



**Foresight4Food**  
International Collaborative Initiative

# Reframing Food Futures: Making Foresight Transformative

4<sup>th</sup> Global Foresight4Food Workshop

3 – 7 June 2024, Dhaka, Bangladesh

## Summary Report

Hosted by



Supporting partners



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In association with regional network partners



ICIMOD



ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

# A Global Event in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Foresight4Food held its 4th Global Workshop from 3–7 June 2024, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Hosted together with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the Government of Bangladesh, the workshop brought together foresight leaders, innovators, and food systems changemakers from 22 countries across the globe.

The workshop focused on how to realize the transformative potential of engaging food systems stakeholders in foresight. Participants explored how foresight can connect with the political and social realities of decision making and mindset change to bring about food systems transformation. A central theme of the workshop was strengthening linkages between science, policy and practice.

The workshop was supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and World Food Programme (WFP). Regional network partners included Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and the World Bank.

## A diverse group of participants

The Global Workshop convened over 100 foresight and food systems practitioners, experts, and facilitators from 22 countries, representing regions across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. This diverse gathering enriched the discussions by bringing a wide array of regional and national perspectives to the table. Participants hailed from various sectors, including policy, research, civil society, business, and international organizations, offering valuable insights on enhancing the connections between science, policy, and society. Notably, active participation from food system stakeholders in Bangladesh sharpened the focus on the opportunities and challenges of leveraging foresight to support national food system pathways.

## Why we need to 'reframe the future' of food systems

**Our global food systems are failing to deliver on food and nutrition security, equitable livelihoods in the agri-food sector and environmental sustainability.** The world is behind on achieving the SDGs, many of which depend on changing the way food is produced and consumed. Hence, bringing about the change requires confronting systemic issues and working with complexity.

**Transforming food systems will require imagining radically different food system futures.** This requires food systems stakeholders to reframe their understanding what food systems should deliver, how they function, and the incentives that drive the behaviour of actors in the system.

**More than ever, long-term perspectives are needed to underpin food system transformation efforts.** Bringing about deep change hinges on effective multi-stakeholder alliances, strengthening the policy-science-practice interface, effective knowledge systems, and developing a society-wide urgency for change. Participatory and evidence-driven foresight can support the engagement needed to shift mindsets, generate political will for change, enable informed dialogue, and spur collective decision making.



## Highlights of the Week

- **Sixteen case studies on the use of foresight across Africa, Asia and the Middle East** were shared by participants – offering a wealth of insights, lessons and inspiration.
- **Senior-level engagement from the Government of Bangladesh** with insight into how foresight is seen as a key tool for helping to achieve their goals for food systems transformation.
- **A deeper look at simulation modelling for foresight**, and how a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches can bring a range of important insights.
- **Reflections on ensuring foresight processes are inclusive** and take gender dynamics in consideration.
- **Six thematic sessions** on cutting edge foresight issues which helped in mapping out a forward agenda for Foresight4Food.
- **Two strategic sessions on 'national knowledge platforms' and 'financing of food systems'**.
- **Learning journey field trips** where participants used insights from food system issues in Bangladesh to stimulate discussion on the future of the food system and sharing of cross-country lessons and experiences.

### Cross-country learning and sharing of foresight experiences

It was a truly enriching experience to have representatives from Bangladesh, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda, Nepal, Singapore and many other countries sharing about food systems, challenges in navigating policy environments, speaking about the differences in contexts. Throughout the workshop plenty of time was allocated for sharing of cases and experiences. In two rounds, 16 different cases were shared by diverse presenters from different countries, each with different focus areas and across scales. Participants engaged in two rounds of interactive thematic sessions, tackling topics such as:



Quantitative modelling within the foresight process



Facilitation capacities for foresight



Facilitating participatory and effective foresight processes



Contextualizing trends and uncertainties across scales



Exploring the impact of foresight on structural change



Making foresight processes relevant to policy and business

### Masterclass on foresight approaches and tools

A pre-workshop Masterclass actively engaged participants in applying foresight and systems change methods and tools. Out of the many foresight tools available, a carefully chosen selection of 11 tools was used to demonstrate a comprehensive approach for implementing the guiding framework proposed by Foresight4Food. The session demonstrated that the tools can be used to:



Convene and create a common language



Engage in constructive debate trade-offs



Unpack assumptions about the current food system



Include all stakeholders in sharing their perspectives.

The Foresight4Food team is currently preparing a 'Process Tool Guide' for publication (to be launched after summer 2024), which includes the tools used in the Masterclass.



# A Glimpse into the Workshop Activities





## Key Messages Emerging

- 01** **Foresight can be a powerful tool in assisting policy makers respond to the global 'polycrisis'** of climate, environment, inequality, health and conflict, in which food systems are central. Foresight can contribute to this by shifting the focus from trends and forecasts to exploration of different futures; going beyond certainties to addressing 'controversies', and by encouraging foresight practitioners to apply a wide range of skills including mediation and negotiation; and graduating from sectorial to trans-sectorial analysis and action.
- 02** **Foresight, connected with system thinking, offers a way of tackling the structural barriers to food systems transformation.** Use of scenarios can encourage stakeholders to 'imagine' alternative futures, opening up new narratives around power. Making the future consequences of inaction explicit and public helps to generate political will for change. Anticipatory policies use foresight and trend analysis to assess risks and enhance resilience.
- 03** **To fully support food systems transformation, there is a need to scale up the use of foresight at local, national, regional and global levels.** The nature of the complex challenge of food systems needs enhanced cooperation, coordination and reframing across different scales. This can be supported through the use foresight and futures thinking.
- 04** **The importance of having foresight units and processes institutionally embedded in government, with a mandate and scope to challenge policy assumptions.** In a world with increasing turbulence and uncertainty, it is critical that foresight is conducted iteratively to inform and improve ongoing food systems policy and decision-making at national levels.
- 05** **Optimizing the impact of foresight requires participatory approaches effectively integrated with evidence, data and simulation modelling. However, conscious decisions to use mixed approaches, resources and capacity for this are often lacking.** Simulation models are very useful to explore the 'what if' question of certain developments, drivers or decisions, and can enhance decision-making. Inclusive stakeholder involvement is critical to ask the right questions, make sense of results, and finally translate insights into practical action.
- 06** **At all scales there is a lack of capability and institutional support to effectively design and facilitate foresight processes.** This includes skills to facilitate multi-stakeholder processes, cultivate convening power, and capitalize on systemic opportunities. The workshop participants noted that investments are needed in more utility-focused data, recognition of the importance of food systems transformation; awareness of the need to work and think holistically; and capacities of leaders, facilitators and convenors of food system and foresight processes.
- 07** **The necessity of increasing and reconfiguring financing and investment in food systems,** and the need for this to be informed by the longer-term perspectives that foresight can bring. The hidden costs of the global food system are estimated to sum up to \$12 trillion, compared to a market value of \$10 trillion (FOLU, 2019). The annual investment requirement for transformation of food and land use systems is between \$300 billion to \$350 billion by 2030. Foresight can contribute by unlocking and enabling more long-term investments and encouraging both private and public coordination on synergies and risks.

Overall, the participants were highly energized by the potential of applying practical approaches of foresight for food systems change. They left highly motivated to take forward the foresight and food systems work they are involved in to support initiatives at national and regional levels.

## Future Directions

A number of new, key directions for foresight practitioners and users working on food systems transformation were generated:

**Practically creating stronger linkages to private sector roles in food systems transformation**, supporting national level investment plans, and using foresight to support more detailed value chains and sectors within a wider picture of food systems transformation pathways.

**Strengthening the science–policy–society interface:** developing foresight and food systems curricula, foresight embedding within governance structures and societal engagement with various scenarios emerging.

**Capacity strengthening at national levels:** further enhancing foresight and multi-stakeholder facilitation capacities, supporting forward looking national knowledge platforms and assessment of what works in terms of foresight impact.



## Emerging Foresight4Food priorities

For Foresight4Food, a range of promising avenues emerged that would be important to invest in the coming years:



**Explore the establishment of regional foresight and food systems hubs in Asia, Africa and Middle East**, which would offer the opportunity for enhanced collaboration across borders, strategic nesting of national pathways and wider sharing of expertise.



**Invest in understanding and strengthening capacities on the process of systems change** – emphasizing the need to invest in the process of food systems transformation, particularly facilitation, inclusiveness and how to foster paradigm shifts.



**Further diversify and scale up the network support to include more Africa and Asia representatives**, by bringing people together for further exchanges.



**Work to institutionalize foresight and food systems change** capabilities by further involving key individuals in knowledge sharing and interactive working groups, organizations in key collaborative initiatives and global meetings.

## The FoSTr Programme

The Foresight4Food Global Workshop was made possible through the Foresight for Food System Transformation (FoSTr) Programme, funded by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands through IFAD. This programme is implemented in collaboration with University of Oxford and Wageningen University and Research. The FoSTr programme, offers a demand-driven country support facility for food systems foresight and scenario analysis in Bangladesh, Jordan, Kenya, and Uganda. The programme builds on the national food systems pathways following from the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, and supports the dialogue, analysis and understanding necessary for co-creating food systems of the future that are sustainable, healthy, equitable and resilient.

The workshop brought together numerous partners and stakeholders from the FoSTr programme, providing an excellent opportunity to learn from and share the progress of FoSTr's work at the country level. It also facilitated valuable cross-country learning among the teams, allowing them to reflect on achievements, identify successful practices, discuss areas for improvement, and explore strategies for amplifying impact.