Agenda

Meeting Objectives: The new Learning Agenda builds on the first Feed the Future Learning Agenda launched in 2012. Through the Learning Agenda, the U.S. Government seeks to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Feed the Future initiative by generating, synthesizing, communicating and applying evidence related to key questions. Evidence from the Learning Agenda will inform the design of Feed the Future-related strategies, programs, projects and activities.

The Learning Agenda will also serve to address requirements laid out in section 8(a)(14) of the Global Food Security Act on sharing lessons learned from implementation of the Global Food Security Strategy. This Feed the Future Learning Agenda will focus on eight areas: (1) Gender and women’s empowerment, (2) Market systems, (3) Policy systems, (4) Nutrition, (5) Risk and resilience, (6) Youth, (7) Water and Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and (8) Scaling technologies and practices. These areas reflect work and research being carried out under the Feed the Future initiative.

9:30 am  Welcome and Opening Remarks
Murrow/White/Lisagor Rooms

Mark Keenum, President, Mississippi State University and Chair of BIFAD
9:35 am  Update on BIFAD Commissioned Study: Analysis of US Benefits and Capabilities Leveraged from Strategic Investments in Developing Country Agriculture and Food Security

  Joseph Glauber, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute

9:50 am  Introduction & Purpose of the Feed the Future Learning Agenda

  Robert Bertram, Chief Scientist, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

  View Slides

10:00 am  Framing the Learning Agenda

Nutrition Learning Agenda

  Julie MacCartee, Knowledge Management & Learning Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

  View Slides

Water & WASH Learning Agenda

  Stéphanie Maurissen, Senior Project Design Fellow- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

  View Slides

Discussion

Gender & Women’s Empowerment Learning Agenda

  Farzana Ramzan, Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

  View Slides

Youth Learning Agenda

  Susan Pologruto, Senior Democracy Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

  View slides

Discussion

11:00 am  Break

11:30 am  Framing the Learning Agenda (Continued)

Risk & Resilience Learning Agenda

  Jami Montgomery, Resilience Advisor, Center for Resilience, USAID

  View Slides

Market Systems Learning Agenda
Tatiana Pulido, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

View Slides

Discussion

Policy Systems Learning Agenda

James Oehmke, Senior Food Security & Nutrition Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

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Scaling Technologies & Practices Learning Agenda

Jessica Bagdonis, Human & Institutional Capacity Development Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

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Discussion

12:30 pm Public Comment Period

Moderator: Mark Keenum, Mississippi State, BIFAD

12:55 pm Closing Remarks

Mark Keenum, Mississippi State, BIFAD

1:00 pm Adjourn
Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mark Keenum, BIFAD Chair and President, Mississippi State University

Dr. Mark Keenum called the meeting to order, introducing himself and greeting the audience. Dr. Keenum then asked the panelists to introduce themselves. In his opening remarks, Dr. Keenum gave a brief overview of the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD), explaining that BIFAD was created by Title XII of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, to recognize the importance of higher education in addressing agricultural development and to serve as an advisory board to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator. Following Board Member introductions, Dr. Keenum acknowledged the many assets that U.S. universities bring to bear on development challenges and recognized the directors of the 22 Feed the Future Innovation Labs, who joined the meeting in person; they stood for recognition.

Dr. Keenum stated that the purpose of this meeting was to roll out, for public comment, the next iteration of the Feed the Future Learning Agenda. He noted that the public comment period would go through September 28th and that BIFAD was excited to have a role in facilitating stakeholder engagement in this process. Participation for those tuning in via livestream was enabled by Twitter or email.

Dr. Keenum then introduced Dr. Joseph Glauber, Senior Research Fellow for the International Food Policy Research
Institute in Washington, D.C., to give an update on the BIFAD-commissioned study to analyze the benefits and capabilities leveraged from investments in developing country agriculture.

Update on BIFAD Commissioned Study: Analysis of U.S. Benefits and Capabilities Leveraged from Strategic Investments in Developing Country Agriculture and Food Security

Joseph Glauber, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute

Dr. Glauber noted that the goal of this study is to quantify how USAID’s history of investments in international agricultural development have benefited U.S. producers and consumers. While quantifying these benefits is a challenge, Dr. Glauber said that much work has been done to look at how investments in research and development have affected productivity, and in turn, GDP, in developing countries, and how that in turn affects food consumption and trade patterns. The BIFAD-commissioned study augments this existing research with case studies. Particularly, case studies from the Feed the Future Innovation Labs that provide examples of how development aid can help the United States strengthen resilience, food security, international security, and other areas. Dr. Glauber noted that a conceptual paper and some case studies will be complete in time for World Food Day on October 16, and the full study will be complete by the end of the first quarter of 2019.

Dr. Glauber referred to the August 8, 2018 BIFAD meeting, where many impactful comments were made by participants. Since that meeting, Dr. Glauber noted that he has received many emails with valuable case studies and welcomes additional input from the development community. He noted that in an age where development budgets are tightening, this study is extremely important. During the question and comment period, Paul Miller from Lutheran World Relief asked for a few examples of how the study measures impact. Dr. Glauber mentioned that there is a large body of existing research on investments in research and development, and how they have affected productivity in the agricultural sector. The impact of these investments can start to be quantified in terms of GDP growth and food demands. However, he noted that it is harder to quantify the impact of infrastructure benefits. For example, reducing transportation costs in African countries can make the cost of trade in those countries go down, which helps increase household income of both producers and consumers, which contributes to rising GDP. While transportation investments clearly have an impact, it is difficult to precisely quantify. Dr. Glauber noted that an important part of this report will be to tell a compelling story about how benefits from USAID agricultural investments make their way back to producers and consumers in the United States.

Tim Dalton, Director of the Kansas State University-led Sorghum and Millet Innovation Lab, asked approximately how many case studies they had received and whether most of them fell within grey literature or peer-reviewed literature. Dr. Glauber replied that his team is still combing through the material, but those received thus far have been grey literature. Cynthia Donovan, Michigan State University, asked how the report will treat capacity building. Dr. Glauber highlighted the importance of trying to quantify capacity building impacts, noting that this is one of the important topics on which the report will focus. Andrei Sinioukov of Overseas Strategic Consulting asked if the report will look at the impact agricultural investments have on health outcomes, particularly nutrition, anemia, and stunting. Dr. Glauber replied that one of the biggest impacts that agricultural investments have on health is to increase caloric consumption for undernourished populations. The impact this has on health, and in turn on productivity and human capital, is difficult to measure, but there is published research that focuses on this question. Anita Campion of Connexus Corporation said her firm organizes annual conferences, such as the USAID-supported “Cracking the Nut” conference, which focused last year on scaling up agriculture technologies. She mentioned that some of the case studies that came out of that conference could be useful to the report, and she offered to send them to Dr. Glauber.
Introduction & Purpose of the Feed the Future Learning Agenda
Robert Bertram, Chief Scientist, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

Dr. Bertram began his remarks by noting that the 2016 Global Food Security Strategy mandates the development of a Learning Agenda so that findings can be shared with other global actors. He noted that the challenge in the Learning Agenda is finding the right balance between intellectual curiosity and useful outcomes—there is no perfect understanding of that trade-off, but he welcomed attendee input to help balance that out in the Agenda. The current Agenda builds on the last Feed the Future 1.0 Learning Agenda developed in 2012, with the goal to generate meaningful information, synthesize it, and then communicate it.

Dr. Bertram stated that the first Learning Agenda had many assessments and included monitoring of work, which fed into the Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS), as mandated. He highlighted the first Agenda aligned with the Feed the Future results framework: inclusive economic growth was measured by reductions in extreme poverty; resilience was measured by reduction in child wasting; and nutrition was measured by reductions in child stunting. The new Learning Agenda will reflect newer emphases that were not present in the first round of Feed the Future. Dr. Bertram flagged the idea that there is an inherent connection between the Feed the Future Research Strategy developed for the Global Food Security Act and the Learning Agenda, as they need to inform one another. He also noted that this is a systemic approach adopted across the government, as there is a culture of accountability in the government, so monitoring and evaluation is emphasized as part of the Learning Agenda.

Dr. Bertram listed the Learning Agenda Areas, all of which will be discussed later in the session.

- Nutrition
- Water and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)
- Gender and Women’s Empowerment
- Youth
- Risk and Resilience
- Market Systems
- Scaling Technologies and practices
- Policy systems

Dr. Bertram concluded by noting that this session will provide an opportunity to get feedback on the Learning Agenda from BIFAD members, attendees, and the public to ensure the determined approach is as effective as possible.

Framing the Learning Agenda
Nutrition Learning Agenda
Julie MacCartee, Knowledge Management & Learning Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

Dr. Keenum introduced Julie MacCartee, a Knowledge Management and Learning Advisor for the Bureau for Food Security, USAID, who facilitates strategic knowledge sharing and organizational learning to improve the outcomes of global food security and nutrition programs; and Stephanie Maurissen, a Senior Project Design Fellow and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Advisor for the Bureau for Food Security, who is responsible for providing WASH-related
Ms. MacCartee presented on the Nutrition Learning Agenda. She noted that Nutrition programming spans several different parts of USAID - including the Bureau for Food Security, the Bureau for Global Health, the Office of Food for Peace, and PEPFAR - and stated that USAID hopes to consolidate and focus the nutrition-related Feed the Future learning with group collaboration, as nutrition is fundamental to global health, economic growth, community and household resilience, education, and women’s empowerment. She made the important point that chronically hungry people cannot work, grow, and learn to their full potential, so nutrition is vitally important to the Global Food Security Strategy. Ms. MacCartee noted that over a quarter of the world’s children under the age of five suffer from undernutrition. Progress can be seen, however, in the decrease of stunted children from 165 million in 2012 to 151 million in 2017. She then showed a Feed the Future progress snapshot, which showed that the average pace of stunting reduction has been 2.5 times higher annually in Feed the Future focus countries than before the initiative. Despite this progress, the number of people facing chronic food deprivation has increased for the past three years. Thus, undernutrition is a complex issue that USAID and Feed the Future will be combatting for some time.

Ms. MacCartee presented the theory of change for the Nutrition Learning Agenda, which focuses on increasing the number of well-nourished individuals at community and population levels through programs that address 1) access, availability, and utilization of nutritious and safe diets year-round (this includes nutrition-sensitive agriculture); 2) direct, nutrition-specific interventions and services; 3) more hygienic household and community environments; and 4) women’s empowerment. She stated that there is evidence linking water and hygiene with nutrition and health, as clean water and good hygiene can reduce diarrheal disease and parasitic infections that impact nutrition. All four of these factors map to specific intermediate results in the Global Food Security Strategy results framework.

She described the following nutrition Learning Agenda questions:

1. How can the U.S. government most effectively reduce undernutrition and support a well-nourished population by addressing the determinants of stunting, wasting, and serious micronutrient deficiencies?
2. What are the most efficient ways to identify the determinants of stunting in the contexts where Feed the Future works?
3. Which nutrition-sensitive interventions, especially in the market systems and value chains, most effectively increase access, availability, and utilization of nutritious and safe diets year-round? (Here, she asserted that access or proximity to markets affects food security and nutrition.)
4. What are the best ways to identify, deliver, and scale up proven nutrition-sensitive interventions, through both public and private sector channels? (Here, she mentioned that this question tries to get at the nuts and bolts of how USAID implements its programs.)

She concluded by saying the questions were complementary to one another and that the Nutrition Learning Agenda team was excited to work with implementing partners to answer them.

**Water & WASH Learning Agenda**

Stéphanie Maurissen, Senior Project Design Fellow - Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

Stéphanie Maurissen spoke about the importance of water security to nutrition, food security and resilience, noting
that water availability, quality, access, and stability affect the utilization, stability, access, and availability of food. The elevation of WASH under the Global Food Security Strategy provides a great opportunity to promote WASH and water as cross-cutting themes in the GFSS. She then described how each of the three Global Food Security Strategy objectives relates to water:

Objective 1: Inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth—water is the input for agriculture, along with seed and fertilizers,
Objective 2: Strengthened resilience among people and systems—water resources can become conflict issues and may affect food security and resilience. Water is a single resource but performs multiple functions, so prioritization and coordination among the different uses will become more and more important to resilience efforts.
Objective 3: A well-nourished population, especially among women and children—improved access to clean water and food, and overall hygiene, are critical to improving nutritional status.

Ms. Maurissen proposed a three-part theory of change.
1. Implement sound agriculture water management technology and practices, so that countries can achieve sustainable agricultural productivity, improved resilience, and enhanced nutrition outcomes.
2. Promote collaboration and coordination between water stakeholders, build capacity to manage conflict, and promote multiple-use systems where appropriate, so communities can manage their water resources more effectively.
3. Target water sanitation and hygiene, and animal husbandry and horticulture interventions to improve access and behavior, which would improve health and nutrition outcomes.

She then asked the question, “How can agriculture water management, water supply, sanitation, and hygiene technologies and practices be best leveraged to achieve sustainable growth, resilience, and nutritional outcomes?” Finally, she listed four sub-questions about ways to increase agriculture productivity and improve resilience; key lessons that ensure successful adoption of water management technologies; what conditions support multiple-use water systems and collaboration among water users; and what contexts and conditions promote different WASH interventions.

Discussion

Dr. Keenum called on the Board to make any comments and ask questions first, followed by public comment.

- Dr. Pamela Anderson commented on the importance of the whole session, stating that all of the important pieces—agriculture-led growth, nutrition, resilience, water—are in place, which means that a food security paradigm can finally be operationalized. Her overarching concern is the timeframe—can this be made operational and progress be made in a timely fashion? Can we really get smarter about our investments and drive forward faster? She then commented on the need to synthesize what was learned in Phase One of the Learning Agenda, as it would strengthen the new Agenda to be more specific. She also asked how the Agenda is building upon what was learned about nutrition work in Phase One. She noted that the interlinkages that have been highlighted are important, but asked, “What does cross learning look like?”
- Ms. MacCartee agreed and said USAID intends to use Phase One in an intentional way to inform the new
Ms. Maurissen reiterated that USAID is excited to have Water and WASH as its own focus area so that there can be intentional cross learning. The elevation of WASH will allow for a succinct learning agenda and for missions to provide GFSS funding to WASH activities.

Dr. Brady Deaton reiterated the timeline concern of the study but that he remains hopeful because the world has woken up to the power of nutrition. He noted that the principles delineated need to be reinforced continually. He also noted that partnerships with public health and the medical communities could be extremely useful.

Dr. Keenum stated that in many Feed the Future countries, conflict is an issue and asked how conflict would be managed.

Ms. Maurissen agreed that water can be a conflict issue but noted that water coordination is a powerful tool in bringing people together. When communities coordinate around water access, they often learn that they can gather around other issues and work out other conflicts in peaceful ways. She acknowledged that water was just one aspect of conflict, but that it is important to understand how to use water to bring people together.

Russ Webster from Grow to Market commented from the audience, stating that market systems are important, but market actors are more important. He asserted that the way forward must include incentivizing better nutrition from market actors. For instance, he works on a program that incentivizes market actors to introduce food safety into their business models. He mentioned that it will be important to incentivize young entrepreneurs who have innovative attitudes to adopt new practices and drive the markets forward.

Dr. Shibani Ghosh from the Tufts University-led Nutrition Innovation Lab agreed that the agriculture-to-health linkage is a key topic seen in her research, so she was excited to see this highlighted in the Learning Agenda.

Larry Schaffer with Schaffer Global Management spoke about how to quantify investments and results. Adding to the discussion of water conflict, he stated that, even locally, in California, there is conflict over water. Addressing this will require a change in agricultural practices which currently are not sustainable. He also noted that nutrition education is extremely important.

Ms. MacCartee agreed and said USAID hopes to use input from the public comment period to further refine or broaden the learning agenda questions.

Nadine Sahyoun, University of Maryland, said that it is important to address food security at all stages of the life cycle, specifically noting that more emphasis needs to be placed on older adults.

Dr. Adegbola Adesogan, Director of the University of Florida-led Livestock Systems Innovation Lab, spoke about including livestock adequately in the Learning Agenda. Recent analysis from his Innovation Lab showed the relationship between meat consumption and stunting across the world, that countries with high levels of stunting had low meat consumption. On the negative side, livestock’s relationship to hygiene and environmental enteropathy needs to be considered.

The speakers agreed, and that closed the discussion session.

Gender & Women’s Empowerment Learning Agenda
Farzana Ramzan, Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

Dr. Keenum introduced the next two speakers, beginning with Dr. Farzana Ramzan, who is a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Advisor in the Bureau for Food Security who provides technical assistance to USAID missions in
Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Zambia. She manages the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index portfolio, and leads the gender metrics and analysis portfolio on her team. He next introduced Ms. Susan Pologruto, a Senior Democracy Advisor with the Bureau for Food Security, who has worked at USAID for nearly 15 years, promoting local solutions and strengthening civil society engagement.

Dr. Farzana Ramzan noted that Feed the Future has made significant investments in technology and training to promote more inclusive programming, as well as obtaining sex-disaggregated data. Some guiding principles USAID is using in developing the Learning Agenda are, “What have we learned? What do we need to understand? What can we answer?”

Answering the question, “What have we learned?” Dr. Ramzan stated that increasing the application of agriculture technology and improved practices, especially among women, has been found necessary for agriculture-led growth. Doing so helps increase women’s productivity and earnings, promote women’s empowerment, and promote sustainable and resilient agricultural systems. Additionally, Feed the Future training has been reaching more farmers, and reaching women and men in fairly equal numbers. Although data show that improved technology and practices are being applied, the gender gap in their application still persists. Dr. Ramzan presented the following gender and women’s empowerment Learning Agenda questions:

1. What contributes to the gender gap in application of improved agricultural technology and practice, and what are the best approaches to improve women’s use of these practices?
2. What are some of the gendered impacts of applying different agricultural practices?
3. What is the influence on nutrition outcomes and resilience capacities?
4. What underlying factors contribute to changes in women’s empowerment over time?
5. How have changes in women’s empowerment translated into food security and nutrition outcomes?

Dr. Ramzan stated that evidence from these questions would be used to shape what technologies are developed and promoted, and to focus on high-impact levers to increase women’s empowerment in agriculture. These questions include steps to shape agricultural technology to be more inclusive and effective. She concluded by stressing the importance of closing the gender gap and ensuring the impacts of technology applications are beneficial for everyone.

**Youth Learning Agenda**

**Susan Pologruto, Senior Democracy Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID**

Ms. Susan Pologruto stated that engaging civil society and youth in agricultural development early and often is extremely important. She noted that up until this point, Feed the Future youth engagement activities have not been disaggregated by age. Starting next year, Feed the Future will track age-disaggregated data. Youth, she asserted, play a critical role in helping to sustainably reduce global hunger and malnutrition. Most young people live in rural areas and will work within agriculture and food systems, but the formal labor market only holds about 25 percent of jobs. Thus, it is necessary to figure out how to engage youth in a productive way when jobs are limited.

Ms. Pologruto presented a theory of change around youth: engaging youth in Feed the Future activities and helping them develop skills and networks, access resources, and overcome certain barriers will help them be better prepared to productively engage in, and earn livelihoods from, diverse areas of agriculture–food systems as they transition to
economic independence, which will positively contribute to Global Food Security Strategy outcomes of improved agriculture-led economic growth, resilience, and better nutrition. Identifying new opportunities that attract or facilitate increased capital investment, on or off the farm, will help make job opportunities in which youth are especially suited more plentiful, leading to progress in achieving GFSS outcomes through job creation.

She added that it is important to focus not only on technology skills and training, but also on non-cognitive skills like time management and self control. She asked, “How can we improve the enabling environment of businesses? How can we help youth be more entrepreneurial?”

Ms. Pologruto presented the following Learning Agenda questions:

1. Are there youth-specific opportunities or constraints to engaging in agriculture–food systems, and do those differ by gender, socio-cultural and enabling environment factors?
2. What programmatic approaches work to overcome youth-specific constraints so that youth can productively participate in agriculture–food systems? If Feed the Future programs succeed, are youth proportionally sharing that success?
3. Which areas of agriculture–food systems are best suited to engage youth, and how can Feed the Future support youth to get involved?
4. How can Feed the Future collaborate with other key actors (i.e., health education, democracy and governance, private sector, etc.) to best support and empower youth?

Discussion
Dr. Keenum called on the BIFAD Board to pose questions first:

- Mr. Richard Lackey agreed that investing in youth is very important, and he noted that educating youth requires that they have a support system. He stressed that youth-development projects should be systems-based, vertical and integrated with the value chain, as much as possible.
- Dr. Pamela Anderson asked a question about the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) as an instrument, suggesting the Learning Agenda speak to the instrument itself and how it has been refined. She expressed a concern that data on girls may fall between cracks, since “age-specific” data doesn’t mean they’ll get data on girls. She suggested USAID distinguish between data on women and girls, or parse that out in the youth section of the Agenda, or both.
- Dr. Ramzan stated that USAID has developed a project-level WEAI on challenges and areas of improvement and have learned a lot from it. Dr. Anderson encouraged writing about this. Dr. Ramzan agreed that ‘girls’ have been a challenge. She noted that the next iteration of data will not be layered; age and sex will both be tracked, but not together. There are budget constraints that inhibit USAID from collecting that information. USAID is working to manage that constraint but understands that there are gaps in the data they are collecting. She stated there is a general focus on female empowerment, and that USAID will rely on partners to help navigate that.
- Ms. Pologruto said that the question of how to engage youth, specifically girls, is currently under discussion. She gave an example of USAID/Uganda, which created an entire Mission Strategy around the 14-year-old girl. For every country intervention considered, the question is asked, “How does this help the 14-year-old girl?” She suggested that we can learn from the USAID/Uganda country experience as it unfolds. For some interventions a focus on the 14-year-old girl may not make sense, but she agreed it’s a creative approach
that enables the country to see indirect links among intervention impacts.

Dr. Keenum then called on the public to pose questions:

- Ms. Eliza Chard from Making Cents International said she was surprised that there was no mention of positive youth development. She said her organization found that a holistic approach to positive youth development is really helpful to engaging youth. She mentioned the guide created by Youth Power and the Bureau for Food Security on youth inclusive agriculture as a helpful resource which can be found online here.
- Mr. James Ash noted that the group’s last three questions were very specific, and he encouraged others to be as specific.
- Dr. Jan Middendorf from the Kansas State University-led Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab suggested looking at the relationship between Peace Corps volunteers, local research agencies, and Innovation Labs, as they involve youth engagement at all levels. She mentioned one Senegalese woman whose research, for example, informs work going on with the Peace Corps. She encouraged the speakers to think about how to capitalize on these kinds of case studies.
- Dr. Hillary Egna from the Oregon State University-led Aquaculture & Fisheries Innovation Lab noted that in many countries, youth are leaving rural areas for the cities, and that youth who remain in rural areas work on the farms of others as day laborers. She asked how Feed the Future will make connections to urban youth. Most of the youth who will advance and make money are going to be in urban areas, not on the farm. She then posed the question: “Are we trying to keep people on farms when they naturally want to gravitate to cities?”
- Ms. Pologruto noted that this is a common question her office contemplates. Many young people want to go to cities for economic opportunities, but a Feed the Future goal is to show that there are economic opportunities both on and off the farm. She provided an example that youth can get involved as travelling vet assistants providing care for farm animals. She also mentioned another program called “Youth on Wheels” that trained youth to deliver agricultural extension services to farmers. A tangible resource like bicycles or motorbikes attracts youth, helps them become mobile, and can lead to other opportunities along the market system. She asked, “Where along the value chain can we engage youth?” She concluded by saying youth do not necessarily have to work the land; there are other ways to engage youth in agriculture.
- Dr. Mywish Maredia, Director of the Michigan State University-led Food Security Policy Innovation Lab asked if USAID was thinking of creating an index similar to the WEAI for youth empowerment. She suggested that, to elevate youth, USAID needs to think about collecting rigorous data.
- Ms. Pologruto responded that it is too early to create an index of this sort yet, but USAID has contracted with Making Cents International, which has developed a two-part guide on how to engage youth. That is a first step, and USAID may or may not create an index. She further commented that relying solely on quantitative measures like indices does not always provide a full picture of the context in which we work such as the nuances with regard to social hierarchy, and she encouraged a systems thinking approach that considers how different components and parts interact to each other in the system.

Risk & Resilience Learning Agenda
Jami Montgomery, Resilience Advisor, Center for Resilience, USAID
Dr. Keenum introduced the next two panelists, starting with Ms. Jami Montgomery, a Resilience Advisor with USAID’s Center for Resilience, who focuses on integrating resilience into food security and related development programming. He then introduced Ms. Tatiana Pulido, the Market Systems Management Lead for the Bureau for Food Security, who developed the guidance on applying system measurement tools to the U.S. Government’s Feed the Future initiative and co-authored guidelines for monitoring, evaluation, and learning in market systems development.

Ms. Montgomery began by defining “resilience” as the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth. She said resilience is elevated in the Learning Agenda, and it protects USAID investments in the face of shocks, helping partners and beneficiaries to manage risk and adapt to changing conditions. Ms. Montgomery stated the theory of change that, if resilience capacities are successfully strengthened and maintained at the individual, household, community, national, and systems levels, then people will be able to better protect critical assets; food security will be improved and sustained; and populations will sustainably escape poverty and vulnerability, even in the face of recurrent shocks and stresses.

She mentioned that there are certain sources of resilience and resilience capacities that cut across contexts. For instance, resilient livelihoods that enable households to diversify and manage risks are important. Resilient communities and countries have systems in place for managing resources and risks that are beyond the control of individual households or that overwhelm the capacity of households to manage on their own. Examples include markets that create and sustain opportunities as well as systems for managing a diverse array of shocks and stresses (e.g., systems for managing natural resources, disaster risk management, and social safety nets). She also noted that resilient people are healthy, well-nourished and empowered and have the aspiration and human capital to achieve and maintain food security and pursue livelihoods.

Ms. Montgomery presented the following resilience Learning Agenda questions:

1. What sources of resilience explain why some households and communities that are subject to recurrent shocks and stresses are able to manage these events without compromising current and future wellbeing, while others are not? How can these sources of resilience be strengthened? Here, she stated that although it is known that some sources of resilience are important, further exploration is needed to understand how to strengthen and build upon those.
2. What roles do inclusive, agriculture-led growth and agriculture value chain development play in strengthening the resilience of households, communities, and market systems?
3. What individual, household, community, and systems-level resilience capacities are important for enabling poverty escapes, and what risks pose the greatest threats to sustaining these escapes over time? How can these capacities be strengthened? She noted that USAID wants to maintain development achievements and outcomes.
4. How is resilience strengthened and food security gains best achieved in areas of protracted conflict and/or subject to violent extremist threats?
5. What contribution does improved resilience and food security make to addressing some of the underlying causes of conflict, including conflict related to violent extremism?
Market Systems Learning Agenda
Tatiana Pulido, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

Ms. Tatiana Pulido opened by saying it is encouraging that everyone seems to be in agreement about the importance of market systems and having a systemic approach. She stated that improving the effectiveness of the Feed the Future initiative, which seeks to reduce hunger, poverty, and malnutrition, is the key objective of the Learning Agenda. Central to achieving poverty reduction through agriculture-led growth is the existence of resilient, competitive, and inclusive markets. Market systems lay the foundation for achieving resilience and nutrition by increasing the availability and accessibility of goods and services to all. She shared the theory of change for the Market Systems Learning Agenda: agriculture and food market systems projects and activities aim to address the underlying causes of poor market performance that matter to people living in poverty in order to create lasting impact through systemic change, leading to inclusive, resilient economic growth and ultimately sustainable poverty reduction and food security.

Ms. Pulido presented the following market systems Learning Agenda questions:

1. What monitoring methods, tools, and indicators best capture market systems changes; are cost effective; and work well in developing country operating environments? How is resilience measured?
2. How can donors, governments, and other public sector actors most effectively incentivize private sector investments in ways that reduce poverty, hunger, and malnutrition?
3. How does market system development maximize indirect impacts? What interventions have had positive effects? What are the cross-market functions that strengthen systems?

Ms. Pulido concluded by saying that she hopes to center learning around these questions over the next five years.

Discussion
Dr. Mark Keenum called on the Board to pose questions first, followed by the audience:

- Dr. Brady Deaton commented that these were demanding questions in terms of data systems, but he was very excited about the potential. He noted that there are vast stores of data available, like educational data in Africa available from African institutions, that could help give insight into such questions as youth and resilience. While the data may not be perfect, they could be a good starting place.
- Dr. Pamela Anderson said the area she’s most concerned about is market systems, and that the learning focus on productivity has fallen off the Learning Agenda. She noted an assumption that focusing on market systems and market demand will increase productivity, but there is a persistent yield gap, so even when there are functioning markets, they often can’t deliver because of lags in productivity. She wanted the group to address productivity or explain why enough is known about productivity not to address it in the Learning Agenda.
- Dr. Keenum asked about the effects of resilience due to violent extremism, asking what approach USAID will pursue in that regard.
- Ms. Jami Montgomery said the question of violent extremism and its effects on resilience can be examined in two ways. First, how can Feed the Future strengthen resilience and meet poverty reduction and nutrition objectives in conflict contexts? Second, how can Feed the Future expand learning around the relationship between food and security, and how that may contribute to environments in which violent extremism and
conflict may arise? Preliminary studies have begun to address these questions. Extremist groups have used business loans to engage youth and others. It is important to understand this phenomenon better and explore how programming might be framed around it.

- Dr. Jagger Harvey, Director of the from Kansas State University-led Reduction of Post-Harvest Loss Innovation Lab asked, “How are the learning findings going to be synthesized so that USAID can collectively better target its work and enable working together across programs? For instance Food for Peace uses the Famine Early Warning Systems.”
- Ms. Montgomery said a robust Learning Agenda and knowledge management system will help synthesize and disseminate learning, but there has been no discussion around setting up similar early warning systems. Learning should be framed around supporting country-led processes to better manage risks and strengthen resilience.
- Mr. Douglas Steinberg, NCBA CLUSA International, said that more income translates to better nutrition, and better value chains lead to better nutrition, but this is not always true unless nutrition is an intentional outcome. Outside of USAID, he said, there are many other agencies that should be involved in nutrition programming—particularly USDA—that do not explicitly have it as a mandate.
- Dr. Vara Prasad, Director of the Kansas State University-led Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab, asked how to measure resilience, since it means different things to different people.
- Ms. Montgomery USAID’s Center for Resilience is aware of the issue and has spent many years focusing on this question. An expert in the Center has been spearheading the effort to identify measurements of resilience.
- Mr. Larry Schaffer suggested using vulnerability and threat assessments to understand risks that are natural versus manmade. Specifically in extremist environments, it is important to understand complexities of the environment and manmade threats.
- Mr. Paul Miller said that climate change affects nutrition and all other aspects of health, so he asked why it was not included in the learning agenda. He also noted that humanitarian crises were mentioned, but not the science of implementing humanitarian and resilience work.
- Ms. Montgomery clarified that shocks and stresses included a variety of things, even if not specifically listed, so climate change is included. However, it is important to consider that not just the large covariate shocks but also individual shocks at the household level—idiosyncratic shocks, like illness or death of a wage earner—can be just as impactful to a family, or more so, than large shocks such as a drought. In reference to the second question, she noted that USAID is explicitly taking a developmental focus on these crises and no longer viewing shocks as anomalies, recognizing the need to plan for risks in the long term. There is a need for a focus on joint planning and operational integration with humanitarian assistance.
- Dr. Peter Goldsmith, Director of the University of Illinois-led Soybean Value Chain Research Innovation Lab built on Dr. Anderson’s point about productivity, noting that until markets stabilize with productive farms and a consistent supply of raw material, downstream food companies won’t invest and hire. In the soy value chain, for example, there are high economic multipliers, but these can’t be leveraged without an increase in productivity.
- Ms. Pulido answered that farmers need an incentive structure to increase yields and need to determine how they can practically access resources to increase yields. Although this theme does not explicitly address productivity, productivity is understood as part of the market systems outcomes Feed the Future wants to achieve. She acknowledged that increased productivity could be more explicit, and further internal discussions would be needed. Dr. Zachary Baquet commented that the Feed the Future Research Strategy does have an extensive focus on productivity and complements the overall Feed the Future Learning.
Agenda.

- Dr. Anderson asked, “do we understand the barriers to closing the yield gap?” If so, that point should be explicit; if not, that question should be a part of the Learning Agenda.
- Dr. Goldsmith asked, “Are the signals in the commodity space so bad that producers don’t have the right incentives?” He argued that global market and price signals are there, but that productivity is still a challenge. A priority need is basic access to good inputs.
- Dr. Robert Bertram noted that the Market Systems concept came out of understanding the efficiencies and synergies that could come from the integration of value chains, which connect production to market. He agreed that it would be important to continue considering production and addressing the yield gap. He said market efficiency is increasing resulting from information flow in the digital age and improved infrastructure, but the Learning Agenda needs to consider how to integrate the two concepts.
- An unidentified man noted that the international agriculture research budget is under threat, so increasing productivity is important. Research helps drive gains in productivity.

Policy Systems Learning Agenda

James Oehmke, Senior Food Security & Nutrition Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

Dr. Keenum introduced the next two speakers: Dr. James Oehmke, a Senior Food Security and Nutrition Advisor for the Bureau for Food Security, who is the Bureau point of contact for mutual accountability, agricultural and rural transformation, nutrition policy, and gender policy, and Dr. Jessica Bagdonis, a Human and Institutional Capacity Development Advisor for the Bureau for Food Security, who has worked across higher education global engagement, agricultural extension, and international development for more than 15 years.

Dr. James Oehmke emphasized that better policy systems help people create better lives while reducing poverty and improving food security, water security, resilience, and nutritional outcomes, leading to self reliance. He shared a graph showing higher agricultural growth rates in countries that had fully implemented agricultural policy reforms of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) early on. He showed that countries that adopted CAADP also had decreased need for emergency food aid.

Dr. Oehmke presented the theory of change that effectively supporting partner countries in the development of a prioritized policy agenda (i.e., what countries should do to move their agriculture and food systems forward), an institutional architecture (i.e., strengthened structures in which citizens engage in policy and implementation), and mutual accountability (i.e., all stakeholders need to be involved and accountable for the solution), will lead to measurable contributions to Feed the Future goals.

Dr. Oehmke shared the following policy Learning Agenda questions:

1. Is the theory of change correct?
2. What are the most promising policies?
3. How do we policy-program effectively?
4. How do we measure progress (i.e., showing better institutional programs, etc.)?
He stated that there is an application of answers to these questions at all levels. One platform for getting these answers, for example, was shown in the African Union’s 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Transformation and Growth. In January 2018, 47 of 55 African countries reported on their progress. Country reports included areas of strength, weakness, and how to solve those weaknesses. Each head of state received copies of all reports. The example of Botswana was presented as having policy strengths. Tanzania was presented as needing to strengthen some policy weaknesses. Dr. Oehmke showed that data could be leveraged at the country level to improve policy. He noted that many BR recommendations to address weaknesses are not policy related, but they are related to other areas that are within the purview of Innovation Lab research mandates. He concluded that both the policy and non-policy work that the Feed the Future Innovation Labs are doing can inform recommendations that countries use to move forward through this platform.

Scaling Technologies & Practices Learning Agenda
Jessica Bagdonis, Human & Institutional Capacity Development Advisor, Bureau for Food Security, USAID

Dr. Jessica Bagdonis began by acknowledging that “scaling” can mean different things to different people, so for this presentation, she noted the definition of “scaling” is the process of sustainably increasing the adoption of a credible technology/practice, or package of these, with the quality to retain or improve the demonstrated positive impact of that technology/practice and achieve widespread use by stakeholders. She noted examples where widespread adoption of a technology/practice could increase agricultural productivity, such as the widespread adoption of improved genetics for seeds or livestock breeds. She also mentioned that widespread adoption of practices, such as hand washing, could support nutrition achievements.

The theory of change around scaling is: If we assess scalability (or the potential of an improved technology/practice to be taken up), and we understand and address stakeholder incentives, constraints, and capacities, and we create an enabling environment, and we demonstrate the business value, and adequate financing is available, then we will achieve widespread adoption of technologies and practices. However, getting all of these elements to happen is difficult. The Learning Agenda, therefore, is about seeking data on these different elements that can enable an understanding of generalizable patterns across contexts.

Dr. Bagdonis presented the following scaling technologies and practices Learning Agenda questions:

1. What implementation models and interventions best support achieving widespread adoption of improved technologies/practices? What are the roles of U.S. government agencies and their partners in promoting widespread adoption of improved technologies and/or practices? What potential actions should they avoid?
2. What are the best methods for monitoring this scaling? What indicators and metrics are most important for monitoring this performance? How do they develop an estimate of the temporal and spatial pattern of diffusion of an improved technology/practice?
3. In the interest of accelerating uptake by delivery pathways, what are the most effective approaches for increasing the rate of uptake? How should such findings be integrated into research plans by Feed the Future partners?
Discussion

Dr. Keenum called on the BIFAD Board to pose questions first, followed by the audience:

- Dr. Brady Deaton asked if USAID investments and investments in the agriculture sector were correlated with education.
- Dr. Oehmke said that education correlates have not been investigated yet. Very few countries scored exceptionally on their own investment commitment to the agricultural sector. Rwanda scored the highest overall, but low on its commitment. He said many heads of state were upset that they had not scored well, and there have been some initial positive developments resulting from disappointment in the low scores.
- Dr. Pamela Anderson asked for more details on the quality of national data.
- Dr. Oehmke agreed that data quality would be an important investment moving forward. He deferred to Dr. Robert Bertram to talk about who would manage data improvement, but he noted that the African Union has held a series of learning activities about successes and failures, focusing heavily on data quality and data systems. He noted that a plan asking countries to improve data will be rolled out over the next year.
- Mr. Richard Lackey made a comment related to scaling, saying that many farmers do not think about the long term. If there is no demand for a product in one season, farmers will not grow it next season, as they want immediate payback. He noted the importance of making sure all stakeholders are in play to walk the system forward and knowing the entire economic system to ensure the value chain is intact.
- Dr. Bagdonis acknowledged the importance of taking a systems approach to understand scaling, and that is implicitly captured in the complex theory of change for the scaling Learning Agenda. Ultimately, the Learning Agenda around scaling seeks to engage diverse partners to work together across programming to sequence and layer interventions at the right time to accelerate sustainable widespread uptake of new or improved technologies/practices for positive impact.

Public Comment Period

Moderator: Mark Keenum, Mississippi State, BIFAD

- Dr. Keenum transitioned to the public comment period and noted that comments submitted through Agrilinks would be accepted through September 28th.
- Dr. John Lamb, an independent agribusiness consultant, expressed concern about proportionality. Although the agriculture sector comprises food, feed, fiber, and industrial use, there is less activity on the interconnections than is desirable. He said there is still a supply orientation in USAID, and he is concerned that so few of USAID’s research and development efforts target post-farm gate value creation. He noted that in the value chain approach, there is a missing middle of market intermediaries, that receives insufficient attention. Finally, he suggested that the Learning Agenda differentiate among major subsectors and commodity systems and seek to understand how that can be applied to different country contexts.
- Mr. Richard Lackey agreed that post-farm gate issues are important, but he cautioned that being a market participant and facilitating market functionality may artificially influence markets and create new problems. He noted that research and analysis by universities is needed to understand what impacts those actions could have. For example, what is the impact of financing market uptake on other market players?
- Ms. Anita Campion from Connexus Corporation noted that access to finance (savings accounts, insurance, and credit) is a huge impediment to scaling up, especially for low-income smallholders.
- Dr. Elizabeth Mitcham, Director of the University of California-led Horticulture Innovation Lab noted that nutritious food often tends to be more perishable and labor intensive, which is both a challenge and an
opportunity for creating jobs and entrepreneurship for women and youth. She said the Horticulture Innovation Lab has been engaged with the Guinea mission on a youth-led horticultural service center, in which young people are trained to teach farmers how to reduce losses and gain market access. She noted that post-harvest loss is a major challenge, and it is difficult to get farmers to adopt new practices and technologies unless they have the expectation that a market linkage and better price that will reward them for adopting improved practices.

- Dr. Tag Demment of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities said that the issues discussed reside in human capital in developing countries, and a strategy is needed to develop that human capital to create policy, become entrepreneurs, and carry out the functions of government that advance agriculture. He mentioned that USAID was active in this area in the past and that the old Collaborative Research Support Program model was funded for a period of time that allowed for people to be trained to the Ph.D. level, unlike the current Innovation Labs, which are funded for five years. He noted that without human capital development USAID will have to keep intervening to create the conditions where people have vision and can formulate and implement policy.

- Dr. Mark Varner of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities took several online questions. Ms. Janeen Simon from Feed the Children Guatemala asked via email, “Will the panelists talk about the link between conflict, violence, migration, and food/nutrition security? Does food/nutrition insecurity lead to conflict/violence/migration?. Do conflict/violence/migration create food/nutrition insecurity, and will the Learning Agenda focus on this?”

- Online participant Mr. Richard Caldwell at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation asked about the process that thematic groups used for coming up with the Learning Agenda.

- Dr. Keenum commented that conflict has been a topic of discussion for the Board. USAID Administrator Mark Green is also very concerned about people affected by conflict and is looking to the BIFAD to solicit input on this issue.

- Ms. Jami Montgomery said conflict is multi-causal, and the reasons people choose to migrate are multi-causal, so she was hesitant to make those direct links between conflict and food insecurity. The Learning Agenda seeks to understand the relationships and mitigate the drivers of these phenomena.

- Dr. Zachary Baquet, Senior Knowledge Management Advisor in the Bureau for Food Security (BFS), noted that the process of developing the Learning Agenda has been ongoing and has included reviewing questions developed by USAID Missions developed through their Country Development Strategies, pulling questions from other sources, working with technical staff in BFS, and getting feedback from USAID and US Government inter-agency partners. At this stage, public input is sought through the BIFAD platform, and Agrilinks.org is soliciting feedback through an online survey. Planned or ongoing research activities are also sought that could help feed into the Learning Agenda questions. Feedback will be reviewed in October, and a finalized Learning Agenda will be available by the end of the calendar year. The process is anticipated to be ongoing on an annual basis and iterative.

- Dr. Pamela Anderson clarified that she thought Richard Caldwell’s question focused on the process to define the eight themes.

- Dr. Baquet noted there is continuity between the new Learning Agenda and the first phase of the Learning Agenda, but, also, areas that were underrepresented before, such as gender and youth, will be developed more in the new Learning Agenda. There are more specific and intentional questions around technology adoption and risk and resilience. Addressing earlier questions about agricultural productivity, Dr. Baquet said that the USG Global Food Security Research Strategy Themes 1 and 2 address agricultural productivity questions, while the Learning Agenda looks at ‘sticky issue’ questions that need to be
addressed to make the whole initiative successful. The eight chosen themes link up with the Global Food Security Strategy Results Framework, link with the previous Learning Agenda, and are areas where moving the needle will help make the Feed the Future initiative successful.

- Mr. Larry Schaffer highlighted two important gaps in the Learning Agenda discussion: carbon emissions as they relate to agriculture as a by-product, and the energy demands of agricultural production. He asked if those themes would be included, going forward.
- Another online question focused on whether the Learning Agenda for nutrition might consider food loss and waste and their effect on consumption at the household level.
- Dr. Otto Gonzalez from the U.S. Department of Agriculture/National Institute of Food and Agriculture, said via email that land-grant universities have a long experience with fostering involvement of youth in agriculture and asked if there was any intent to use that experience.
- Ms. Assa Balayara via email from Senegal asked, “In villages, in order to enhance nutrition, women are growing fruits and vegetables; what about in urban areas? What do you learn?”
- Mr. James Ash asked the audience if non-U.S. citizens who have participated in U.S. post-graduate education programs had impacted their work. Almost everyone in the audience raised their hands to say yes.

Closing Remarks

Mark Keenum, Mississippi State, BIFAD

Dr. Keenum thanked Rob Bertram and the other speakers for their contributions. He also thanked Clara Cohen, Executive Director of BIFAD; Learning Team Leader Zachary Baquet; Jessica Bagdonis; Karen Duca and Carole Levin at USAID; and Mark Varner and Devin Ferguson at APLU. The meeting was adjourned.