

LANSA Stakeholder Interview Guide

Background

Stakeholders are critical to the success of LANSA's research programme. We plan to interview stakeholders as part of our policy research and research uptake activities. Stakeholder mapping exercises in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have identified organisations and individuals that are highly influential and/or highly supportive of addressing nutrition within the agriculture sector. Shortlists of stakeholders have been further refined with input from researchers in-country, and across research themes.

Timeline

This document is a guide for interviewers to inform interviews with LANSA's stakeholders. Interviews with stakeholders will be conducted from October to December 2013.

Objectives of stakeholder interviews

As several parts of the LANSA research programme rely on input from stakeholders, we aim to organise an initial set of interviews to meet our cross-organisational objectives. These objectives are:

- A) RESEARCH:
To capture stakeholders' knowledge and perceptions about the political economy of agriculture and nutrition in their country (the political context, dynamics, processes and the opportunities for nutritional considerations to influence agricultural and broader agri-food system policy and practice);
- B) RESEARCH UPTAKE:
To understand stakeholders' information sources, and their communication preferences and practices in relation to how they use and regard evidence;
- C) M&E:
To inform our ongoing learning and M&E. (The findings will provide a snapshot of stakeholder perceptions in the first year; in future it will be important to assess whether (and if so, how) these have changed);
- D) CAPACITY STRENGTHENING:
To find out if there are key skills that stakeholders would like to develop.
(As stakeholders' capacity to access and use research will influence their ability to assimilate LANSA's research findings, we will use the interview opportunity to identify needs, and if relevant offer support)

How to use this guide

There are a lot of sections and questions that will be far too much for one interview. Rather than trying to get everything in, REMEMBER to focus on the overall objectives listed above.

These questions should be seen as prompts and will need to be adapted to context and interviewee, and operationalised in locally relevant ways. Some of the information requested in this guide may already be available, so not all these questions/objectives will need to be covered. Some questions are specifically aiming to uncover perceptions, rather than knowledge, so -- whether or not you think we already know the answer -- we still want to know what the interviewee thinks.

The objectives are more important than the questions. You need to *internalise* these objectives so that you aren't overly dependent on a "script". The questions are provided as prompts.

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To help the interviewee understand a question you can reference your knowledge (based on the evidence review and stakeholder mapping) where relevant. Examples are provided following some questions to help interviewees understand what we are getting at. This will ensure that the interviewee:

- a) can see the sorts of information we are looking for;
- b) can reference issues they think are more important; or,
- c) disagree with what we think we know.

Start the interview with (5 mins):

- A brief introduction to LANSA -- why it was set up and the overall goal. Need here to ensure there is a shared understanding of what is meant by “nutrition” and “malnutrition” and that these outcomes lie beyond food security and health;
- A very brief explanation of your role in LANSA;
- The purpose of the interview (see objectives above); and how long the interview will take (approx.45-60 minutes)
- explain interview procedure (you will ask broad questions and they answer, there are no right or wrong answers)
- They can ask questions any time, don't have to answer a question they don't want to and can stop interview at any time
- Let him/her know the research outputs will be made available to the interviewees;
- The interviews will be anonymous (only type of role/organisation will be shared).

During the interview

Clear transitions between topics

- It is easier for the interviewee to follow the interview if clear transitions are created between topics. Conclude one topic area and move on to the next. You could say: XY was very interesting, I would now like to ask you about ZW

Interviewer attitude

- It is important that the interviewer encourages the stakeholder, but still remains as neutral as possible with regard to the replies (i.e. don't agree too strongly). This is more difficult if the interview is not audio-taped but only notes are taken.

Non-guiding questions

- Interviewer should try to be as neutral as possible in questions and not guide answers with own assumption and beliefs about topic.
- Use terms like: “how do you feel about”, use words like “influence” rather than “reduce” or “improve”

Use of prompts

- Be careful not to guide interviewee with your prompts!

Silence and listening is often the most effective technique to bring interviewees to talk!

- Wait before you give prompts

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Notes from your interview

This section explains what format to collect the information in to make it helpful for others to analyse the results.

Challenges with note-taking during interviews

The interviewer often can't write quickly enough to capture everything that is said as well as fully concentrate on the interview.

- One possibility would be to conduct the interview together with an assistant whereby both people take notes and combine them after the interview
- If only one person takes notes and does the interview, it may be helpful to let the interviewee know in the beginning that the interviewer will pause occasionally to catch up with the writing. This always worked fine and the interviewee had some time to gather his/her thoughts and often came up with new ideas. However, it can also break the interview flow a little.

When taking notes it is sometimes challenging to keep neutral and not suddenly start writing frantically when the interviewee said something especially interesting. The interviewee might feel he/she said something especially good and all following answers might be influenced and go into the same direction.

One challenge with the note-taking (but also with audio-recording) is that interviewees sometimes don't answer the question that was asked but a question that was planned for later. The interviewer needs to try to follow this up and find out whether the interviewee does not want to answer or just did not understand the question. Being prepared to ask each question in different ways helps in such situations.

After the interview

To retain most information from the interview, it is very important to immediately check the notes after the interview and add details and then (as a second step) type the notes on the same day.

Helpful tips

- Make sure you are clear what you are trying to find out (internalise the objectives);
- If an interviewee goes off the point be prepared to say 'That's very interesting and I wonder if you can tell me more about...' or, 'I understand ... but I wonder if you can tell me more about..'
- Use plain and simple language. For example, words like 'evidence' may be meaningless to some stakeholders. So substitute words like 'information' for 'evidence'.
- Fewer questions are best (you can always ask follow up questions as long as you are clear on the purpose).
- Open ended questions are more helpful.
- Helpful to do a couple of test interviews. This gives you an idea of length, and makes you more familiar with the questions, so more confident when in the actual interview.
- At the beginning of the interview it is important to establish rapport. Don't be overly wedded to your script.

Key:

Notes to interviewers	
Prompts and examples	
Objectives	
Priority questions	*

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1) Political/institutional context, governance systems, structures & processes (20-25 mins)

This describes the political context and institutional architecture and their dynamics and processes with relevance to leveraging agriculture for nutrition – including discussion of the key actors, organizations, political institutions, networks and systems, and the ways in which they are connected.

1.1) OBJECTIVE (“What”):

To capture stakeholders’ knowledge and **perceptions** about **the most important factors** that influence whether nutrition is, or can be, prioritised in agriculture and the broader agri-food sector.

- 1.1.1) Is improved nutrition a consideration in agriculture and the broader agri-food sector, [AND OTHER SECTORS LIKE SANITATION, DEPENDENT ON INTERVIEWEE]*
- 1.1.2) If not, what are the most important factors preventing nutrition being prioritised within agriculture and the broader agri-food sector [AND OTHER SECTORS LIKE SANITATION, DEPENDENT ON INTERVIEWEE]*

PROMPTS:

- Political priorities (e.g. not important to provincial candidates/not in manifestos/ not visible / not priority of electorate);
- Lack of accountability (e.g. no nutrition targets for Agriculture Ministry);
- Challenges implementing current policies (e.g. increasing yield is paramount and difficult enough, no targets for anything else);
- Capacity of implementers (e.g. not sufficient extension support for current priorities);

- 1.1.3) What (if anything) is the government or other actors doing to address this? (e.g. political, institutional, budgetary)?*

1.2) OBJECTIVE (“Who”):

To understand **who** are the key stakeholders, both individuals and organisations, that **influence and formulate policy, programmes and interventions** that can leverage agriculture, and the broader agri-food sector, for nutrition, and how they are connected or work together;

NOTE:

As with the rest of the interview questions some or many of the questions below may not be necessary, particularly given the stakeholder mapping exercises. If an interviewee was involved in stakeholder mapping be sure to acknowledge that, and tailor the questions accordingly. You could say that the stakeholder mapping found [x organisations/individuals] to be most influential do you agree? Who else is key? Etc.

- 1.2.1) Who are the key stakeholders? In which organisations? (briefly)*
- 1.2.2) Who are the key policy makers? In which organisations? (briefly)
- 1.2.3) Who are the *individual* leaders or champions for nutrition?
- 1.2.4) Which *organisations* are considered to be leaders in this field? Are they influential?
- 1.2.5) Is the relevant policy community cohesive on this issue, or divided?*

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- 1.2.6) Does a multi-stakeholder platform exist?
- 1.2.7) Which networks or alliances are most influential?*
- 1.2.8) What is the role of civil society?
- 1.2.9) What is the role of private sector?

1.3) OBJECTIVE (“How”)

- To understand how policy is formulated, in order to better identify **opportunities for research to influence policy and other decision making processes.**
- To understand **what motivates** and **who influences** policymakers and other decision makers?
- To understand **barriers** facing policy and decision makers **in accessing and using research?**

- 1.3.1) How is policy formulated? Through what type of process or processes?*(Process/stages of agenda-setting, policy design, adoption, implementation)
- 1.3.2) What influences decisions in this process?*
- 1.3.3) What opportunities are there for input into this process?*
- 1.3.4) What policy windows¹, political windows (e.g. elections), focusing events are there?*
- 1.3.5) Is nutrition a consideration when formulating agriculture and broader agri-food policy?*(PROBE LEVEL OF CONSIDERATION)
- 1.3.6) What vision, motivations and (dis)incentives inform what policy and other decision makers do (or do not do)?*
- 1.3.7) What is their “room for manoeuvre” or freedom to act to change a decision?
- 1.3.8) Who do they listen to?
- 1.3.9) What accountability mechanisms are in place for decisions made (e.g. monitoring , evaluations, performance assessment)?
- 1.3.10) Are they motivated or incentivized to use research knowledge? (link to evidence section)*
- 1.3.11) Do they have the capacity to understand and use research knowledge? (link to capacity section)
- 1.3.12) Are there other issues preventing policy and decision makers from using research?*

1.4) OBJECTIVE

- To understand **perceptions** about the **potential of agriculture (and broader agri-food systems)** to help tackle malnutrition

- 1.4.1) Does he/she know of programmes that are currently working to address food security issues through agricultural research and development?*
- 1.4.2) Does he/she know of networks that are currently working to address food security issues through agricultural research and development?*

PROMPTS

Example: A research and development network is trying to counter food insecurity in areas of seasonal hunger through water conservation and crop diversification.

Example: A research institute is seeking to involve farmers in the breeding and selection of millet varieties adapted to dryland and low soil fertility conditions.

¹ Kingdon (2011) refers to windows “opening” when three non-linear processes relating to problem, politics and policy favourably converge.

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1.4.1.1) *If yes*, Can he/she see opportunities for any of these programmes or networks to enhance their impact on **nutrition security**?*

PROMPTS

Example: The water conservation and crop diversification initiative might make a greater contribution to the diet diversity of producer and consumer households by researching and promoting locally-adapted nutrient-rich crops.

Example: The millet programme might have a greater impact on nutrition were it to link with organizations promoting improved processing and preparation methods which reduce cooking time and increase the uptake of millet's iron.

1.4.3 Does he/she know of programmes or networks that are currently working to improve the effectiveness of food value chains² in serving **poor rural**?*

1.4.4 Does he/she know of programmes or networks that are currently working to improve the effectiveness of food value chains in serving **urban poor**?*

PROMPTS

Example: A programme to improve income for Amul Dairy farmers was expanded to make milk more suitable and affordable for poor consumers.

1.4.2.1) *If yes*: Can he/she see opportunities for any of these programmes or networks to enhance their impact on **nutrition**?*

PROMPTS

Example: A social enterprise produced and marketed a nutritious yogurt product targeted at disadvantaged groups through women's self-help groups and a school meals programme.

Example: The orange fleshed sweet potato programme used radio to promote awareness of the nutritional impacts targeting a range of households.

Example: A commercial business develops and markets a fortified snack product aimed at children.

1.4.5 Do you think there are opportunities for the development of similar programmes for other products or geographical areas?

1.4.6 What support might enable these programmes to make a greater contribution to nutrition?*

PROMPTS

Example: Access to nutrition information for researchers/development workers; collaboration with nutrition institutes; coordinated nutrition education for producers and consumers.

Example: Donors/ government insisting on nutrition impacts in programmes/interventions that they fund.

² **Definition of value chains:** A food value chain is the set of actors, from the farm gate to the consumer, that collectively produces, processes, distributes and markets food commodities and products.

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- 1.4.7 Can s/he suggest other people familiar with active programmes of these sorts (as in 1.4.1. and 1.4.2) whom we might contact?*
- 1.4.8 Can s/he suggest other people familiar with active networks of these sorts (as in 1.4.1. and 1.4.2) whom we might contact?*
- 1.4.9 Have agricultural and broader agri-food policies or programmes ever inadvertently negatively affected nutrition? Please provide examples.*

PROMPTS

Example: Agricultural research focusing on certain crops or production environments to the neglect of others.

Example: Value chain development focusing on certain markets to the neglect of others.

2) Knowledge and evidence (10-15 mins)

This describes the nature of the evidence base linking agriculture to nutrition -- the types of evidence and knowledge that exists, whether there is perceived to be enough evidence for action, the gaps that may exist and crucially the perceptions of decision makers and the dominant narratives that influence them (with regard both to the nature of the problem of undernutrition and the actions needed to address it).

2.1) OBJECTIVE:

To understand the **interviewee's role, needs and current information sources** when formulating policy, designing programmes/ interventions or systems.

- 2.1.1) In the recent past have you worked on formulating policy/programme or guidelines in your sector?*[Probe - what was the policy/programme or guidelines]
- 2.1.2) In the last 5 years, what are the different ways that you have worked in formulating policy/programme or any guidelines? [Probe as necessary - How were you involved? What role did you play?]
- 2.1.3) What do you think are the most used sources of information in policy or development of any guidelines?*

(PROMPT) TYPES OF INFORMATION

Existing policy documents like (INSERT DEPENDING ON ACTOR)

Data on problem (What data? What sources used for data? Why those sources?)

Monitoring data from program (what monitoring data? Where from)?

National or international documents or case studies? On what?

Similar policy documents/ guidelines of other or related Ministries (as precedents)?

Knowledge sources or Networks? (INSERT EXAMPLE BASED ON ACTOR)

Other sources of information used? (e.g., personal experiences/evidence-based reports, state reports, news stories, media campaigns)

Anything else?

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2.2) OBJECTIVE:

To understand levels of **knowledge** and **perceptions** about the potential for agriculture and the broader agri-food system to address malnutrition

To understand the **information and evidence gaps** to support policies and programmes in this area

- 2.2.1) What is known / What are the perceptions about the links and pathways between agriculture (and the broader agri-food system) and nutrition outcomes?

NOTE: These three questions (above and below) are intentionally open. We are trying to find out what is generally understood in the agriculture and nutrition community about the links and pathways between agriculture and nutrition. We want to know how s/he perceives the issue to be framed in the local or national context.

For example, TANDI identified the following pathways between agriculture and nutrition. See Annex 1.

- Agriculture as a source of food;
 - Agriculture as a source of income - how income from agriculture/non agriculture is spent on food and non food (other basic needs);
 - Agricultural policy and food prices;
- Gender dimensions:
- Women's employment, time and ability to manage young child care;
 - Women's status, decision making power and control over resource allocation;
 - Women's own health and nutritional status.

- 2.2.2) What is known [or what are the perceptions] about the role of agriculture and the broader agri-food system in ensuring nutrition security?*
- 2.2.3) What is known about the ways in which agriculture and the broader agri-food system can become more nutrition sensitive/ are connected to nutrition?

FURTHER PROBING:

- Is there emerging consensus in this field, or a divergence of understanding or views?
- Is the problem of undernutrition perceived to be serious? Perceived to be urgent?
- Is there a perception that undernutrition can be effectively addressed by the right type of policies and programmes?
- Does agriculture have a role in such actions? Can agriculture and the broader agri-food system do better?

- 2.2.4) How do you feel about the currently available data (of the right type, frequency and quality) that relates the problem of undernutrition to agricultural and agri-food policy and practice?*

- 2.2.5) How do you feel about the currently available evidence of "what works" in programmes or interventions to make policy decisions?*

2.3) OBJECTIVE:

- To understand **what type of evidence is most useful and how it can be packaged**, or presented to increase the chance of uptake

- 2.3.1) What type of evidence/information is most appropriate for influencing policy?*

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- In what form? From what sources?
 - How can it best be packaged and communicated? To whom? When?
 - Personally, how do you find out about new evidence?
 - Are you influenced by communications in 1) the traditional media/news, 2) on twitter, 3) Facebook or other social media? Which?
- 2.3.2) What are the factors that **help** the *use* of evidence?*
- 2.3.3) What are the factors that **hinder** the use of evidence?
- 2.3.4) What are the barriers and constraints?

3) Capacity and resources (5-10 mins)

3.1 OBJECTIVE:

- To understand the role of **capacity** and **financial resources** in improving nutrition through agriculture and the broader agri-food system

- 3.1.1) In what way do the capacity levels of individuals, organisations and systems influence the agriculture and agri-food sector's ability to improve nutrition?*

NOTE:

The list below highlights different levels of capacity. Given the issues discussed up to this point in the interview you could ask if capacity (at any of these levels below) represents a challenge. If so, it would be good to understand what the issues are.

The checklist below should help you to ask key questions that cover the core issues contained within. That is, the questions need to focus on individual capacity (tools, skills), organisational capacity (staff, infrastructure) and systems capacity (structures, systems and roles). It is **not** necessary to ask individual questions within the checklist. Use these bullet points as prompts or aids for the interview, as relevant. Also note that the main focus here is on the systemic level.

CHECKLIST

1) Individual capacity: tools and skills

- *Performance capacity*: Are appropriate tools and equipment available to do the job?
- *Personal capacity*: Are staff sufficiently knowledgeable, skilled and confident to perform properly? Do they need training, experience, or motivation? Are they deficient in technical, managerial, interpersonal, or specific role-related skills?

2) Organizational capacity: staff and infrastructure

- *Workload capacity*: Are there enough staff with broad enough skills to cope with the workload? Are job descriptions practicable? Is skill mix appropriate?
- *Supervisory capacity*: Are reporting and monitoring systems in place? Clear lines of accountability? Can supervisors physically monitor all staff? Are effective incentives and sanctions available?
- *Facility capacity*: Are training centres, offices, workshops big enough, with the right staff in sufficient numbers, to support the workload?
- *Support service capacity*: Are there training institutions, supply organizations, building services, administrative staff, research facilities, quality control services?

3) Systemic capacity: structure, systems and roles

- *Structural capacity*: Are there decision-making forums/multi-stakeholder platforms where inter-sectoral discussion on agriculture and nutrition may occur, where consensus is generated,

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collective decisions made, and individuals called to account for non-performance?

- *Systems capacity*: Do flows of information, money and managerial decisions occur in a timely and effective manner? Can private sector services be contracted as required? Is there good communication with the community? Sufficient links with NGOs?
- *Role capacity*: Have individuals, teams, committees etc been empowered to make decisions to ensure effective performance. Is there clear articulation of responsibility (who does what)?

3.1.2) What do you think are the most important financial factors of improving the nutrition-sensitivity of agriculture and the agri-food system?

3.1.3) If significant extra resources are needed, but not available, how can finances be raised?

3.1.4) Are there any new forms of resource mobilisation that could be employed to this end?

4) Stakeholder (interviewee) capacity (5 mins)

4.1 OBJECTIVE:

- To ascertain whether the stakeholder is interested to build her/his skills to access and use evidence.

NOTE: is important to present this offer as an **opportunity** to address an issue that many people face in today's technology enhanced work environment. They may have already indicated that they struggle to stay on top of the latest developments. If they do use that as a lead in to the next question. We are more interested in high level decision makers, so use your discretion on how you approach this. If the Institute of Development Studies has a good reputation amongst stakeholders mention that they will be the training provider.

4.1.1) Would you be interested to receive training to help you tackle information overload, or assess the credibility of research?*

We can offer training in these three topics below. Would you be interested in receiving training in these or related areas? * LANSA may be able to offer training in a way that accommodates your busy schedule/is convenient to you.

The types of programmes we can offer through our partner (Institute of Development Studies) include:

1. *Assessing the credibility of research used to inform policy making, for example determining what evidence is and looking at a range of products such as systematic reviews and policy briefs.*
2. *Tackling the information overload through social media and learning platforms.*
3. *Skimming and scanning documents for reliability, authority and relevance.*

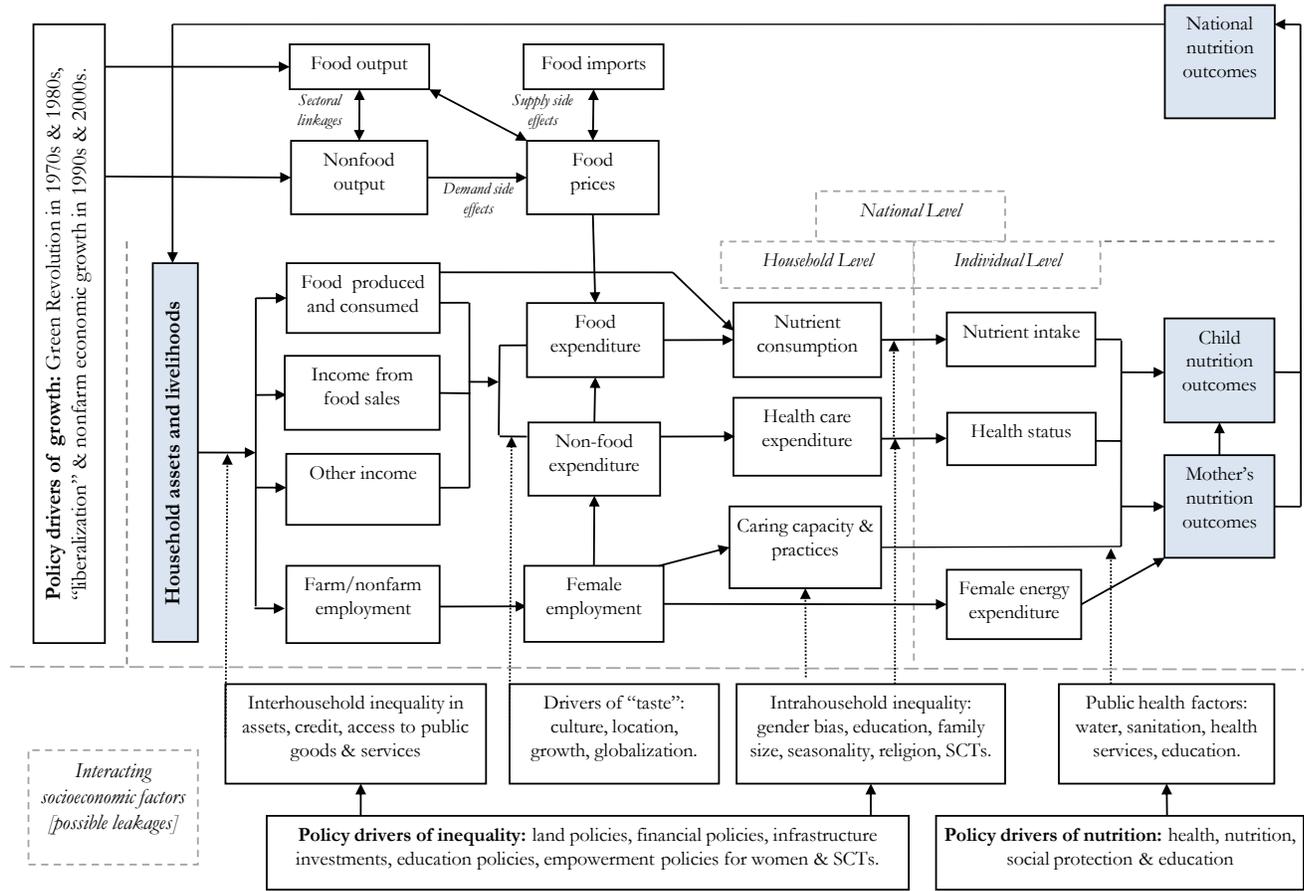
NOTE: If the interviewee is interested, please ask to specify whether online or face-to-face would be best. Also point out that if there's sufficient demand there will be a pre-course survey to get more of an idea of the sort of training that would be beneficial to participants

5) End of the interview

Thank them and ask whether they have any questions or would like to add something they think we have forgotten on nutrition and agriculture. Explain again what happens to the interviews and how and when results will be shared with them.

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Annex 1: The pathways between agriculture and nutrition (TANDI).



Source: Gillespie et al., TANDI project