

How coherent are food policies with the goal of healthy diets for all?


An analysis of Pakistan, India, & Bangladesh

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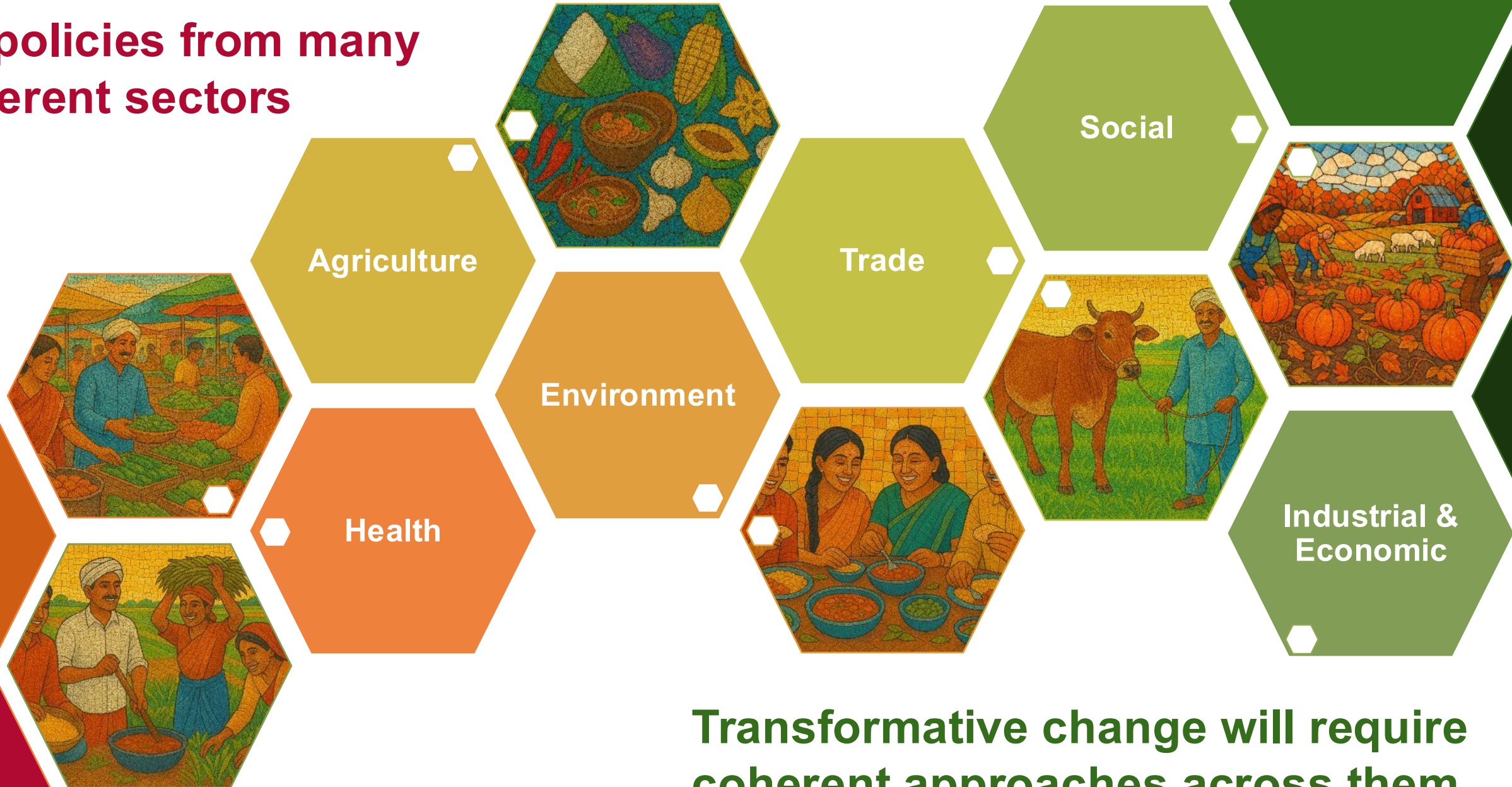
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**One of the key routes for
achieving scale in improved
nutrition is through **policy**.**

**But nutrition is influenced
by policies from many
different sectors**



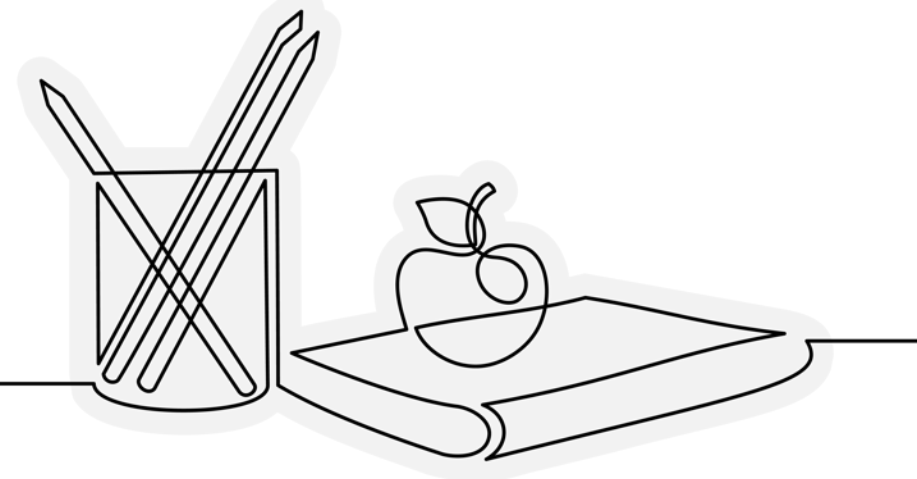
**Transformative change will require
coherent approaches across them.**



We sought to examine food system policies across diverse sectors to understand how those policies are (and are not) coherent with the goal of healthy diets for all.

Method: Food Systems Policy Coherence Diagnostic Tool

- **Focus:** horizontal coherence (across sectors), at the national (domestic) level.
- **Sources Used:** Academic research on policy coherence and food systems policy, existing metrics & tools (e.g. OECD, UNEP), syntheses of current practices (e.g., UNFSS), existing secondary data sources (e.g., UN Global Surveys on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation)
- **Structure:** Two modules, all using multiple-choice closed-ended questions
- **Application:** Applied to 3 South Asian countries in 2025 - Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India (+9 others)
- **Methods:** key informant interviews (n=84), document review (n=361), validation workshops



Tool Module 2: Coherence between sectoral policies and cross-cutting goals

- Six **goals**, drawn from the UNFSS process
- For each, 1-2 policy **outcomes** that contribute to it
- For each outcome, analyze **policies** across health, agriculture, environment, social, industrial/economic and trade
 - How do they **contribute to or detract from** that goal?

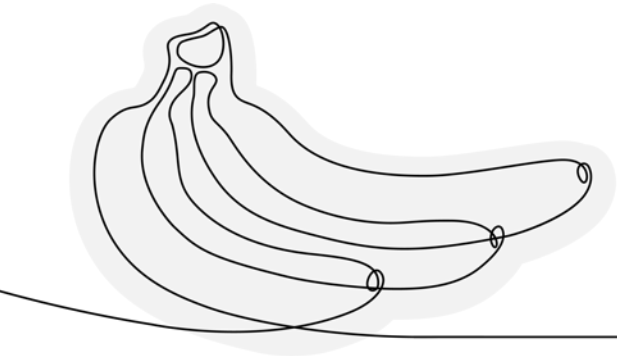
Two outcomes:
More nutritious food consumption
Less unhealthy food consumption



Limitations & Caveats

- Not exhaustive in policy coverage
- Simplification of questions, answers, and analysis
- Policy is dynamic, context specific
- Not looking at implementation

 **Interpretation is key and the output is just the start of a discussion**





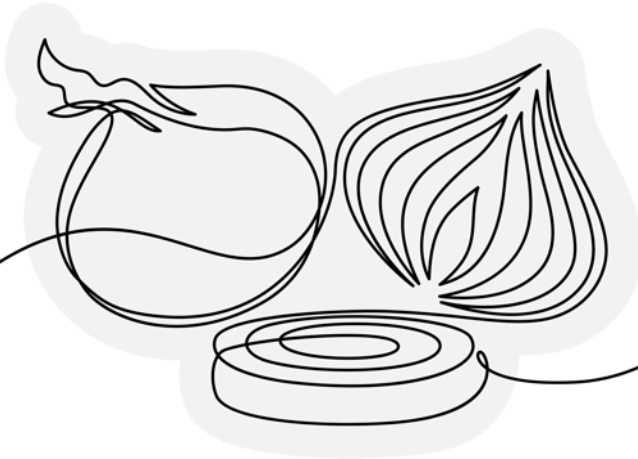
RESULTS

Results from South Asia

	Agriculture	Health	Environment	Trade	Social	Industrial, Economic & Monetary
More nutritious food consumption						
Bangladesh						
India						
Pakistan						
Less unhealthy food consumption						
Bangladesh						
India						
Pakistan						
LEGEND	Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly incoherent	

Common trends across countries

- Health policies widely coherent with both healthy diets outcomes
- Agriculture policies coherent with increasing nutritious food – but not with reducing unhealthy food
- Environment, Trade, and Social policies tend to show more incoherence with healthy diets goals



Health Policies

More nutritious foods

- ✓ Consistently support public awareness-raising on nutrition
- Include some mandatory food fortification – though may be voluntary for some foods in some countries (e.g., some oils in India)
- Mandate nutrient labelling, though not consistently front-of-pack (*positive outlier - India*)

Less unhealthy foods

- ✓ Mandatory removal of trans fats from foods, nutrient lists, and healthy eating campaigns
- Some (*imperfect*) regulation of food advertising
 - Limited standards for school meals, including restrictions on unhealthy foods (*positive outlier - India*)



Agriculture Policies

More nutritious foods

- ✓ Consistently support R&D for nutritious non-staple crops & ASFs and provide extension services for these
 - *To some extent*, provide subsidized inputs and irrigation support for these crops
- ✓ Consistently support biofortification, cold chain infrastructure development, and market development support

Less unhealthy foods

- Consistently subsidize edible oilseeds and sugar crops, such as through subsidized inputs or price supports



Environment Policies

More nutritious foods

- Consistently permit some use of land for urban agriculture and agroforestry for tree foods and wild harvested foods – but could do more to explicitly support
- Mostly support land consolidation (*positive outlier: Bangladesh*)
- Do not restrict water use for irrigation
 - Consistently include restrictions on fishing

Less unhealthy foods

- ✓ Limit use of single-use plastics for food packaging



Trade Policies

More nutritious foods

- ✓ Support fast-track import clearance for perishable products like fruits and vegetables
- Impose tariffs (of varying degrees) on imports of highly nutritious foods or inputs for producing them
- Non-tariff trade barriers can increase the cost of fortification inputs and equipment

Less unhealthy foods

- Require nutrient content labelling on imported packaged foods
- *Do not* place higher tariffs on unhealthy foods (e.g., based on salt, sugar or fat content) (*positive outlier – Pakistan*)



Social Policies

More nutritious foods

- ✓ 2 of 3 countries mainstream nutrition BCC in social protection
- Limited requirements for nutritious food in social protection programmes, including (bio)fortified products (*positive outlier: India*)
- No regulations on nutritious foods in workplace canteens

Less unhealthy foods

- Limited education on risk of unhealthy foods within social protection (focus on dietary diversity, undernutrition prevention)
- No limits on use of food/cash transfers for unhealthy foods
- Mandated minimum wages not necessarily sufficient to access a healthy diet



Industrial & Economic Policies


More nutritious foods

- ✓ Consistent support for rural infrastructure, use of price controls (e.g., zero VAT) on nutritious foods, interest rate concessions or other financial incentives for food producers
- Limited specific economic support for nutritious foods (beyond agriculture as a sector)

Less unhealthy foods

- Financial incentives for food producers often apply to those producing unhealthy foods
- Some health-related food taxes (*positive outlier: SSBs*)





Policy is central to achieving better nutrition at scale, but analysis of food systems policy coherence underlines that nutrition is influenced by many different sectors – and often the most incoherence lies in unexpected sectors.

Policy analyses and advocacy efforts must go beyond health (and agriculture) to **consider food systems policies more holistically, acknowledging there may be trade-offs.**



Despite consistent trends in some areas across countries, there are also divergences, including positive outliers that offer models for cross-country learning—which in turn can amplify scale.

Resources

Toolkit + Results Briefs for all Countries



<https://www.gainhealth.org/policy-coherence-toolkit>

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