and services in cooperation with CC.
- NGO: Conduct training, raise awareness and pilot solutions.

4. Protecting Dhaka's population from shocks to the food system

This fourth key direction focuses on the importance of building resilience into the urban food systems to enable them to respond adequately to uncertainties and shocks. Whether it be climate related shocks, pandemics, or geopolitical instability, there is a need for adequate safety nets and regulatory price mechanisms to ensure food and nutrition security for all. Conscious decision-making, regarding the level of self-sufficiency and dependence on food trade, is also required, driven by an understanding of the risks and opportunities that different business structures and food sourcing strategies provide. Therefore, the following four key areas of action are proposed:

1. Strategize to improve the resilience of enhanced food security and food safety, given the impacts of climate change, trade and other conditions
2. Support the development of a resilient business environment
3. Improve the resilience of the food outlet landscape (food markets, vendors) to adverse weather conditions and the impacts of climate change
4. Ensure that low-income and vulnerable groups become more resilient to stress and shocks

Together, these action areas address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, and acknowledges the need for better understanding and response to vulnerabilities in food production, transportation, storage and retail.

4.1 Strategize to improve the resilience of enhanced food security and food safety, given the impacts of climate change, trade and other conditions

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Review policy and analyse risk and gaps in the agrifood system (food security, safety) in the face of climate change.¹
- Review bilateral trade agreements with major food producing and exporting countries.²
- Diversify the portfolio of essential food sourcing: peri-urban, close and long-distance production hub, and imports.³

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Introduce and promote climate-smart and resilient agriculture (crop varieties, technology, practices).⁴
- Explore and incentivize urban and peri-urban food production.⁵
- Monitor and improve linkages between production, markets and food stocks.⁶

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Address and mainstream disaster risk management and climate resilience in all agricultural and relevant policies, to ensure nutrition and food security.⁷
- Formulate a long-term plan to develop resilient agrifood infrastructure (production, inputs, irrigation, transportation, storage, energy, waste management).⁸ Upgrade healthcare systems to address emerging health issues (especially urban) such as non-communicable diseases.⁹
- Integrate designated food production and preservation areas in urban planning.¹⁰

Leading actor: CC, MoA, BFSA

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- MoCommerce: Manage bilateral trade relations
- CC: Promote and support urban/ peri-urban production and trade
- Department of Disaster Management (DDM), Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR): Conduct a vulnerability study
- MoA/NARS: Provide training, and support resilient production and technologies

4.2 Support the development of a resilient business environment

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Analyse policy gaps concerning resilience of the food-producing sector in relation to adverse weather and seasonal constraints.¹¹
- Encourage matching consumption pattern to seasonal changes in local production and market potentials and conditions.¹²

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Uptake strategies to mitigate food loss related to seasonal hazards: strengthen early warning systems, change cropping patterns as per changing weather conditions and seasonal traits.¹³
- Support environment-sensitive seasonal business development: generate necessary market forecasts, introduce seasonal loans, insurance and technologies to promote post-harvest food processing and storage.¹⁴

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Reform price policy to reduce seasonal fluctuations (as for rice).¹⁵
- Uptake strategies for balanced international food trade: encourage and incentivize export-oriented agriculture, high-value crops and food processing.¹⁶
- Decentralize services (education, health, industries) and utilize opportunities outside Dhaka.¹⁷

Leading actor: DAM (MoA)

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- Other actors: MoFood, MoCommerce, MoDMR, MOEFCC

4.3 Improve the resilience of food outlet landscape (food markets, vendors) to adverse weather conditions and impacts of climate change

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Develop necessary criteria or guidelines for the assessment of fresh and other markets to determine resilience standards.¹⁸
- Incorporate guidelines for resilience into standards of procedure for fresh and other markets.
- Inform market actors and consumers about resilient infrastructure and practices.¹⁹

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Encourage investment in developing resilient market infrastructure,²⁰ e.g. with tax rebates, specialized loan facilities for upgrades.

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Upgrade retail and other market infrastructure to ensure resilience, e.g. set up shed, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), drainage system to prevent waterlogging, covered refrigerated van, food storage with refrigeration, waste management, concrete pavement, fire safety.²¹
- Monitor markets for compliance to resilience standards and enforce relevant regulations.²²

Leading actor: RAJUK, CC

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- CC: Monitor food outlets regularly to ensure the presence of safety measures, raise awareness, train actors, and support investment in resilience.
- RAJUK: Ensure compliance to resilient building codes or requirements.
- Other actors: MMC, Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), MoEFCC

4.4 Ensure that low-income and vulnerable groups become more resilient to stress and shocks

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Control price inflation of basic food items (e.g. price ceiling, regulate syndicates, contract with private shops to sell products at defined prices).²³
- Develop individual-level strategies for disaster risk management and climate impact mitigation (especially for those who are climate-vulnerable); encourage personal savings, income diversification and alternative income-generation activities.²⁴

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Design and uptake integrated, customized, short-term social safety schemes targeting crisis periods (e.g. lean period, fishing bans, natural disasters), supplement them with government loan schemes/ agri-input subsidies, agri-insurance (crop, cattle), expand coverage of open market sale.²⁵
- Implement existing social safety policies such as, the life-cycle approach, placing emphasis on socially vulnerable groups including pregnant and lactating women, children and the elderly.²⁶
- Invest in urban social safety nets, targeted programmes for vulnerable groups, and food subsidies, including fortified basic foods (e.g. rice) for pregnant and lactating women and children.²⁷

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Design and offer counter-cyclical or seasonal loans with minimum interest.²⁸
- Develop and enhance coverage of universal social schemes (e.g. universal pension and savings).²⁹
- Reform and enforce policies to reduce income disparity (taxing).³⁰

Leading actor: Ministry of Social Welfare

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- MoHFW (BNNC, IPH, IPHN, DGHS): Food fortification and monitoring health condition of vulnerable groups.
- Other actors: MoFinance, MoDMR, MoA, Designated Branch/ Desk of Urban Development Wing of LGD, MoFood, MoWCA, MoCommerce, DAM

5. Feeding Dhaka in a nature positive way

As diets change around the globe, the impact of food systems on the natural environment has become increasingly evident, with loss of biodiversity, increasing greenhouse gas emissions, environmental degradation and pollution of food. The projected increase in wealth in Bangladesh goes hand in hand with an anticipated rise in the consumption of protein-rich foods such as dairy, meat and fish. However, from an environmental perspective, increased consumption of these foods represents a critical risk. A major challenge is how to navigate towards consumption patterns that not only support good health and well-being, but support a healthy natural environment within and outside Dhaka. In short: how can Dhaka feed its citizens in a manner that protects and even restores natural resources in and outside the city? This means not only sustainable and organic production of foods in urban and peri-urban areas, but also the efficient organization of food value chains to reduce food losses, which could include smart packing of food and rethinking of food transportation and waste management. What is considered food waste, and how to valorize waste throughout the food value chain are important questions for the future of Dhaka's food system.

Therefore, the following four key areas of action are proposed:

1. Shift towards nature-positive consumption and food behaviour
2. Promote nature-positive production to improve soil health, water and air quality and enhance food safety
3. Ensure there is a more efficient, environment friendly, and sustainable food transportation system
4. Develop clean and safe food markets (fresh, wholesale, supermarkets, others) and distribution that strengthens natural habitats

Together, these action areas acknowledge that a nature-positive approach requires a demand for foods that are produced as such, but also that production, transportation, processing, marketing and disposal of waste need to be in line with agreed sustainability standards and ambitions.

5.1 Shift towards nature-positive consumption and food behaviour

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Conduct motivational mass media campaigns to promote nature-positive diets that discourage unhealthy foods and improve consumers' purchasing habits, cooking, and storage behaviour to reduce FLW.¹
- Invest in future generations by building capacity of parents with school-age children and educating children in schools to normalize healthy, nutritious and nature positive food choices.²
- Engage communities and households actively in improved ways of consuming, disposing and re-using excess foods or food waste (e.g. encourage community-level food donation).³

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Assess and upgrade existing rules and policies (for agriculture, food, trade) to promote nature-positive consumption.⁴
- Gain a better understanding of current consumptions patterns, food buying behaviours, and FLW through data collection and research.⁵
- Promote household-level waste segregation and composting to reduce FLW.⁶
- Adapt or explore options to switch to ecofriendly alternative products and packaging at every stage of the food chain (jute/bamboo).⁷

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Incorporate information on safe, nature-positive diets in academic curricula from primary education.⁸
- Stimulate initiatives that optimize use of water in the agrifood sector.⁹

Leading actor: MoFood and MoA

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- MoFood, MoEducation: Provide training, and conduct promotional publicity campaigns and awareness-raising activities for consumers and market actors on mass media (i.e. to prevent over-purchasing or unnecessary storage).
- MoA, Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA), national agricultural research system (NARS): Introduce and promote new good practices
- Consumers and their associations: participate and cooperate

5.2 Promote nature-positive production to improve soil health, water and air quality and enhance food safety

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Promote ecofriendly and nature-positive production techniques including integrated pest management, GAP, good animal husbandry practices,¹⁰ and soil-water quality testing.¹¹
- Ensure soil and water quality-testing services, also in cities especially in areas that are important for urban agriculture or gardening, and for argi-input suppliers.¹²
- Bring suppliers and food sector MSMEs under one umbrella to reduce FLW.¹³

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Promote structural data-collection and sharing on soil and water conditions in urban, peri-urban and rural production areas and monitoring of agrochemical use.¹⁴
- Implement existing policies and standards for safe and nature-positive food production and distribution, including the maximum residue limit, also for pesticides and fertilizers.¹⁵
- Regulate and minimize food loss and waste, promote valorization of (food) waste through guidelines and enforcing the 3R policy (reduce, reuse and recycle).¹⁶

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Monitor and enforce minimum standards for use of agrochemicals and residues diligently in production areas.¹⁷
- Provide ecofriendly certification and supportive policies to encourage safe and nature-positive food production and distribution and efficient usage of land (soil) and waterbodies.¹⁸
- Ensure maximum utilization of food waste through structural uptake of waste recycling (e.g. animal feed, energy, or fertilizer) and treatment both by government and private sector.¹⁹

Leading actor: Department of Environment (DoE, MoEFCC) and producers' associations

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- Academia and RAJUK: Test and distribute information on the soil-water condition in cities.
- Farmers and producer associations and the private sector: Adopt GAP and other good practices.
- MoA (DAE, DAM), MoFL (DLS, DoF): Expand technology, and provide training and raise awareness on safe food production.
- BARC, BFSa, BSTI: Ensure uptake of GAP and other good practices.

5.3 Ensure there is a more efficient, environment friendly, and sustainable food transportation system

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Initiate collaboration across the ministries concerned and private sector traders and transporters to employ complementary modes of transport such as railways and waterways (as low-energy alternatives to energy-intensive long-distance transport), to transport food sustainably and efficiently, so as to reduce food loss and costs, ensuring food is more affordable; formulate policies to promote such transport.²⁰

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Relocate wholesale markets or hubs from central Dhaka to peri-urban areas.²¹
- Form farmers' group or communal production hub, and enhance connection between production hubs and urban wholesale markets to shorten value chains.²²

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Ensure proper, adequate, feasible and improved mass transportation system for food items; minimize transportation time to maintain food value.²³
- Incentivize green or safe transportation, and subsidize the safe transportation of food.²⁴

Leading actor: MoRailways and DAM (MoA)

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- MoRailways, MoRoadTransport&Bridges and MoPowerEnergy&MineralResources: Provide low cost environment friendly food transportation while maintaining food value.
- MoPostsTelecom&IT: Expand connectivity and facilities to rural areas.
- MoFood, MoA (DAM), MoFL: Organize farmers and producers to ensure the efficient connectivity to markets.

5.4 Develop clean and safe food markets (fresh, wholesale, supermarkets, others) and distribution that strengthens natural habitats

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Select location for markets based on access to water supply, sanitation, waste management and other civic facilities.²⁵
- Segregate dry markets from the wet.²⁶
- Provide market workers with safety tools (apron, gloves, masks)/ facilities,²⁷ promote reusable bags and shopping carts.²⁸

Short-term actions (2024-2026)

- Enforce rules banning use of plastic bags and promote perishable bags.²⁶
- Structure and organize fresh markets to minimize FLW.²⁷

Long-term actions (2027-2041)

- Develop and implement self-sustaining nature-friendly food market models.³¹
- Initiate joint financing or fundraising management, and activity between government, development partners and the private sector to upgrade fresh markets.³²

Leading actor: CC, law enforcement agencies and DAM

Roles for specific actors, champions, networks:

- MMC: Provide technical support to CC and ensure proper management of markets.
- DAM and law enforcement agencies: Ensure safe nature-positive handling of food.
- CC: Develop market infrastructure (safe and secure) and allocate space and budget; ensure sanitation and hygiene; segregate dry and wet markets; and improve waste disposal in markets.
- Development partners: Invest in developing nature-friendly markets and upgradation of markets.



Strengthening Dhaka's food system governance

Food and nutrition governance is a responsibility that is distributed across different levels. At the national level, the Ministry of Food, and in particular the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit, is responsible for policy development and implementation relating to food and nutrition security. The Unit collaborates with 14 ministries and is supported by the Food Policy Working Group. At the subnational level, the Ministry of LGRD&C is responsible for local policy development and implementation strategies.

City Corporations are organized into different departments that each link to the food system in different ways: health, sanitation, revenue (market management), waste management and engineering, headed by administrative departments and led by the Chief Executive Officer. In addition, CCs can form standing committees on specific issues in their cities, such as waste management, water, electricity or urban planning. City-level policy development for food and nutrition security for all is thus, by nature, a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary effort that is embraced by all city officials.

Sectoral policies provide guidance to the governance structures that operate in the different domains of the urban food system. However, the existing multistakeholder partnerships are not well established and are often concentrated in specific domains of the food system. Considering the food system challenges faced by cities, there is a need for dedicated cross-sectoral multistakeholder platforms and a functioning food system governance that drives decision-making towards a sustainable, safe and inclusive food system in Dhaka.

The Dhaka Food Agenda 2041 brings stakeholders together

Food system governance is about the decision-making processes regarding the food system, how these decisions are made and by whom. Multistakeholder platforms in Dhaka's food system have supported such participatory decision-making and assisted in the development of the DFA 2041. The Consultative Group for Urban Food Systems Strategies (CGUFSS) operates at the ministerial level and brings together representatives from other relevant ministries, City Corporations, private sector, development partners and knowledge institutes. The CGUFSS serves as an important link between the national government and cities, has supported the development of DFA 2041, and can guide its implementation, going forward.

At the city-level, four Food System City Working Groups are active in setting an agenda for each of the cities – Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Narayanganj and Gazipur. The CWGs are multistakeholder groups that are led by City Corporations, serving as open inclusive food system governance platforms, focused on addressing problems and seizing opportunities for innovative and urgent solutions. City Corporations leverage collaboration, organize dialogue, set priorities, share resources, coordinate decision-making and joint actions, empower stakeholders and promote the formulation of good policy.

The CWGs have supported the development of City Food Charters in each of the four cities, a shared vision for the direction of the city, identifying key food system challenges, prioritizing and addressing actionable steps, and the broad direction to move towards – through an inclusive and participatory process. City Food Charters can serve as an instrument to materialize the actions of DFA 2041 in four cities. As part of the CWGs, urban planners can play an important part in supporting future foresight processes and agenda development within these cities and further update and refine DFA 2041.

These platforms can, each in their own way, contribute to urban food system governance by looking at food from farm to fork to waste and everything that happens in between. They offer opportunities to link actors and sectors and may include diverse groups of stakeholders to ensure that different perspectives and interests are represented in the decision-making processes. Linking to the action areas defined under each key direction in DFA 2041, the CWGs play a vital role in forming a hub for relevant stakeholders to meet, exchange views and collaborate. In this way, the CWGs can be catalysts for many of the proposed actions under each of the key directions.

To further strengthen planning and governance of urban food system, a series of action areas can be identified that support the anchoring and continuity of key food system governance platforms at the national and city level.

1. Continue, consolidate, and anchor the key urban food system governance platforms
2. Scale-up and replicate good practices and create an enabling environment
3. Monitor, reflect, learn, and reformulate policies and plans

1. Continue, consolidate and anchor the key urban food system governance platforms

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Continue and anchor the City Working Groups as food system governance platforms at the city-level.
- Consolidate and anchor the CGUFSS into a National Forum for Urban Food Systems, as a responsible authority at the ministry level to coordinate and engage with other relevant ministries and government departments.
- Strengthen the capacity of the designated Branch/ Desk of Urban Development Wing, LGD.
- Engage in dialogue with City Corporations and designated Branch/ Desk at the LGD Urban Development Wing to seek endorsement and support to continue CWGs and formulation of the National Forum for Urban Food Systems.
- Develop an action plan, terms of reference and justification for such platforms to increase their legitimacy, allocate the necessary resources (staff, budget, time, meeting space, etc.).

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Develop a strategy for CWGs in line with DFA 2041.
- Institutionalize CWGs with a clear mandate and positioning in the City Corporations.

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Anchor CWGs, the proposed National Forum for Urban Food Systems and the Branch/ Desk of Urban Development Wing of LGD in City Corporation and LGD's policy arrangement, annual plans and budgets, ensure they are acknowledged formally as esteemed food system governance platforms.

2. Scale-up and replicate good practices and create an enabling environment

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Explore opportunities to establish CWGs in other cities in Bangladesh and develop City Food Charters.
- Scale-up good practices in each of the cities, based on experiences from the CWGs, and implement relevant actions formulated in the DFA 2041.
- Strengthen engagement of the private sector and civil society (including youth representation) in existing governance platforms such as CWGs, so they can participate in decision-making processes and integrate their views and interests in policy, planning and action by these platforms.
- Invest in strengthening the institutional capacity of City Corporations to further embrace food systems concepts.

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Continue implementation of good practices and scaling-up of pilots in cities, defined and led by the respective CWGs, inspired by good practices in other countries, and in close collaboration with relevant actors and networks.
- Review and coordinate existing and emerging policies (such as, the Multisectoral Urban Nutrition Strategy), or develop policies and by-laws that support (innovative) action for a safe and sustainable food system, thereby engaging relevant stakeholders and implementing agencies.

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Transfer accountability structures to relevant institutions and build necessary institutional capacities to carry out the responsibilities.
- Invest in training, skill development and capacity-building of all relevant organizations, (implementing) partners, and service providers that work with City Corporations to implement the DFA 2041.

3. Monitor, reflect and learn, and reformulate policies and plans

Immediate actions (steps in the next 12 months)

- Build relations with cities in other countries to learn about their practices, innovations and explore how these could fit within the context of Dhaka and feed into the DFA 2041.
- Develop a strategy to monitor actions defined in the City Food Charters and reflect on progress and learning within the CWGs.

Short-term actions (2024–2026)

- Develop a strategy and necessary communication channels to share data, progress and learning on a structural basis between the City Corporations (CWGs) and the Branch/ Desk of Urban Development Wing, LGD.
- Formulate or revise the plans and strategies in the DFA 2041, based on learning in line with other national ambitions and strategies so as to achieve food system-related SDG targets by 2030.
- Work out ways to leverage coordinated policy development and actions across different sectors and actors.
- Acknowledge the role of youth in further updating and implementing the DFA 2041.

Long-term actions (2027–2041)

- Develop a strategy, and necessary communication channels to structurally share data, progress and learning about Dhaka's food system and implementation of the DFA 2041 with relevant stakeholders.
- Integrate food system sustainability aspects into all plans, policies, and duties, across all relevant sectors and actors, in line with the DFA 2041.

Stakeholder engagement strategies

The proposed actions in DFA 2041 link to a variety of levels and scales. Thus, multistakeholder collaboration is required for each of the action areas, for which the following strategies can be adopted:

- **Government–government collaboration:** At the national level, there is a need to deepen collaboration between and among ministries to implement existing policies. Liaising between those ministries and City Corporations is key to translating policies for specific needs in the cities. This includes collaboration with other government agencies that determine and monitor food-related standards (e.g. BSTI and the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority), or agencies that specialize in spatial planning and modelling of future scenarios for example RAJUK, Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services, and Bangladesh Institute of Planners, or organizations that look after food system planning and governance (such as the FPMU, Branch/ Desk of Urban Development Wing of LGD , BNNC, and different Inter-Ministerial Committees or Forums).

- **Government–private sector collaboration:** The role of the private sector is essential for implementation of the actions proposed, not only in DFA 2041 but also in all other development commitments of the government at the subnational, national, regional and global level. Partnership with the private sector is key to upgrading and regulating markets, to ensure food safety, traceability, and to support the desired enabling policy and regulatory effort, as industry has a large influence and opportunity to promote and carry new ideas forward.

- **Government–academia collaboration:** Enhanced collaboration with research and educational institutes, including national and international academic and research organizations, is required to review existing educational programmes and policies at all levels, to ensure evidence-based policy formulation, innovation, and effective technology transfer.

- **Government–Civil society/NGO collaboration:** National and city governments can form collaborative structures with consumers' associations and development partners to design and implement interventions to raise awareness, strengthen social and behaviour change communication initiatives, develop pilots and align efforts for actions formulated in this Agenda.



Way forward for the Dhaka Food Agenda 2041

What is the way forward to further the DFA 2041? How can the Agenda play a central role in accompanying and steering the transformation of the urban food system of Dhaka further? Dhaka's food system and, therefore, its Agenda are dynamic, which require ongoing adaptation and system leadership. City Corporations, jointly with the Ministry of LGRD&C, RAJUK, and urban planners can play an important part in supporting future foresight processes and agenda development. Dhaka's decision-makers can use the existing platforms and policy processes to review the Agenda, inform changes, and iterate stakeholder processes.

The collection and validation of data to serve the policy processes can be pathways to explore, monitor, evaluate and learn together. The DFA 2041 seeks to tap into international developments on urban food policy planning to establish the relevant mechanisms.

It is essential that key stakeholders are involved in this process so as to create ownership and co-creation capacity. However, stakeholder engagement alone is not sufficient to strengthen urban food system governance.

The actions in each of the five domains are formulated in general terms and require further action and careful deliberation at the level of the City Corporations to translate them into concrete actions for their respective constituencies. Only when governance platforms can bring key stakeholders and the necessary evidence to the table, effective and inclusive decision-making can take place. Following are the stakeholder recommendations for the way forward for DFA 2041:

- Keep the City Corporations as the central implementing authority for DFA 2041, actively engage Ward Councillors to bring the DFA 2041 closer to local level constituencies.
- Emphasize the role of women and underprivileged segments of society to explore alternative strategies to improve their access to safe, healthy and nutritious foods, in implementing DFA 2041.
- Seek potential investors and collaborative opportunities, and develop new patterns of relationships with development partners to work together to realize the DFA 2041.
- Engage civil society organizations with government in all initiatives under DFA 2041.
- Identify and adapt or formulate the necessary policies to take DFA 2041 forward, and endorse or embed the recommendations of DFA 2041 into government policies or acts, as needed, through for example, interministerial consultations.
- Emphasize educational institutions as key stakeholders and ensure teachers and academic instructors, students, and youths are aware of the desired actions to take today to obtain a better future, as today's children will be tomorrow's leaders (2041).
- Develop a Plan of Action to implement the DFA 2041 with clear delegation of responsibilities, disaggregation of activities with more fragmented timeline, strategies for implementation and institutionalization among ministries, resource requirement and mapping, technical supports, and reporting or monitoring and evaluation mechanism.
- Review the DFA 2041 at given regular intervals (e.g. every five years) to maintain its relevance and dynamism as a living document when considering future challenges and uncertainties.



ENDNOTES:

Introduction

National Food Policy 2006, National Plan for Disaster Management 2021–2025

¹ The scenarios were quantified using the agrifood tailored macro-economic model MAGNET and the Spatial Simulation of Income Change (SSID) model, which uses a spatial microsimulation approach to create subnational projections of income and food security indicators. The main data sources of MAGNET are GTAP and FAO statistics. The main source of the SSID database is the most recent Bangladesh Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES 2016).

It is assumed that the baseline follows the IPCC-based ‘middle-of-the-road’ shared socio-economic pathway (SSP2) up to 2040, meaning that the Bangladesh economy as a whole is expected to face moderate social and economic climate challenges over the coming decades, as suggested by the assumed GDP and population growth rates.

Key directions for Dhaka’s food system

1. Consumption of healthy and nutritious food

¹ Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2016–2025 (NPAN2) 2017, National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (NFNSP) 2020

² NFNSP 2020, NPAN2, Food Safety Act 2013, Packaged Food Labelling Act 2017, Breast–Milk Substitutes (BMS) Act 2013, Salt Act 2021

³ National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (NPAN) 2020

⁴ Second National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2016–2025 (NPAN2)

⁵ Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution Act 2018

⁶ Food Safety Act 2013, Dept. of Livestock Services Quality Control Laboratory Policy 2021

⁷ NPAN2 The Consumers’ Right Protection Act 2009

⁸ NFNSP 2020, NPAN2, Food Safety Act 2013, Packaged Food Labelling Act 2017

⁹ NFNSP 2020, National Food Policy 2006, Allocation of Business among the Different Ministries and Divisions (Schedule I of the Rules of Business, 1996 Revised up to April 2017): Ministry of Commerce

¹⁰ Agricultural Marketing Act 2018, Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009,

¹¹ Bangladesh Govt. Hats and Bazars (Management) Order 1972, Allocation of Business among the Different Ministries and Divisions (Schedule I of the Rules of Business, 1996 Revised up to April 2017): Ministry of Commerce

¹¹ NFNSP 2020, National Food Policy 2006 ¹²

¹² National Urban Health Strategy 2020

¹³ National Urban Health Strategy 2020, Partially covered under NPAN2 through involvement of CCs, LGD, and MoLGRD&C

¹⁴ NPAN2 Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, Bangladesh Govt. Hats and Bazars (Management) Order 1972, National Agriculture Policy 2018 (digitalization of agricultural markets)

¹⁵ National Agriculture Policy 2018 (digitalization of agricultural markets)

¹⁶ Partially covered under Agricultural Marketing Act 2018

2. Meeting Dhaka’s future food demands

¹ National Agriculture Extension Policy 2020, National Agriculture Policy 2018

² National Food Policy 2006

³ National Agriculture Policy 2018, National Agriculture Extension Policy 2020, National Livestock Development Policy 2007, National Food Policy 2006, National Land Use Policy 2011, Agricultural Land Protection and Land Use Act (Draft, 2015)

⁴ National Agriculture Policy 2018, National Agriculture Extension Policy 2020, Good Agriculture Practices Policy 2020, National Organic Agriculture Policy 2017

⁵ National Food Policy 2006, NFNSP and its PoA 2021–2030

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