**Strategic national program for the development of sustainable food systems by 2030 in the Kyrgyz Republic**

**1. Food systems objectives and assessment in the Kyrgyz Republic**

The Kyrgyz Republic has a liberal trade regime and open investment climate, while the food trade balance is negative. The country is characterized by a mountainous landscape with limited arable lands and substantial water resources unevenly distributed over the territory. The country has experienced several food shocks over the past three decades. The severe crisis accompanied the transition to independence in the 90s of the 20th century. Kyrgyzstan faces a sharp decline in the national economy, impoverishment of populations, and an acute shortage of food. Agrarian reform was carried out during this period. It allows recovery and increases food production by creating numerous smallholder family peasant farms based on rural households.

2008 World Food Price Crisis led to the next food crisis in Kyrgyzstan. Food prices in the world have risen sharply. It causes high food inflation and led to poverty growth in the country. In later years (2009–2011, 2014–2016), food prices in Kyrgyzstan increased due to shocks associated with the national currency devaluation and growth of the imported food prices. The latest and most sensitive crisis occurred in 2020-2021. It was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and led to food price inflation in 2020 (17.6%), and it continues to increase in 2021. Poverty also has increased in the country. In addition, food security has deteriorated due to increased climate variability and disasters in 2021.

Growing food production and ensuring access to nutritious food for the most vulnerable are the ongoing priorities of the Government of Kyrgyzstan. The country has developed an acting legal framework for food security and nutrition issues. Policy measures have been incorporated into the country's development documents: country strategies, food security and nutrition programs, agriculture and health programs for food production and nutrition. In Kyrgyzstan, policy measures to mitigate food crises and ensure food security include: regulating prices for basic foodstuffs, purchasing grain from local farmers, distributing food to vulnerable people, building strategic food stocks, subsidizing farmers, introducing trade barriers to food exports, and introducing meal program in schools.

The food systems development policy encompasses the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)s: Goal 1 - Eradicate poverty, Goal 2 - Zero hunger, Goal 10-Reduce inequality, Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production, Goal 13 - Combat climate change, and Goal 15 - Conservation of Terrestrial Ecosystems. Goal 5 - Gender Equality remains a cross-cutting theme, which is essential given the role of women in food production.

However, many problems in the country remaining unresolved. The country depends on primary food imports. The food industry, agriculture, and food quality infrastructure require substantial investments for development. The state needs to increase its potential and increase funding for agriculture. The growth of the agricultural sector continues to be lower than the country's development rates. These problems require developing policies that ensure increased availability of food, improved efficiency of agricultural production, the use of resource-saving technologies, and the sustainability of the food system. A separate important policy area is associated with the current food consumption, the economic availability of healthy food, and the population's knowledge about the value of local organic products.

**2. An expectable outcomes of food systems of Kyrgyz Republic by 2030**

Food systems by 2030 should enable Kyrgyzstan to implement the main development priorities[[1]](#footnote-1): a) increasing food production, b) building required infrastructure for the development of food systems, c) improving public management and administration, d) promoting healthy food consumption, and e) protecting and recovering natural resources.

Increasing **production of all types of food** from existing food systems will improve consumption and reduce food losses in value chains. The state's role is to create favorable conditions for all stakeholders and ensure **effective management of the required food quality infrastructure** for ensuring a safe food environment, both domestic and imported.

Access and availability of food for all population groups will be achieved through the **cluster development of the country's regions.** It will ensure both an increase in food production and an increase in the local population's purchasing power. The regional cluster development mechanism will allow building local and national food chains local zones of economic growth based on comparative competitive advantages. Within the framework of the cluster approach, special measures to protect natural resources will be implemented. Measures aimed to reduce the impact of climate change and introduce environmentally friendly food production (organic agriculture), taking into account the specific conditions of each region. Each region will implement a plan to preserve and increase agricultural land, forests, and pastures. Measures to compensate and reduce the risks of climate change and inform the population and farmers about climate change will also be based on a regional principle.

Raising awareness of the principles of **healthy nutrition** among people will play a key role in achieving the sustainability of food systems. The country's digitalization processes will provide information for consumers and manufacturers about national products and domestic markets, including regional ones. Local brands development will also be based on the preferences of the country's population about the high quality of domestic products.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Regional Development will play a central role in food systems development. The main goals until 2030: control of the critical changes in food systems essential elements (food prices, foreign food trade, climate change challenges, labor market trends, and innovations) and needed policy adjustments, development of forecasting of food systems based on new digital technologies, support of domestic production through government purchases, improving the quality of public management and administration through the development of the domestic potential, transparency of management processes and accountability of budget spending.

**3. Food systems of Kyrgyz Republic by 2025 - Nearest tasks**

The food systems of the Kyrgyz Republic will develop in conjunction with the strategic goals of the country's development - agriculture, energy, tourism, specific sectors of industry, and overall improvement of the living standards of the population. Low agricultural productivity is a critical constraint in achieving the desired goals. The main reasons for the slow agricultural growth rates are a small-scale character of agricultural production, low productivity of livestock and crop yields, degradation of agricultural land, limited access to water resources due to insufficient capacities and degradation of the irrigation system, lack of investments, and new technologies.

1. To support the **agricultural efficiency growth** in Kyrgyzstan, a draft Concept of agro-industrial development until 2025 has been prepared. The concept is focused on achieving the following priorities: food security; organic farming; adaptation to climate change; cluster development of agriculture; digitalization of agricultural production, new technologies, and new export markets development. The document proposes a set of measures to achieve priorities through the growth of the production potential of rural producers, the use of innovative agricultural production methods, the expansion of integration of agricultural producers, better access to financial resources and incentives.

2. Higher importance is given to the **agricultural producer's integration support** through institutional mechanisms creation, stimulation of integration, and cooperation processes using economic incentives and technical support. For ensuring the sustainability of agricultural value chains, the following tasks are planned to be addressed: increase of processed agricultural products, supporting the creation of trade and logistics centers, support of export infrastructure and export commodity transport corridors, the availability and quality of technical regulations conformity services, and the introduction of a traceability mechanism.

3. The leading role is assigned to the expansion of organic agriculture and the halal industry within the transition to **sustainable consumption patterns**. At the same time, the following tasks are also important: increasing the participation of local communities in ensuring food security at the local level, promoting the principles of healthy nutrition, supporting the process of food fortification, limiting the advertising of food products that contribute to the growth of non-communicable diseases (NCD), increasing the availability of quality food for vulnerable groups of the population, and overall support for socially vulnerable groups. These measures will significantly improve the situation in the area of ​​sustainable consumption.

4. The critical factor in increasing **the resilience of food systems** is the urgent change in land and water use modality. It is planned to solve the problems by consolidating arable land, preserving and restoring the fertility of arable land, new approaches to managing lands of the State Fund of Agricultural Lands, and pasture management. Increasing irrigation water resource efficiency and reducing water losses are associated with investments in the irrigation system and improved water use in the state irrigation network and networks of Water Use Associations (WUAs). The solution to water problems in Kyrgyzstan has both national and international dimensions. Solutions are needed to consider mutual interests with neighboring states based on economic benefits and good neighborliness, taking into account the criteria of resource conservation.

5. Improving the resilience of food systems requires **measures to mitigate the negative natural disaster shocks** caused by droughts, floods, mudflows, and other natural disasters. Climate shocks that harm agriculture also requires adaptation measures to climate change - the development of water-saving technologies for irrigation, the improvement of the genetic potential of farm animals and seeds, and a change in the structure of cultivated crops.

6. **Food shortages** associated with instability of food supplies, food price inflation, pandemic, epizootic, and other unpredictable circumstances lead to instability of commodity distribution channels and cases of profiteering. These challenges need to be addressed through the **collective actions** of state bodies, local authorities, agricultural producers, and commercial enterprises.

**4. Collective actions of food systems stakeholders**

The main stakeholders of the food systems in Kyrgyzstan include food producers, supporting private sector, consumers, public sector, and civil society representatives (Figure 1). The critical challenge is to build synergies between stakeholders. Some problems hinder collective actions among food systems stakeholders: lack of knowledge and skills of government officials, cases of corruption, lack of transparency and conflict of interests of different stakeholders, insufficient control and low accountability of government agencies, lack of interaction between government agencies, private producers and civil society. There is a high level of mistrust and fierce competition among some participants in the food systems.

**Figure 1. Food systems stakeholders in Kyrgyzstan**



The need for collective action requires the implementation of the following measures: increasing the capacity of government officials; ensuring the transparency of the work of state bodies; creation of a platform for dialogue between government bodies, civil society, and private producers; creation of a decision-making mechanism through a dialogue of all stakeholders; strengthening control over compliance with rules and technical regulations in the production and marketing of food; implementation of PPP and attracting both private and donor funds to food systems; efforts in informing the population and motivating the active position of the population in food systems work.

The ultimate goal for all stakeholders is to consume a more optimized and diversified, high-quality food with a fairer distribution system. Food needs to be safe for the consumer, and food production needs to bring less harm to the environment in the climate change conditions.

**5. Linkage between the program for the development of sustainable food systems and other strategic development documents**

Ensuring the linkage between the sustainable food systems development program and other policy documents has two vectors – national and international. At the national level, the first group of tasks and measures will harmonize the food system sustainability program and the goals, objectives, and indicators of country, sectoral/sub-sectoral development programs. The primary documents include the draft Concept of Agrarian Development of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2025, the Food Security and Nutrition Program until 2023, sectoral strategies of key government bodies, and policy documents for the development of SMEs.

The second group of tasks and measures will aim to improve regulatory documents that ensure coordination of actions of government agencies to ensure the sustainability and productivity of food systems.

The third group of measures and tasks and measures will be oriented on improving the reporting system of all government bodies that are involved in ensuring the sustainability of food systems and the monitoring and evaluation system for a deeper analysis and assessment of its sustainability and the development of policy measures to improve governance in food systems.

The fourth group of tasks and measures will be focused on enhancing the activity and effectiveness of institutions and institutional mechanisms, primarily the Council for Food Security and Nutrition, in terms of monitoring the resolving of tasks within the framework of a joint objectives tree and processes related to ensuring the sustainability of food systems.

The fifth group of tasks and measures aims to improve the food systems financing, implemented from the republican budget funds by economic sectors and public agencies.

Nationally determined contributions should be formulated in the form of the following measures:

- Financial plans of funds allocated by the Government of Kyrgyz Republic annually to develop food systems, indicating the tasks to be done and formulating the expected results for 2022–2025 and until 2030.

- A system of measures to support food systems through harmonized and coordinated state development programs.

Non-financial actions include the civil sector, private business, and food producers in the process of collective action, discussion, and their inclusion in joint decision-making.

- The final stage requires coordination through the United Nations Framework for Cooperation for Sustainable Development.

The international vector of work includes providing international support for measures to increase the sustainability and productivity of the food systems of the Kyrgyz Republic. Each donor (development organization) has its mandate, i.e., the scope of actions and measures approved at the global level. The importance priorities of many directions and principles of work are reflected in the SDG targets for each development agency. Kyrgyzstan needs to develop a productive approach to work with donors by coordinating joint actions and studying experience, best practices, and the promotion of pilot approaches required for the study and promotion into practice. Thus, it will be possible to attract additional funding, technical and consultation support, assistance in developing effective strategies, innovations, and current best practices.

**6. Main strategic national program timeline**

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|  | **2021** | **2022-2025** | **2025-2030** |
| Development and adoption of the Agricultural sector development concept | **Fall 2021** |  |  |
| Coordinated development programs harmonization, including interagency commitments and collective actions | **Fall-winter 2021** |  |  |
| Detailed stakeholder action plan including monitoring system and evaluation criteria | **Fall-winter 2021** |  |  |
| Nationally Determined Contributions | **Winter 2021** |  |  |
| Agricultural sector development concept for 2022-2025 implementation start |  | **2022** |  |
| Implementation of a set of policy measures and collective action |  | **2022-2025** |  |
| Nationally Determined Contributions progress evaluation |  | **2025** |  |
| Policy cycle repetition: failure cases and lesson learned analysis, success stories cases, analysis of achievements reached, development of the new policy cycle for 2026–2030  |  | **2025** |  |
| Updated Agenda for Sustainable Food Systems 2030 – development, adoption, and implementation |  |  | **2026-2030** |

1. In the document the results of discussions in the framework of subnational and independent dialogues and national dialogue that took place during the preparation of the program are used. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)