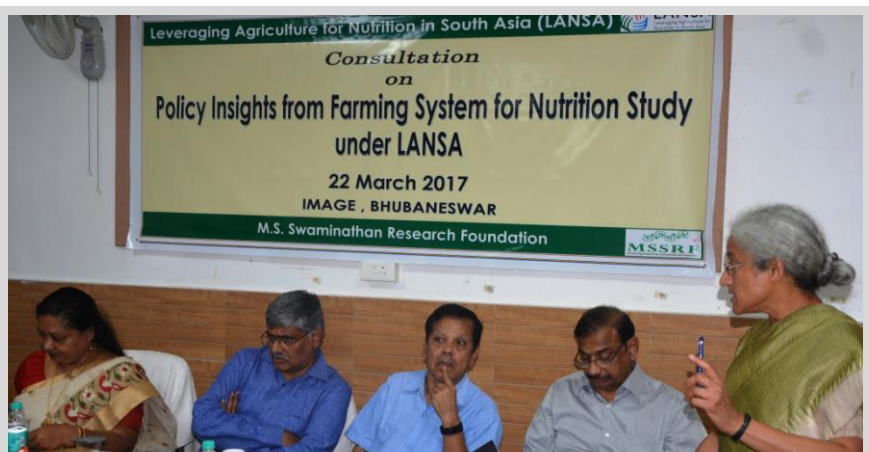


LANSA invited to inform Odisha Vision 2036 policy document

Vision 2036 is a roadmap to achieving the SDGs for Odisha State, and is jointly drafted by the State Government functionaries, policy influencers and experts



Summary

The State of Odisha in India is characterised by rainfed farming and agriculture is the primary occupation¹. Undernutrition is at a critical level with the National Family Health Survey showing Odisha in poor light². Therefore in 2016, to propel action towards development in the State and to frame realistic action plans, the government decided on a Vision 2036 Policy Document in line with the SDG targets and involved civil society organisations as well as experts to help articulate strategies at the grassroots level³. LANSA was recognised for bringing attention to ‘agriculture for nutrition’ in Odisha State through several multi-level, multi-sectoral research uptake efforts under the MSSRF Farming System for Nutrition (FSN) study since 2013⁴. These strategic engagement endeavours with the farmer men and women communities⁵, village school children⁶, research-policy forums and policy-makers⁷, built a strong ‘research-to-policy’ and ‘research-to-practice’ relationship, earning LANSA the invitation from Odisha Government to contribute to the section on agriculture in the Vision 2036 policy document⁸. The Document comprises of collaborative contributions from government department functionaries and subject experts, and LANSA was chosen as one such expert. As a consequence, nutrition-sensitive agriculture evidence from the FSN study has informed the Odisha policy document and the future agenda for agriculture policy and practice in Odisha State.

Background: The FSN study, context and challenges in Odisha

The underlying hypothesis of the MSSRF Farming System for Nutrition study⁹ is that nutritional outcomes in a rural population improves through production and own consumption of nutrient-rich diverse diets; i.e. It is feasible to improve diet diversity at the household level through a farming systems approach. To this end, a series of crop-based and animal husbandry interventions¹⁰, along with nutrition education for farmers (men and women), and also children¹¹ were initiated in seven villages in Koraput district in Odisha State, starting in 2013. Simultaneously, a host of agri-nutrition stakeholders including academics, researchers, knowledge partners, civil society and policy-makers were also identified and rapport built so as to leverage knowledge and foster intervention partnerships for the FSN approach at the grassroots¹².

LANSA research and research uptake efforts during 2014, 2015 and 2016, focused on better availability and awareness around nutrient-dense crops such as millets and pulses, and these were promoted at the household level to begin with. However, the first hurdle and major challenge was that during Kharif (the main agriculture season), paddy remained the main crop with most farmers owning small or medium landholdings. **It took a lot of persuasion and face-to-face meetings to mobilise farmers, followed by several agri-demonstrations¹³ conducted by MSSRF scientists on farmers’ fields and farmer exposure visits, before LANSA could hold their attention¹⁴.** These efforts were complemented with regular nutrition-awareness events / campaigns to engage with rural men, women and children to build an understanding of what nutrition means and how it could be derived from their daily diet.

Once the benefits of better and balanced diets were understood, they began growing nutrient -rich crops¹⁵. Farmer-community buy-in is important to establish an intervention like FSN; but to sustain nutrition-sensitive cultivation in Odisha, the challenge was to find agriculture policy support. Working with this objective from the outset, LANSA identified a multi-sectoral agriculture-nutrition stakeholder base in Odisha, and built rapport¹⁶, particularly with policymakers at all levels of governance – those in a position to support the FSN initiative. **Farmers would have an incentive to grow more nutrient-dense crops once there was agriculture policy support.** LANSA undertook an agriculture policy landscaping and analysis exercise for Odisha, and found that nutrition was not among the 17 objectives listed in the Odisha State Agriculture Policy of 2013. The focus was on increasing production, agricultural growth and income, with no mention of nutrition in agriculture, providing space for research evidence emerging from the FSN feasibility study in Odisha to contribute to bridging this gap.

LANSA evidence and engagement influences agriculture policy and practice discourse:

While research evidence was emerging from the FSN-focus villages in Koraput District, Odisha, engagement with multi-sectoral stakeholders enlightened the research uptake strategy. **LANSA became more aware of what information policymakers in Odisha were lacking for evidence-based agriculture policy, and also identified how they would like to receive this evidence.** Tailor-made communication products were designed to meet stakeholder needs and preferences¹⁷. A series of Policy Briefs¹⁸ and Research Briefs¹⁹ developed from FSN research evidence played a major role in influencing the nutrition-sensitive agriculture discourse among researcher and policymaking communities in Odisha.

HIGHLIGHT:

“I came to know about fruits like amla, guava, lemon, mango, papaya and some vegetables like bitter gourd, cauliflower and moringa are rich in vitamin C, which helps to increase immunity in the body.”

-**Barsha Harijan**, Class VII, Upper Primary School, Chikima village, Koraput district, Odisha



“We like the farming system for nutrition approach under the LANSA project because this system of cultivation gives us nutritious food. We can grow different crops, and eat fresh and nutritious vegetables from our small piece of land.”

» **Brundabana Nayak** farmer,
Chikima Village, Koraput District, Odisha

Getting agriculture institutions and policymakers to reflect on nutrition

Since the inception of LANSA in India in 2013, focused research uptake in Odisha was organised starting with academic discussions on agriculture for nutrition. LANSA hosted periodic multi-sectoral stakeholder consultations and knowledge sharing roundtables²⁰ bringing together agriculture and nutrition research institutions, agri-technology partners, civil society, local NGOs, donor agencies and the media, to share and discuss the FSN study. **The evidence coming out of the MSSRF-led study influenced the discourse around nutrition-sensitive agriculture research and policy in Odisha setting an enabling environment to re-think the inclusion of nutrition into agriculture.** Uptake was strategically targeted at agriculture policymakers and continuous sensitising of agriculture policy decision-makers at every governance level²¹, the Odisha Environment Congress (OEC) Award in December 2015 recognising LANSA work²² and LANSA hosting a session at the OEC in December 2016 presented much visibility in the policy influencer and policy-maker space.

Improving nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices

LANSA's 2014 FSN baseline survey from Odisha²³ revealed that household diets were dominated by cereals and consumption of all other food groups was lower than recommended levels. The FSN design was therefore developed in a participatory manner along with farmers to increase the area under millet and pulse cultivation and their availability, and also introduce the practice of growing fruits and vegetables in the backyard of their homes²⁴. These **'Nutrition Gardens' were promoted at the household level and extended to village schools following demand from the community**²⁵. LANSAs also used awareness tools like the 'Nutrition Calendar' developed with drawings by school going children in the villages to reach out to their families²⁶. Community nutrition awareness initiatives included information about government entitlements on agriculture, food and nutrition and training of resource persons as 'nutrition champions' at the village level²⁷. **All these successes were instrumental in influencing the agricultural and nutrition practices among Odisha farmers and the community as a whole.**

HIGHLIGHT:

"I look at the calendar and read the nutrition messages, it is easy to remember. I came to know that the balanced diet should include fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, egg, etc."

- **Ramesh Harijan**, Class VII, Upper Primary School, Bhejaguda village, Koraput district, Odisha

Connecting farmer-communities with policymakers

To ensure uptake of LANSAs evidence, FSN research was shared widely starting from the village community, the panchayat or village level government, officials at block and district levels and with state policy-makers and feedback was sought. **Over time, farm men and women became the 'champions' sharing their experience under FSN at these forums**²⁸. This process brought a certain level of stakeholder ownership to the research findings coming out of the FSN study in Odisha and established LANSAs reputation as an 'agriculture for nutrition' champion in Odisha State. **Five years of multi-sectoral stakeholder consultations created a science-policy interface and allowed a credible space for exchange of ideas on nutrition-sensitive agriculture**, at the same time providing opportunity to listen to voices from the fields, leverage collaborations and convergence with ongoing government programmes.

Results: LANSAs evidence informs major policy document for Odisha State

On April 28, 2017, Dr Bhavani R V, Director MSSRF and Programme Manager for the LANSAs research programme consortium received a letter from the Additional Secretary, Planning and Convergence Department, **Government of Odisha, requesting that LANSAs contribute to the agriculture section in the Odisha Vision 2036 document** being drafted by the government. LANSAs submitted recommendations focusing on nutrient-rich crops like millets and pulses, shining a spotlight on 'nutrition' in agriculture policy and practice in the document. The Odisha Government is expected to release the Vision 2036 Policy Document in April 2018 and take-up action points submitted to enhance growth and development in the State.



"We used to cultivate pigeon pea, black gram and finger millet using traditional methods, but now we use the line sowing technique demonstrated by LANSAs and it has given us a good yield. We received Red Amaranths and spinach seeds, and now grow our own leafy vegetables in the backyard garden. So we don't depend on the weekly market for vegetables."

» **Ghasa Dalai** woman farmer,
Banuaguda Village, Koraput District, Odisha



LANSA has thus contributed to a public policy document and by including ‘nutrition’ (otherwise absent in agriculture policy) in the future development of agriculture practices for Odisha. Periodic and strategic stakeholder engagement over the last 5 years under the MSSRF-led Farming System for Nutrition study enabled a favorable policy environment for LANSAs input. **The rapport and trust built since 2013 with evidence-users, particularly farmers and policymakers, resulted in ‘stakeholder ownership’ for LANSAs research.**

The outcome: Nutrition-sensitive agriculture evidence from the FSN study under LANSAs has informed the Odisha policy document and contributed to the future agenda for agriculture policy and practice in Odisha State, India.

Further Information:

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- ² Government of India - Gol (2017) National Family Health Survey – 4 (2015-16): State Fact Sheet – Odisha, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- ³ [Odisha government panel to prepare vision document for 2036 stakeholders engaged with LANSAs from the outset](#)
- ⁴ [LANSAs celebrates national nutrition week with village community](#)
- ⁵ [School children take baby steps toward nutrition awareness](#)
- ⁶ [LANSAs work receives recognition](#)
- ⁷ [PDF invitation](#)
- ⁸ [Farming system for nutrition](#)
- ⁹ [Development of farming system for nutrition intervention \(FSNi\) at crop level](#)
- ¹⁰ [Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition through Nutrition Gardens](#)
- ¹¹ [Strengthening Capacity to Use Research](#)
- ¹² [Reports on demonstrations and trials at koraput](#)
- ¹³ [“I wish teach others the line sowing practices”](#)
- ¹⁴ [“This farming system gives us nutritious food”](#)

- ¹⁶ [Stakeholder consultation on farming system for nutrition initiative, bhubaneswar](#)
- ¹⁷ [Research Communication Products](#)
- ¹⁸ [Policy Briefs](#)
- ¹⁹ [Research Briefs](#)
- ²⁰ [Meeting of minds: agri-nutrition stakeholders prioritize nutrition for India](#)
- ²¹ [Engaging with Odisha state-level agri-nutrition stakeholders for policy insights](#)
- ²² [LANSAs work receives recognition](#)
- ²³ [Farming system for Nutrition-Summary of Baseline Report for Koraput](#)
- ²⁴ [Presentation on Farming system for Nutrition](#)
- ²⁵ [Sprouting of school nutrition gardens in FSN study villages](#)
- ²⁶ [For better and long lasting nutrition, begin with the young](#)
- ²⁷ [Community Nutrition Awareness Program under Farming System for Nutrition](#)
- ²⁸ [LANSAs-MSSRF India national policy meet endorsed urgency to tackle undernutrition and Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition: A Public Policy Consultation](#)