



GUYANA'S NATIONAL PATHWAY FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

Contents

1 Background	2
1.2 Context	3
1.3 The Foundation for Food Systems Transformation in Guyana.....	3
A. Thematic Area #1: Food Security.....	7
B. Thematic Area #2: Climate Resilience	12
C. Thematic Area #3: Funding and Financing.....	13
3. Nexus in achieving Food Systems Transformation	15

1 Background

Food systems “encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded.” (FAO, 2018). They seek to ensure that all people have access to safe and nutritious food.

Sustainable food systems are not just limited to ending hunger, but they can help Guyana achieve critical progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable food systems can contribute to the fight against poverty by creating good jobs, improving access to food, and supporting healthy communities. Further, rebuilding our food systems to make them more sustainable, productive and resilient is essential for solving long-term hunger challenges and managing acute shocks, like disease outbreaks and climate extremes.

In September 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened a Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The Summit aimed to bring the world awareness to the fact that we all must work collectively to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food. It was dubbed a summit for everyone everywhere – a people’s summit. It was also a solutions summit organized around five (5) Action Tracks, namely:

- Action Track 1: Ensure Access to Safe and Nutritious Food for All
- Action Track 2: Shift to Healthy and Sustainable Consumption Patterns
- Action Track 3: Boost Nature-Positive Food Production at Scale
- Action Track 4: Advance Equitable Livelihoods and Value Distribution
- Action Track 5: Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses

Following the Summit, a register of national and/or regional pathways for food systems transformation to deliver the SDGs by 2030, was to be tailored to local context and priorities. More than 100 countries had already developed detailed national pathways, while an additional 50 made commitments at the summit.

A register of 'coalitions of action' developed under the action areas, and a record of the commitments made by all organisations and groups lodged in the online commitments’ registry. Guyana has since joined the School Meals Coalition.

A follow-up and review process supported by the UN and its agencies and coordinated by a new coordination hub led by three Rome-based UN agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The summit served as an important platform for Guyana to reassure the world that the nation is actively doing its part in helping the world to evolve its food systems and enhance food security.

1.2 Context

Despite being a net exporter of food, Guyana still faces some elements of food and nutrition insecurity, especially given that the definition of food security is not limited to the availability of food, but also includes access to food and quality of nutrition.

In Guyana, the food security challenge involves creating income-earning opportunities and producing and making enough safe and nutritious food available for all residents.¹ Rising food prices, increased weather variability and the global economic crisis and periodic crises such as the food and fuel crises of 2008 and 2020-2021 have, in recent years, made the goal of enhancing food security in Guyana even more challenging.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an eye-opening experience for Guyana and the rest of the world, as it demonstrated that our food system and supply chains are fragile and susceptible to shocks. Disruptions in the food supply chains especially in the high value commodities such as fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, and milk affected farming and food processing activities. The most affected farmers included casual/seasonal workers, women-headed households, those located far from the markets, small crop farmers, small ruminant keepers, and small-scale/artisanal fishers.²

Another key event that has a significant impact on Guyana's food system was the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Wheat and other food commodities have been in short supply since the onset of the war, which has led to strong demand and an increase in food prices. Fertilizers, a key element in food production, has also been in short supply and high demand since both Russia and Ukraine are large exporters of this commodity in the global markets.

Global fuel costs have also increased significantly which have impacted on shipping costs and the cost of all commodities and services. As a result, the cost of living for Guyanese is on the rise and periodic shortages have affected food availability. Government has had to take pro-active aggressive measures to reduce the impact of these exogenous developments on the cost of living for the general population but more especially the poor and vulnerable.

In the face of increased unpredictable weather patterns due to climate change and global crises, Guyana is now further challenged with the task of creating a food system which is resilient and has the capacity to easily absorb exogenous and domestic shocks in an effort to reduce the impact on food security.

1.3 The Foundation for Food Systems Transformation in Guyana

Guyana has a well-established foundation, in several of its existing strategies and policies, that will aid the transformation of the food system and ensure more actionable solutions are undertaken with greater urgency than in the past.

In 2005, the Jagdeo Initiative- Strengthening Agriculture for Sustainable Development- which identified ten key binding constraints and interventions in the Caribbean region was endorsed by members of the agri-business sector, the forum of Ministers of Agriculture and the 2005

¹ Food and Nutrition Security Strategy for Guyana April 2011, <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/guy166205.pdf>, (accessed 14 July 2021).

² CARICOM-FAO Assessment of COVID-19 Impacts on Food Security, Agricultural Production and Livelihoods, 2020

CARICOM Heads of Government Conference. The strategy aimed to remove the constraints that hindered the development of agriculture in the Caribbean.³

In 2009 through a market-led approach, Guyana embarked on a “grow more food” campaign which yielded great success in encouraging small holders to increase production, especially the production of other crops. As a result of the campaign, exports of other crops increased by 32.4% in the year 2009.⁴

Guyana’s Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) was launched in 2009 setting out a vision for balancing national development with global climate action and the preservation of biodiversity.

Further, in 2011 the Food and Nutrition Security Strategy for Guyana was unveiled. The strategy is a feasible plan that is directed at improving the food situation of the country and its people, especially for the poor and vulnerable populations facing food insecurity. This was an important step forward for Guyana in taking a strategic approach to building and improving its food system.

The **new Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030** adopted in the National Assembly in 2022 is Guyana's national development strategy based on the premise of the creation of a new low-carbon economy in Guyana. It establishes incentives which value the world’s ecosystem services and promote these as an essential component of a new model of national development and global development with sustainability at its core. For 2021 to 2030 the LCDS aims to build climate resilience in the agricultural sector by managing drought and flood risk, developing climate proof sustainable farm systems and building the adaptive capacity of the sector.

Presently, to shape the course of agricultural and food systems transformation in Guyana, the following action pillars are priorities that are set out in the **Agriculture Development Strategy 2021 -2025**:

1. Diversify agriculture production and improve land access in an effort to increase its competitiveness to provide real economic benefits to the rural sector in an oil-based economy.
2. Create a robust marketing system to improve local and international market access.
3. Promote a national integrated approach to Food and Nutrition Security as fundamental for improving social welfare by ensuring access to safe and nutritious food. [particularly in a COVID-19 environment]
4. Strengthen the resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems to promote effective management of natural and productive resources, and to protect the investment and livelihoods in agriculture from external shocks
5. Modernize and upgrade supporting infrastructure to advance water management and transportation requirements
6. Strengthen and modernize support services to promote innovation and sustainability of the agriculture sector.

³ Private Sector Commission: The Jagdeo Initiative Technical Information Bulletin No. 8 October 2007, https://caricom.org/documents/9841-jagdeo_initiative.pdf, (accessed 14 July 2021).

⁴ <https://guyanachronicle.com/2010/10/23/grow-more-campaign-boosts-guyanas-food-security/>

7. Develop Human resources on which to build a responsive, diversified, gender-responsive, world-class agriculture workforce and sector which can deliver this vision.
8. Improve multi-sectoral coordination and strengthen data systems to guide policy development and implementation.

Moreover, it must be noted that Guyana holds lead responsibility for Agriculture, Agricultural Diversification and Food Security in the CARICOM Quasi-Cabinet, and President H.E. Irfaan Ali earlier this year presented to his colleague Heads of Government, a Food Production and Food Security Agenda which outlines in detail a strategy and action plan for transforming the agriculture sector in CARICOM. Guyana and all CARICOM member states have since signed on to this strategy and work is on the way for several of the necessary actions to be implemented to ensure transformation in the immediate, medium and long term.

During his address to the CARICOM Regional Food Systems Dialogue, His Excellency Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana noted that the following key priority areas must be addressed to drive the transformation of the agri-food system. These areas include, but are not limited to:

- The complete removal of all technical barriers to trade,
- The implementation of an E-agriculture strategy,
- Investments in production, research and development,
- Measures to promote de-risking of the sector; and
- The improvement of transport and logistics.

Change in the aforementioned areas will allow Guyana's national food systems to meet the defined expectations by 2030.

2. Guyana's Position on Food Systems Transformation

Guyana held its National High-Level Dialogue on May 11th 2021 which saw a wide range of stakeholders lending their voices to the discussion on how food systems transformation can be achieved in Guyana. The Dialogue consisted of representatives of development partners, private sector, farmers, investors, agencies in the agricultural sector, technical experts, and government ministries, agro-processors, NGOs, civil society, and many others who highlighted some of the common challenges in the food system. These include:

- High cost of planting materials and farm inputs
- Limited and unreliable markets and market linkages
- Underdeveloped agro-processing
- Inadequate Drainage and irrigation
- Lack of agriculture product diversification
- Lack of systems to deal with food waste and loss
- Low quality standards in meat production
- Some households lack the minimum financial resources needed to access sufficient high-quality food

- Lack of integrated value chain development programmes to assist farmers and local agri-enterprises to access high value chains
- Small and medium-sized companies (SME's) are unable to access financing readily
- Lack of social safeguards, legislation and governance mechanisms that allow indigenous and local communities to secure their access to land, water and genetic resources
- Lack of a disaster preparedness and recovery framework

Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Agriculture Plan 2021-2025 as a pathway to achieving SDG 2

With just 10 years remaining to achieve 2030 Agenda, Guyana is not yet convincingly able to meet the targets set out in SGD 2. To do this we must simultaneously focus on growth and sustainable development. It is noted that current modes of production and consumption threaten the achievement of Goal 2 – Zero Hunger.

During the *Guyana Voluntary National Review* of 2019, the following were identified as important considerations to advance national development:

- adequate and predictable financing, key investments in infrastructure and service delivery
- efforts to promote more sustainable agriculture – diversify from rice and sugar, especially with agriculture exports. In tandem with value chain development, supply chain management, quality standards,
- sustained farmer population considering aging farmers and limited interest among youths in agriculture
- promote research and development and adequate data systems
- multi-sectoral coordination and leveraging partnerships with private sector and international entities for sustainability interventions.

The following highlights Guyana’s main areas of priority and aligns with the three thematic areas which was discussed during the CARICOM Regional Dialogue.

A. Thematic Area #1: Food Security

Drawing from Guyana's 2011 Food and Nutrition Security Strategy for Guyana, the foundation on which Guyana's newly envisioned plan for food security can be built. Since the 1960s Guyana has been considered the country with the greatest potential to be the breadbasket of the Caribbean due to the country's large land mass of 214,969 km² and substantial amount of arable land, ideal for agricultural production and a long history of being a primary producing agricultural nation.

In Guyana, agriculture is mostly concentrated along the coastal region which is roughly 1.0 m below sea level at high tide. Ironically this is where the most fertile and most easily accessible arable land is located This creates a situation where farming is very susceptible to flooding, seasonal as well as natural disasters, and it’s devastating aftereffects, as happened in 2005 and in 2021 on a national scale. The agriculture sector in Guyana consistently sees growth year after year, with rice currently leading the way as the main export earner, followed by sugar and coconuts. However, upon closer examination of Guyana's agriculture sector, it would be observed that the sector is still vulnerable to factors such as flooding, market demand, volatile supply chains and external shocks.

Therefore, when it comes to the strengthening Guyana’s food security, it must focus on the important areas of relevance, the challenges to be faced, and the country’s current position on those areas, these include:

I. Food Availability

Guyana’s abundance of natural resources and large swaths of agricultural land usually means that food availability is not generally considered a major challenge. If consideration is given to the six (Caribbean) food groups: staples, foods from animals, legumes, vegetables, fruits and fats and

Expectation for Guyana’s Food Systems in the coming decade

“By adopting a “food systems approach” rather than an individual sector approach, we can be more productive, more inclusive of the poor, more environmentally sustainable and resilient, and better equipped to deliver healthy and nutritious diets to all Guyanese.

Transforming Guyana’s food system will provide an environment where:

- agriculture can continue to provide a good livelihood for many (not just farmers);
- the country can take advantage of emerging trade opportunities in agriculture both regionally and internationally;
- the country can meet its development goals by leaving no one behind; and
- EVERYONE can have healthy, affordable diets that promote good health and reduce non-communicable diseases.”

Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, Minister of Agriculture and Guyana’s National Convener for the UN Food Systems Summit

oils—one can conclude that Guyana is self-sufficient in the production of foods from each of these food groups.⁵

Rice, sugar, and fisheries are considered the traditional agricultural sub-sectors. These sub-sectors produce significantly more than is demanded domestically and thus gear their products to export markets. However, the non-traditional agricultural sub-sector which is also critically important, especially in terms of diet diversification and enabling poorer and smaller producers to provide for their families, lacks the same level of availability, especially in hinterland areas.

Agriculture Initiatives to Ensure Food Availability

Guyana is actively working to increase agricultural production and achieve the Regional goal of 25% reduction in CARICOM food imports by 2025 by investing in the following initiatives:

Aquaculture

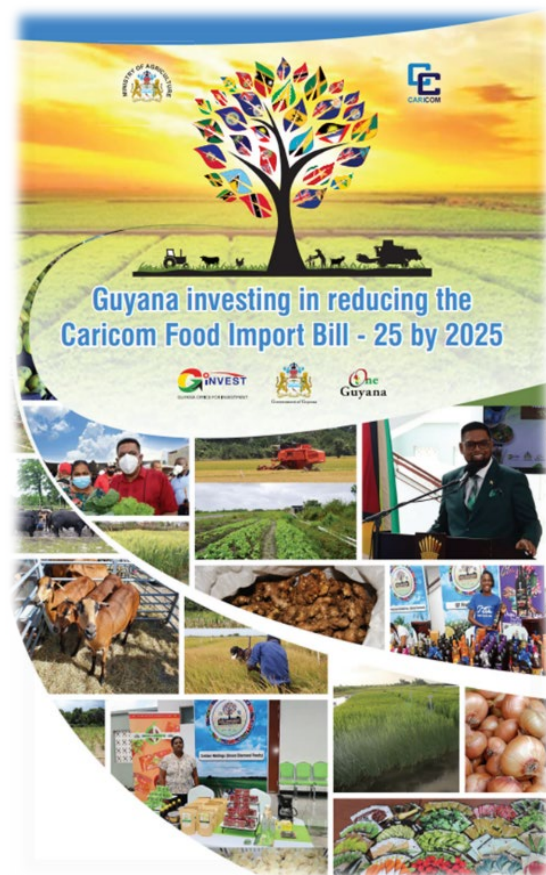
- Brackish Water Shrimp Production
- ‘Cage Culture’ Fish Farming
- Prawn Production

Livestock

- Black Belly Sheep Production
- Poultry Expansion and diversification through Black Giant Chickens
- Beef Genetic Improvement utilizing Artificial Insemination and Embryo Transfer

Crops

- Corn and Soya Cultivation to produce animal feed
- Shadehouse Technology for high-value crops (Cauliflower, Broccoli and Carrots)
- Coconut Industry Expansion
- Onion Cultivation
- Wheat Production
- Advancing Hemp Cultivation



⁵ Food and Nutrition Security Strategy for Guyana April 2011, <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/guy166205.pdf>, (accessed 14 July 2021).

Food availability in Guyana is threatened when agriculture is affected by global shocks:-

- Climate change continues to be a serious threat to the agriculture sector. In May and June of 2021 Guyana experienced extreme rainfall which provoked floods, both in the coastal and in interior areas that caused significant damage and loss in the agriculture sector, as well as a significant loss to the economy. Both established farmers along the coast and subsistence farmers in the interior were negatively impacted. As a consequence, the availability of fresh produce was impacted, and this was also followed by a sharp increase in prices.
- Food security was further threatened by COVID-19 which affected the food supply chain, and the Russia-Ukraine war that resulted in limited supply of essential commodities that are usually supplied by both Russia and Ukraine.

It is in this regard, that greater emphasis must be placed on building a resilient and sustainable agriculture sector and increased production in the non-traditional sector, in an effort to increase the availability of fruits, vegetables and root crops which are all required for balanced and diversified diet.

1. Responding to food systems shocks by supporting production

i) As a small developing country that is vulnerable to climate change and the consequent economic shocks, Guyana believes that unilateral trading interests should always be subject to multilateral considerations where the interests of small fragile economies must always take centre stage. Guyana supports a multilateral trading system that promotes the fair and equitable participation of all countries in international trade.

While Guyana executes its external trade policy through the auspices of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we participate in the WTO multilateral trade negotiations within its bounds and means and have taken incremental steps, as in the case with the establishment of the Geneva Mission to strengthen its capacity to actively monitor developments in the multilateral negotiations at the WTO and to register our voice in cases of unfair trade and tariff agreements against SIDS such as Guyana.

Vision 25 by 2025 of CARICOM is aimed at reducing the extra-regional agrifood import bill by 25% by the year 2025

The Caribbean Region has a food import bill of about US\$6 Billion; owed to the importation of several commodities that can be produced in abundance in the region. The President of Guyana, His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali has committed to transforming our regional agri-food system to reduce the food import bill by 25% by 2025 by increasing agricultural production in the region. This commitment has led to the presentation, **Advancing the CARICOM Agri-Food System Agenda: Prioritizing Regional Food and Nutrition Security**, and the establishment of the Special Ministerial Task Force on Food production and Food Security. The implementation of the CARICOM Agri-Food Systems Strategy in the member states is expected to help achieve the 25 by 2025 target, giving special attention to priority crops and products such as poultry, corn, soya, meat (cattle, sheep, goat), and rice which are highly imported in the region.

Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, Chairman of the CARICOM Special Ministerial Taskforce on Food Production and Food Security, and Minister of Agriculture, Guyana

ii). Reducing Import Dependency

The Caribbean governments have set a target to reduce regional food imports in 2025 by 25%, known as the 25 by 25 initiative. Many countries, inclusive of Guyana, have committed to undertake policy measures and incentives that support food production in our Region.

The priority areas of intervention in the implementation plan of the CARICOM Agri-Food System Strategy cover all activities to be completed over the short, medium and long term. The broad policy areas are as follows:

1. Advocacy for the reform of the Rules of Origin and CET Regime and Suspensions;
2. Complete removal of all intra-regional barriers to trade;
3. De-risking of the Agricultural Sector;
4. Development of a Regional E-Agriculture Strategy;
5. Improving Transportation and Logistics throughout the region; and
6. Investment in Production, Research and Development;

iii). Supporting smallholder farmers

Farmers and agri-businesses have benefited from several government interventions such as:

- Reduced cost of planting materials and farm inputs
- Training in new and emerging areas for increase productivity
- Enhanced drainage and irrigation infrastructure
- Easier access to farm and pasture lands
- Easier access to finance and
- To cushion the impact of the rising cost of fertiliser for farmers and to limit the pass through to food prices, GY\$1 billion worth of fertiliser was purchased for free distribution to farmers.
- Distribution of Flood Relief Cash Grant following the devastating floods in 2021 that significantly affected the agriculture sector with major damage and losses to hundreds of farmers across the country. In addition, the impact was of significant proportions on the economy.
- Distribution of Covid-19 Cash Grant to all households in Guyana (2020) to ease the impact on people.

2. Investing in local infrastructure and enhancing the capacity of distribution systems

A priority of the government is to address the sector's vulnerability to the effects of climate change by providing and maintaining better drainage and irrigation, as well as sea and river defences, to prevent and reduce flooding and better water management to improve agriculture productivity. Through its budgetary allocations the government continues to invest in the construction of drainage structures, sluice gates, bridges and farm to market roads that will benefit farmers across the country.

The Government of Guyana has also invested in constructing and making eleven (11) agro-processing facilities operational across the country. These facilities are equipped with processing lines to produce commodities such as fruit juices, green seasoning, pepper sauce, meat (ground, cut, frozen, fresh), peanut butter, cashew nut butter, dehydrated fruits, cassava cassareep, sauces & seasoning and vegetables. Farmers, new & existing agro-processors, wholesalers, retailers and exporters and consumers will benefit from these facilities.

II. Food access

The main demographic affected by food insecurity are small scale independent artisans (small fishermen, small-scale miners); small holders (small scale farmers); marginal populations in urban areas; and Indigenous Guyanese situated in the Hinterland. Persons within this demographic are characterized by their inability to access a balanced and nutritious diet, due their limited income or lack thereof, the lack of family support and social services, as well as those in the far interior where logistical challenges and high costs are involved.

Guyana's Progress Report on the Millenium Development Goals showed a decline in poverty across the board with pockets remaining where poverty was higher than the rest of the country. Due to geographic location and cultural traditions, subsistence farming on limited staples remains a challenge in interior locations amongst the indigenous peoples. To address limited food diversity and cost of food contributing to food insecurity in Hinterland areas, the Ministries of Agriculture and Amerindian Affairs are facilitating more agricultural production with a variety of seeds, fertilizer, wheelbarrows etc and tractors and training in farming techniques to encourage greater food diversity and access to nutritious food.

Responding to food systems shocks by ensuring access to food

The Government of Guyana aims at improving the nutrition of the population by increasing the production and access to more affordable, fresh, healthy, protein-based food and fruits and vegetables. One of the strategies being used to do this is to improve nutrition in schools and children of school age, by promoting lifelong healthy eating habits through the National School Feeding Programme.

Over 85,000 nursery, primary students across Guyana benefit from the National School Feeding Programme.⁶ As of 2022, Guyana has three separate school meal programmes that are operated and funded by the Ministry of Education. These programmes differ in the types of food offered, targeted percentage of recommended dietary allowances, geographic distribution, and practices for procurement and monitoring and evaluation. They include: the community-based hot meals programme; the breakfast programme; and the fortified biscuit and juice snack programme.⁷

⁶ <https://education.gov.gy/en/index.php/media2/external-news/4618-2b-budgeted-for-national-school-feeding-programme>

⁷ <https://www.fao.org/platforms/school-food/around-the-world/latin-america-and-the-caribbean/guyana/en>

III. Food utilization

The food consumption patterns of the Guyanese populace have shifted over the last decade, due to the influence of western fast food and manufactured goods. There has been a discernible shift from traditional and culturally based foods to the convenience of fast food and the lower cost and easiness of preparation of processed foods, which are imported. This change in consumption pattern has impacted the rates of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and obesity within the population. It is estimated that the annual direct costs of treating diabetes and/or hypertension in Guyana are estimated to be between US\$7.2 million and US\$10.8 million.⁸ The Presidential Commission on NCDs functions and works on influencing people's food consumption, lifestyle changes, treatment and care.

Guyana acknowledges that there needs to be greater focus on encouraging consumers to have healthier diets and lifestyles.

One of the ways to contribute to this change back to traditional foods is through the development of effective pricing policies which make locally produced meat, chicken, and vegetables and staples more affordable and thus curb the demand for fast foods high in saturated fat, trans fats, sugar and salt.

IV. Food Stability

One of the greatest threats to the stability of Guyana's food system is climate change. Climate variability has made it difficult to maintain steady and predictable production throughout the year, due to out of seasons weather patterns which affects the majority of farmers along the coastland of Guyana..

B. Thematic Area #2: Climate Resilience

Guyana, and in particular the coastal zone, is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events. Annual mean temperature and precipitation are increasing which leads to unpredictable weather patterns, floods and drought periods, which are expected to worsen in the upcoming decades. In light of Guyana's vulnerability, the Government of Guyana is fully aware of the increasing climate-related threats and is committed to the transformation to a low-carbon economy, enhancing the resilience of vulnerable ecosystems as well as local rural, and indigenous communities to combat the effects of Climate Change.

Speakers at the Guyana National High-Level Dialogue highlighted many of the fragilities of the agrifood systems caused by the disruptions of the COVID-19 crises. The COVID 19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of food production and distribution systems especially to the most poor and vulnerable and has exacerbated other challenges such as the threat of Climate Change.

⁸ Ministry of Health, GUYANA Strategic Plan: NCD Prevention and Control 2013 – 2020, <https://www.paho.org/guy/dmdocuments/Guyana%20NCDs%20Strategic%20Plan%202013-2020%20.pdf>, (accessed 13 July 2021).

Guyana must confront these risks which threaten the livelihood of farmers and fisherfolk by transforming its food systems to be more climate resilient.

In addition, Guyana recognizes the importance of maintaining and increasing the genetic diversity of crops and livestock within the country. It is urgent that both marine and terrestrial ecosystems are safeguarded from imminent threats in order to enhance climate resilience and provide available safe, healthy and nutritious diets at affordable prices for all.

Practical suggestions to give force to the commitments that emerged from the Guyana National High-Level Dialogue are as follows:

- **Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress:** Guyana must put measures in place to promote de-risking of the agriculture sector that threatens the sustainability and productivity of the agriculture sector. Relevant innovation and technological tools must be introduced to assess food systems, identify risks and relevant actions to manage food system shocks and to increase the resilience of food systems in Guyana.
- **Ensuring national food systems are regenerative and circular to build resilient food systems.** Interventions should have a regional (administrative) context, identifying the weaknesses at the regional and national scale. It needs to be inclusive, taking into consideration indigenous knowledge while building on existing systems (cultural, environmental, social, and economic) and coping mechanisms.
- **Develop Climate Smart Practices** that farmers should implement to address adverse effects of Climate Change. Climate Smart Practices should revolve around three (3) main pillars; reducing and removing greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere, increasing productivity and incomes and enhancing resilience of livelihoods.
- **Increased investments in disaster preparedness** with a focus on identifying and addressing long-term and structural causes (unfair and unequal distribution of resources or unsustainable agricultural practices) as compared to sudden shocks (droughts, etc). In Guyana, the increase in investments will help foster the development of resilience to vulnerabilities in food systems coupled with training of producers with modern farming practices.

C. Thematic Area #3: Funding and Financing

Guyana has long recognized the benefits of transforming its current food systems to be more sustainable. From ending poverty and hunger to responding to climate change and sustaining natural resources, transformed food systems lie at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Guyana has always advocated the need for fair access to adequate financing to develop food value chains and create sustainable food systems. Transforming the food system will require significantly greater public financing as well as private capital from national, regional and international partners.

A challenge for small and medium-sized companies (SME's) is barriers in accessing financing as existing financing options do not necessarily incentivize them to sustainably produce nutritious foods. Inadequate financing also limits farmers and fisherfolk from building resilience against natural disasters.

Guyana realizes that increasing investments in a more sustainable food system will require changes in policy including legislation. Public and private sector support to encourage investments in national food production plays an important role in supporting rural transformation and mitigating risks.

Suggestions to achieve these elements that emerged from the Guyana National High-Level Dialogue include:

- Launch a multi-donor funded financing facility to provide catalytic capital to a range of actors and institutions investing in agri-food SME's or supporting their capacity to develop viable business models that contribute to positive impact in food systems (e.g. equity).
- Implementing mechanisms that provide equitable access to financial resources for investment along the value chain for women and youth.
- Provide blended finance solutions and concessional loans or subsidies (e.g. as part of public-private partnerships) to help develop sustainable domestic food value chains. This typically would include providing training and technology transfer to farmers and food companies to help them comply with public and private standards for quality, quantity, safety, and reliability. This includes investments in ICTs, green energy, cold chains and upgraded ports.
- Scale up protection programs by to enhancing their financing, expanding their reach, improving delivery and making systems more adaptive to crises.
- Committing a targeted allocation of public spending towards agri-investment.

The Government of Guyana is working with the commercial banks to working on bridge the financing gap for low-cost loan programmes that will help rice, poultry and other farmers. Focused programmes to support capital formulation for farmers incentives, tax benefits to facilitate land, acquisition of land and equipment to modernise farms and open up opportunities for higher production and high yield.

In June 2023, an agreement has been made with a Commercial Bank, the Demerara Bank Limited to provide loans for poultry farmers across Guyana at an affordable interest rate. Farmers who wish to access loans, GYD\$500,000 or less, can do so at an interest rate of 3.5 per cent. While loans of between GYD\$500,000 – GYD\$1 million can be accessed at a four per cent interest rate, loans of between GYD\$1 million -GYD\$5 million are being offered at a 5.5 per cent interest rate.

3. Nexus in achieving Food Systems Transformation

Achieving Guyana's Food Systems Transformation is reliant on the successful implementation of Guyana's Agriculture Strategy 2021-2025 and the Strategy for Advancing the CARICOM Agri-Food Systems Agenda as both of these strategies have key targets to achieve over the next 5 -10 years that will strengthen our food system and the Caribbean region.