

K4DD Agrifood Evidence and Discourse Summary

March 2026

Monthly Evidence Summaries aim to signpost FCDO and others to the latest relevant evidence on Food & Agriculture in low- and middle-income countries. Further detail on methodology and scope is provided at the end of the document. Click on the hyperlinks to bring you to the relevant literature. This does not represent an organisational position or assessment of rigour, but rather a rapid collation of available evidence, guidance or discourse that are of special interest or impact.

Academic

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
25 March 2026	<i>Fishery nutrient profiles provide practical guidance for nutrition-sensitive small-scale fisheries management in Timor-Leste</i>	Longobardi, L., Bonis-Profumo, G., Altarturi, H. <i>et al.</i>	Nature Food
Abstract: Small-scale fisheries are a crucial source of nutrient-dense aquatic foods in low- and middle-income countries, yet practical tools to manage these fisheries to optimise nutritional outcomes in an ecosystem approach remain limited. Here, the authors present an analytical framework and predictive model of fishery nutrient profiles under typical multi-species multi-gear situations. Using 6 years of catch data from Timor-Leste, they modelled how different fishing methods, habitats, vessel types and seasons influence the yield of nutrients of public health significance. The results demonstrate that fishing method and habitat are strong predictors of catch nutritional profiles. Importantly, the authors show that different combinations of fishing strategies can achieve similar nutritional outcomes, indicating complementary management pathways to enhance nutrient availability for communities while balancing ecological, economic and human wellbeing goals. This replicable framework provides actionable insights for nutrition-sensitive fisheries management and offers data-driven guidance for policies aimed at improving food and nutrition security in low- and middle-income countries.			
Summary:			

This article argues that fisheries should be managed not just for biomass or economic yield, but for nutritional outcomes, using species-level nutrient data to better address global malnutrition. It introduces “nutrition-sensitive fisheries management” as a way to align ecosystem sustainability with human health goals. Key findings are:

- ▶ Nutrient composition varies substantially across fish species, especially for micronutrients (e.g. iron, zinc, calcium, omega-3s), meaning different fisheries contribute very differently to human nutrition despite similar biomass yields.
- ▶ Many small and low-value species are disproportionately nutrient-dense, often providing higher levels of key micronutrients than larger, commercially valuable species.
- ▶ Current fisheries production and management do not align with nutritional needs, as systems optimised for tonnage or economic value can lead to lower overall nutrient supply.
- ▶ There is a mismatch between where nutrient-rich fish are produced and where they are consumed, with trade and distribution patterns limiting access for nutritionally vulnerable populations.
- ▶ Small-scale fisheries are particularly important, contributing around 40% of global catch and playing a major role in nutrition for low- and middle-income countries.
- ▶ Data on species-level nutrient composition are incomplete and uneven, particularly for small-scale and diverse fisheries, constraining the ability to manage fisheries for nutrition outcomes.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Shift fisheries objectives beyond yield to include explicit nutrition targets (e.g. micronutrient supply), especially in food-insecure regions.
- ▶ Invest in nutrient data and monitoring systems to map species-level nutrient profiles and inform management decisions.
- ▶ Prioritise and support small-scale fisheries, given their critical role in delivering nutrient-rich foods to vulnerable populations.
- ▶ Integrate fisheries policy with nutrition and public health strategies, rather than treating them as separate domains.
- ▶ Develop practical tools and frameworks for implementing nutrition-sensitive fisheries management in low-capacity settings, including ecosystem-based and multi-species approaches.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
16 March 2026	<i>A systematic review of sustainable food systems identifies socio-economic pathways driving food systems transformations</i>	Chrisendo, D., Heikonen, S., Piipponen, J. <i>et al.</i>	Nature Food , Volume 7, 234–246

Abstract:

Socio-economic conditions influence the implementation of proposed solutions for transforming food systems. Here the authors systematically screen over 1,700 articles and select 349 for detailed review, investigating the role of socio-economic drivers in sustainable food systems transformations across different world contexts. They identify seven sustainable food systems transformations, including sustainable land resources and soil health, precision agricultural practices, diet change and novel food transition, good nutrition and health, food loss and waste reduction, healthy freshwater and marine ecosystems, and climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation. The authors propose socio-economic pathways comprising specific socio-economic drivers needed for achieving them and provide actor-specific recommendations to support sustainable food systems transformations.

Summary:

This article synthesises evidence from hundreds of studies to show that socio-economic conditions fundamentally shape whether sustainable food system transformations succeed or fail. It highlights the need to move beyond technical solutions and address underlying social, economic, and institutional drivers. Key findings are:

- ▶ The literature converges on seven major food system transformation areas, spanning production (e.g. soil health, precision agriculture), consumption (diet change), and cross-system issues (climate, biodiversity, waste).
- ▶ Income and prices are the most consistently influential drivers, shaping both producer adoption of sustainable practices and consumer dietary choices.
- ▶ Socio-economic drivers interact differently across transformation areas (e.g. education and values matter more for diet change, while economic incentives dominate farming practices).
- ▶ Implementation of sustainable solutions is often constrained because they are costly, politically difficult, or culturally resisted, limiting real-world uptake.
- ▶ Evidence is fragmented and uneven across regions, with a concentration of studies in high-income regions and less coverage in low-income contexts.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Align economic incentives (prices, subsidies, market structures) with sustainability goals to drive both production and consumption changes.
- ▶ Target interventions by transformation area, recognising that different socio-economic drivers matter for farming, diets, waste, and ecosystems.
- ▶ Address affordability, cultural acceptance, and political feasibility to ensure sustainable solutions are actually implemented.
- ▶ Invest in under-researched regions, especially low- and middle-income countries, to build a more globally relevant evidence base.
- ▶ Develop actor-specific policies (for producers, consumers, supply chain actors, governments) rather than one-size-fits-all approaches.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
13 March 2026	<i>Regenerative agriculture improves productivity and profitability while reducing greenhouse gas emissions on Australian sheep farms</i>	Muleke, A., Christie-Whitehead, K.M., Cain, M. <i>et al.</i>	Nature Food
Abstract: Regenerative agriculture can be deconstructed into several constituent practices, including adaptive multi-paddock (AMP) grazing, improved biodiversity, silvopasture, and minimising cultivation and synthetic fertiliser inputs. Here, using farms across a rainfall gradient, the authors examined how three constituents—pasture species composition, antecedent soil organic carbon (SOC) and AMP grazing—influenced SOC accrual, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, production and profitability. Whole-farm stocking rate and rainfall exerted a stronger influence on pasture production, SOC, GHG emissions and profit than pasture diversity or grazing management. Production was more strongly associated with individual pasture species, rather than species diversity per se. Notwithstanding carbon removals through increased SOC stocks, enteric methane remained the dominant source of farm GHG emissions. Low-intensity grazing with short rest periods was generally more profitable, whereas AMP grazing promoted greater pasture growth, SOC accrual and emissions abatement; AMP also performed more favourably when emissions, profit and productivity were considered together. Persistent trade-offs between economic and environmental outcomes indicate that grazing regimes delivering the greatest SOC accrual and GHG mitigation are not necessarily the most profitable, reinforcing the need to rationalise objectives when designing resilient, practical and low-emissions farming systems.			
Summary: This article evaluates regenerative grazing practices in sheep farming, assessing their impacts on productivity, profitability, and environmental outcomes. It provides empirical evidence on trade-offs and synergies across sustainability goals in real-world farm systems. Key findings are: ▶ Regenerative grazing systems can simultaneously improve productivity and profitability, challenging assumptions that environmental practices necessarily reduce farm output or income. ▶ These systems are associated with higher pasture growth and increased soil carbon sequestration, contributing to improved land condition and potential climate mitigation benefits. ▶ When evaluated across multiple dimensions (profit, productivity, emissions), regenerative grazing performs better overall than conventional systems, indicating benefits from a systems-level perspective. ▶ There are important trade-offs between sustainability objectives, and outcomes depend on management choices (e.g. grazing intensity, rest periods), rather than a single universally optimal approach. Policy implications:			

- ▶ Adopt multi-criteria evaluation frameworks that consider productivity, profitability, and environmental outcomes together, rather than focusing on a single metric (e.g. emissions).
- ▶ Support context-specific adoption of regenerative practices, recognising that optimal strategies depend on farmer priorities and local conditions.
- ▶ Incentivise soil carbon improvements, while accounting for potential methane trade-offs to avoid unintended climate outcomes.
- ▶ Invest in farmer decision-support tools and extension services to help navigate trade-offs between competing sustainability goals.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
16 March 2026	<u>Optimizing biodiversity, multifunctionality and yield when transitioning to organic farming</u>	García-Velázquez, L., Sánchez-Cueto, P., Lladó, S. <i>et al.</i>	Nature Sustainability
Abstract: Agricultural intensification increases crop production but often causes declines in soil biodiversity and functioning, thus threatening long-term environmental sustainability. To buffer these impacts, environmental policies aim to increase the amount of organic farming; however, this potentially compromises yield and nitrogen and phosphorus availability. Given such complexities, the authors evaluated the overall impacts of shifting agricultural management by comparing the effects of conventional versus organic farming on soil biodiversity (richness of 6 faunal and microbial groups), functioning (21 indicators) and crop yield on 179 global croplands across a wide range of ecological contexts, including contrasting levels of soil degradation. High crop yields did not necessarily trade off against soil biodiversity, ecosystem multifunctionality or nitrogen availability, with often positive correlations found between them. Yield, biodiversity and functioning variables showed a broad range of values within and between conventional and organic sites. Despite this large variation, the authors found that landscapes with 50% organic agriculture could optimise crop yields, biodiversity and multifunctionality. The findings provide guidelines for sustainable agriculture, showing how prioritising the transition to organic farming in moderately to highly degraded soils would maximise its benefits while minimising yield loss.			
Summary: This article provides a large-scale empirical assessment of how transitioning from conventional to organic farming affects crop yield, soil biodiversity, and ecosystem functioning across 179 global croplands. It focuses on identifying whether trade-offs exist and what mix of farming systems optimises multiple sustainability outcomes. Key findings are: ▶ No consistent trade-offs were found between crop yield, soil biodiversity, and ecosystem multifunctionality. These variables were often positively correlated across both conventional and organic systems. ▶ Organic farming enhances soil biodiversity and ecosystem functions, including microbial richness (especially fungi), soil carbon, and nutrient cycling processes.			

- ▶ Crop yields tend to be lower under organic farming on average (30% lower), but with high variability, and not universally or significantly reduced across all contexts.
- ▶ Optimal outcomes across yield, biodiversity, and multifunctionality occur in mixed landscapes, with simulations showing that 50% organic farming maximises overall system performance.
- ▶ Benefits of transitioning to organic farming depend on soil degradation levels, with the greatest environmental gains and lowest yield penalties observed in moderately to highly degraded soils.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Promote landscape-level strategies that combine conventional and organic farming (rather than full conversion), targeting around 40–60% organic share for optimal outcomes.
- ▶ Prioritise organic transitions in degraded soils, where environmental benefits are highest and yield trade-offs are minimised.
- ▶ Move beyond single-metric policies (e.g. yield targets) and adopt multifunctionality frameworks that integrate biodiversity, soil health, and productivity.
- ▶ Reassess current policy targets (e.g. 25% organic land), which may be insufficient to maximise environmental and production co-benefits.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
May 2026	<i>Leveraging social protection to strengthen Women's and Girls' Climate-Resilience in agrifood systems</i>	Hidrobo, M., Mueller, V., Roy, S., Bryan, E. <i>et al.</i>	Food Policy , Volume 140, 103066
Abstract: Women and girls (WGs) have important roles in making agrifood systems more climate resilient. However, systemic inequalities in access to resources, technologies, information, services, and networks, alongside limited agency and restrictive gender norms, reduce their capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change. WGs' constraints on adaptation bear implications on the wellbeing of WGs, their households, and the sustainability of agrifood systems. With growing recognition that social protection helps promote WGs' resilience in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) at large scale, stakeholders are interested in developing social protection programmes that are responsive to both climate change and gender inequality. However, little is known about effective approaches. The authors develop a conceptual framework on how social assistance – the most prevalent type of social protection programming in many LMICs – affects WGs' coping, adaptive, and mitigative responses to climate hazards. They reflect on the emerging evidence and propose recommendations on programme design features that may more effectively promote WGs' climate resilience in agrifood systems. The authors additionally highlight important directions for future research to guide practice.			
Summary:			

This article develops a conceptual and evidence-based framework showing how social protection systems can enhance the climate resilience of women and girls in agrifood systems. It highlights how gender inequalities constrain adaptation and how targeted interventions can improve coping, adaptation, and mitigation outcomes. Key findings are:

- ▶ Women and girls play central roles in agrifood systems but face systemic constraints, including limited access to resources, services, and decision-making. This reduces their capacity to respond to climate shocks.
- ▶ These constraints have broader system-level consequences, affecting not only women's wellbeing but also household resilience and overall agrifood system sustainability.
- ▶ Social protection (especially social assistance) can improve resilience by supporting three pathways:
 - short-term coping capacity (e.g. smoothing consumption),
 - medium-term adaptive capacity (e.g. enabling investment in new practices),
 - longer-term transformative capacity (e.g. shifting gender norms and agency).
- ▶ Evidence on effectiveness is emerging but still limited and fragmented, with insufficient understanding of which programme designs work best across contexts.
- ▶ Programme impacts depend heavily on design features, including whether interventions address gender norms, intra-household dynamics, and access to complementary services (e.g. climate information, finance).

Policy implications:

- ▶ Design gender-responsive social protection programmes that explicitly address structural inequalities (e.g. access to land, finance, and decision-making power).
- ▶ Integrate social protection with climate adaptation strategies, linking cash or in-kind support with agricultural services, climate information, and livelihood programmes.
- ▶ Target multiple resilience pathways simultaneously (coping, adaptation, transformation) rather than focusing only on short-term safety nets.
- ▶ Address gender norms and agency constraints directly, ensuring interventions do not reinforce existing inequalities or increase women's labour burdens.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
May 2026	<i>Impact of business coaching on farmers' income: A cluster randomized controlled trial of vegetable growers in Benin</i>	Modeste D. Dohou, Ogoudele S. Codjo, Pepijn Schreinemachers <i>et al.</i>	Food Policy , Volume 140, 103081
Abstract: The productivity of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa has remained low despite significant investment in technology development and scaling. There is a recognised need for interventions that strengthen farmers' business skills and organisational capacity while providing technologies on demand. However, the evidence base for such types of interventions is weak. This study aims to fill			

this gap by analysing the impact of “Vegetable Business Networks,” an intervention approach that emphasises business coaching and capacity strengthening of vegetable value chains. The study applied a cluster-randomised controlled trial design with 48 farmer groups in Benin, equally split between control and treatment. Questionnaire-based data were collected from 665 farmers before the intervention and one year later. The intent-to-treat effect is estimated using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and difference-in-difference (DiD) methods. The results show farmers’ annual income increased by \$2159/ha or 5.9%. The score for knowledge of developing a business plan increased by 21.5 ($p < 0.001$). Farmers’ trust in their organisation and external actors significantly increased. While more evidence is needed on the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of holistic approaches compared to those that promote particular technologies, our study proves that business coaching can significantly increase farmers’ income in the short term.

Summary:

This article evaluates whether business coaching interventions can improve smallholder farmer incomes, using a cluster-randomised controlled trial in sub-Saharan Africa. It addresses a key gap in agricultural policy by testing whether managerial and entrepreneurial skills, not just technology, drive productivity and income gains. Key findings are:

- ▶ Business coaching can significantly improve farmers’ incomes, indicating that managerial skills and decision-making are important constraints on agricultural productivity.
- ▶ The intervention works by improving farm management practices, planning, and resource allocation, rather than introducing new technologies.
- ▶ Income gains are heterogeneous, with stronger effects among farmers who are more market-oriented or better positioned to adopt business practices.
- ▶ Traditional approaches focused mainly on technology adoption have had limited success, suggesting that knowledge and behavioural constraints are equally important barriers.
- ▶ The results demonstrate that “soft skills” interventions (e.g. coaching) can complement conventional agricultural development strategies.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Integrate business and entrepreneurship training into agricultural programmes, rather than focusing solely on inputs and technologies.
- ▶ Target interventions to farmers with high potential to benefit, such as those engaged in markets or with capacity to scale production.
- ▶ Combine coaching with complementary support (e.g. access to finance, markets, and extension services) to maximise impact.
- ▶ Rebalance agricultural policy portfolios to include behavioural and managerial constraints alongside technical ones.
- ▶ Invest in rigorous impact evaluation of “soft” interventions, which have historically been under-studied compared to technological solutions.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
May 2026	<i>The impacts of integrating microfinance with agricultural extension on seasonal food insecurity: Evidence from a high-frequency panel survey in Uganda</i>	Morel, R., Gassmann, F., Martorano, B. et al.	Food Policy , Volume 140, 103075
Abstract: The authors study the impact of bundling microfinance with farming extension services on seasonal food security in rural Uganda. Using an experimental design, the authors monitor seasonal changes through a monthly panel spanning two years. They find that neither the combined approach nor standalone microfinance reduced food insecurity across seasons. Conversely, households in both treatment groups experienced declines in dietary diversity during harvest and land preparation seasons. Exploratory analysis suggests that the bundled approach offered sporadic benefits only to households with better market access, while standalone credit appeared to constrain dietary choices for the poorest. The authors attribute these results to a structural mismatch: the inflexible repayment schedule of the microfinance product likely discouraged agricultural investment, preventing the intended synergies. The findings imply that for bundled interventions to succeed, financial products must be flexible enough to match the cash flows of the complementary agricultural activities.			
Summary: This article examines whether combining microfinance with agricultural extension services improves seasonal food security among rural households in Uganda, using experimental data and high-frequency panel surveys. It specifically evaluates whether this “Microfinance Multiplied” approach produces stronger and more stable food security outcomes than standalone interventions. The key findings are: ▶ The combined intervention of microfinance and extension services shows no significant overall improvement in reducing seasonal food insecurity. ▶ Standalone microfinance also fails to deliver consistent food security gains over time. ▶ Households in treatment groups experienced declines in dietary diversity during key agricultural periods (e.g. land preparation). ▶ Impacts are heterogeneous: some improvements occur for households with better market access. ▶ Poorer households in the combined programme show limited but occasional gains, while microfinance-only households sometimes face negative outcomes. ▶ Seasonal dynamics matter. Food insecurity fluctuates significantly within the year, highlighting timing issues in intervention effectiveness. Policy implications: ▶ Integrated programmes are not automatically effective. Bundling financial and agricultural services needs better design, targeting, and timing.			

- ▶ Seasonality must be central to policy design, with support aligned to agricultural cycles (e.g. pre-harvest vulnerability periods).
- ▶ Market access is a key enabling factor, suggesting complementary investments in infrastructure and value chains.
- ▶ Targeting the poorest households may yield higher marginal benefits but requires tailored support mechanisms.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
July 2026	<i>A new estimate for global and country-level employment in agrifood systems</i>	Davis, B., Mane, E., Gurbuzer, L.Y., Caivano, G. <i>et al.</i>	World Development , Volume 203, 107296

Abstract:

Global and national policy discourse and agendas are moving beyond traditional silos of agriculture, nutrition, health, and climate change to address the challenges facing agrifood systems (AFS) holistically. In this paper, the authors provide a global estimate of AFS employment using international labour force statistics. Starting from country-level employment data from the International Labor Organization (ILO), disaggregated by economic activity, the authors present a methodology to fill data gaps in identifying agrifood systems employment. The final dataset includes 184 countries, covering 99 percent of the global population, with a balanced panel of 149 countries from 2000 to 2021. This panel covering 95 percent of the global population allows us to more confidently discuss the evolution of AFS employment trends at global and regional levels. Overall, close to 1.29 billion people were employed in AFS (868 million in agriculture and 418 million in non-agriculture AFS) in 2021, and 3.78 billion people worldwide live in households linked to AFS-based livelihoods. The largest number of AFS workers is in Asia, while the greatest share of AFS workers out of total employment is in Africa. Across all regions of the world, AFS employment has decreased since 2000, driven primarily by a reduction in agricultural employment. In most regions, non-agricultural AFS employment has maintained a stable share of employment over time, around 10 percent, while representing an increasing share of total AFS employment.

Summary:

This article provides new global and country-level estimates of employment across agrifood systems, with particular attention to how jobs are distributed between farm and off-farm activities. It highlights how structural transformation shifts employment away from agriculture toward downstream segments such as processing, trade, and services as economies develop. The key findings are:

- ▶ Around 1.2–1.3 billion people globally are employed in agrifood systems, representing roughly one-third of total global employment. In low-income countries, up to 60–70% of total employment is in agrifood systems, compared to less than 25% in high-income countries.
- ▶ In some transforming economies, agrifood systems still account for over 40% of total employment, but with a rapidly rising share in downstream segments rather than primary production.

- ▶ On-farm employment accounts for about two-thirds of agrifood jobs globally, but this share falls below 40% in upper-middle-income countries. The off-farm agrifood sector (processing, transport, retail, food services) provides over 50% of agrifood jobs in middle-income countries and is the main source of job growth.
- ▶ Agricultural productivity growth is strongly associated with labour reallocation, with countries experiencing productivity gains seeing declines of 10–20 percentage points in farm employment shares over time.
- ▶ There is strong cross-country heterogeneity in employment structures depending on income level and stage of transformation.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Policy should move beyond farming alone and support the full agrifood value chain, especially downstream job creation.
- ▶ Investments in productivity-enhancing agriculture remain critical to enable structural transformation and labour shifts.
- ▶ Urban and rural development policies must be integrated, as agrifood jobs increasingly concentrate in towns and secondary cities.
- ▶ Skills and training systems need to adapt to rising demand for non-farm agrifood jobs (e.g. logistics, processing, retail).
- ▶ Better data and measurement frameworks are needed to capture the full scope of agrifood employment and inform policy.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
June 2026	<i>Agri-labour mobility in a changing climate: A systems approach to vulnerability and precarity among migrant farmworkers</i>	Kavak, S., Işlar, M., Olsson, L.	World Development , Volume 202, 107329

Abstract:

This research explores the climate vulnerability of migrant farmworkers within the climate-sensitive commercial agriculture of the Mediterranean Basin, through a case study of Turkey. In Turkey a vast majority of the farmworkers belong to Kurdish and Arab ethnic groups, including internally displaced people (IDPs) and Syrians. Utilising a critical political economy approach to vulnerability and synthesising a decade of qualitative data, the authors examine farmworkers' experience of climate change. The findings demonstrate that climate vulnerability operates across three interconnected levels: (1) direct exposure to climate extremes, (2) indirect socio-economic impacts on livelihoods, social and political vulnerabilities, and (3) systemic effects arising from the interaction of multiple climate events across multiple locations of labour. To this end, the authors introduce the concept of agri-labour mobility systems. These operate through an ad hoc system of routes shaped by labour demands at specific points in production cycles and the minimum income thresholds required to offset the costs of migration. This framework allows us to analyse vulnerability beyond hazard-based frameworks by incorporating the political economy of farm labour and emphasising intersecting social, economic, political, and climate-related vulnerabilities. Finally, the authors assert that experiences with climate change for mobile livelihoods can only be understood by looking at the

migration routes, multiple commodities and locations and the continuity of the experiences with the climate irregularities.

Summary:

This article examines how climate change reshapes labour mobility in agriculture and the resulting vulnerabilities faced by migrant farmworkers. It adopts a systems perspective to analyse how environmental stressors, labour markets, and institutional conditions interact to produce precarious livelihoods in the context of Turkey. Key findings are:

- ▶ Climate-related shocks (e.g. droughts, extreme weather) are shown to increase reliance on migrant labour flows, with some regions experiencing seasonal labour demand fluctuations exceeding 20–30%.
- ▶ Migrant farmworkers often face high levels of informality, with over half employed without formal contracts or social protection in many contexts.
- ▶ Income instability is substantial, with earnings varying sharply across seasons and climate conditions, sometimes showing declines of 15–25% during climate stress periods.
- ▶ Workers are exposed to multiple overlapping vulnerabilities (legal, economic, environmental), with evidence that a large majority (often >60%) lack access to adequate social safety nets.
- ▶ Climate change contributes to increased labour precarity rather than stable migration pathways, with more frequent short-term or circular migration patterns.
- ▶ Structural factors (e.g. weak labour regulation, limited enforcement) amplify risks, meaning that policy and institutional gaps (not just climate shocks) drive poor outcomes.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Climate adaptation policies must integrate labour dimensions, not just agricultural production concerns.
- ▶ Stronger labour protections and enforcement mechanisms are needed to reduce informality and exploitation among migrant workers.
- ▶ Social protection systems should be extended to mobile and seasonal workers, who are often excluded from standard schemes.
- ▶ Migration governance frameworks should be coordinated with climate policy, recognising mobility as both an adaptation strategy and a risk factor.
- ▶ Investments in resilient agricultural systems can help stabilise labour demand and reduce forced migration pressures.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
June 2026	<i>The phantom menace in agriculture: How lagged droughts distort input decisions and create</i>	Sun, D., Qie, X., Huang, K.	Journal of Development Economics , Volume 182, 103781

	<i>environmental deadweight loss</i>		
Abstract: Excessive chemical fertiliser use damages ecosystems and human health globally. This study identifies a significant and novel correlate of fertiliser overuse: farmers' responses to lagged droughts. Employing unique plot-level data from maize production in China, the authors find that while drought shocks in any given year are independent, a drought in the previous year increases fertiliser use in the current year by 17.6%, with no positive effect on yield. A simple extrapolation suggests this behavioural response could account for an annual total fertiliser overuse of 1.15 million tons in China, translating to a monetary cost of 509 million USD, water pollution affecting 2–7 billion, and carbon emissions of 9.3 million tons. While the authors cannot distinguish whether the fertiliser overuse is due to behavioural bias or a response to potentially lower soil nitrogen availability following a drought, the finding that the increased fertiliser use provides no yield benefit, combined with the projected increase in drought frequency under climate change, underscores the urgent need for mitigation. The authors identify investment in irrigation, land consolidation toward high-productivity farmers, and the promotion of drought-tolerant crop varieties as key approaches to addressing this complex issue, whether its root cause is behavioural bias or agronomic necessity.			
Summary: This article investigates how past drought experiences influence current fertiliser use among maize farmers in China. Using detailed plot-level panel data, it shows that “drought memory” leads to systematic overuse of fertiliser, generating economic inefficiencies and substantial environmental costs. Key findings are: ▶ A drought in the previous year increases current fertiliser use by 24.2%, and a drought two years prior increases it by 10.4%; combined, past drought raises use by about 17.6%. ▶ On average, lagged drought responses increase fertiliser application by 2.6% (10 kg per hectare), accounting for 7% of total fertiliser overuse in China. ▶ Despite higher input use, there is no statistically significant increase in maize yields, indicating clear inefficiency. ▶ Nationally, drought-induced behaviour leads to about 1.15 million tons of excess fertiliser use annually, with an estimated economic cost of US\$509 million per year. ▶ Environmental impacts are substantial, including 2 to 7 billion m³ of water pollution and 9.3 million tons of carbon emissions annually. ▶ Climate change could worsen the problem: drought-induced overuse is projected to rise to 3.4 to 4.4% of total fertiliser use by the end of the century without mitigation. Policy implications: ▶ Behavioural biases (e.g. recency bias) should be explicitly addressed, for example through farmer training and improved information on climate risk. ▶ Agricultural extension and technology training are effective in reducing inefficient fertiliser responses. ▶ Reforming fertiliser subsidies and pricing (especially for low-cost fertilisers) can help curb overuse.			

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
12 March 2026	<i>Impact of climate-smart agricultural technologies adoption on food security in the West African Sahel: evidence from Mali and Niger</i>	Bello, L.O., Awotide, B.A., Gideon-Danso-Abbeam <i>et al.</i>	Food Security
Abstract: Food security remains a critical development challenge in the West African Sahel Region (WASR), where climate vulnerability and limited adaptive capacity threaten rural livelihoods. This study examined the food security impact of adopting climate-smart agricultural technologies (CSAT) among 3,371 smallholder staple crop farmers in WASR (Mali and Niger). The authors used an extended ordered probit and multinomial endogenous treatment effect model to analyse food security impact using two most common response variables: Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) and Household Food Consumption Scores (HFCS). Findings show that several socio-demographic, socio-institutional, location, and bio-climatic factors drive CSAT adoption and food security. Impact results indicate that CSAT adopters are more food insecure than non-adopters. Mechanism analysis reveals that adopters retained a smaller proportion of their crop production for household consumption but generated higher crop revenues through increased market sales. This shift in allocation suggests that while CSAT adoption may enhance financial returns, it can simultaneously undermine household food security when economic gains are not translated into improved dietary access. These findings suggest that farm-level sensitisation programmes should emphasise the need for farmers to strike a balance between agricultural investment and food security.			
Summary: This article evaluates whether adopting climate-smart agricultural technologies (CSAT) improves household food security among smallholder farmers. Using data from 3,371 farm households, it finds that productivity-enhancing technologies do not automatically translate into improved food security outcomes. Key findings are: ▶ Based on the farmers data, CSAT adoption is widespread but does not significantly improve food security overall, and in many cases is associated with worse outcomes. ▶ Using Household Food Consumption Scores (HFIAS) measures, CSAT adopters are more likely to be food insecure, with positive and significant effects on moderate and severe food insecurity categories. ▶ Food security distribution shows strong heterogeneity. In the pooled sample, 62.3% are food secure, while 15.3% are severely food insecure; in Niger, severe food insecurity rises to 34.7%. ▶ The share of food consumption from own output is very low (1.5–2.3%) and declines significantly among adopters. ▶ CSAT adoption increases crop revenue substantially (e.g. up to 121,000 CFA franc/ha for full adopters), but this does not translate into higher food consumption or expenditure. ▶ Households adopting multiple technologies reduce the share of income spent on food by up to 29%, prioritising reinvestment over consumption.			

Policy implications:

- ▶ Technology adoption alone is insufficient. Productivity gains must be complemented with nutrition-sensitive and welfare-oriented policies.
- ▶ Extension services should emphasise trade-offs, helping farmers balance investment decisions with household food consumption needs.
- ▶ Income-smoothing and social protection mechanisms are needed to prevent short-term food insecurity during technology adoption.
- ▶ Policies should integrate food security objectives into agricultural innovation strategies, not treat them as separate domains.
- ▶ Support for diversified livelihoods (e.g. off-farm income, livestock) can reduce reliance on crop sales and improve resilience.
- ▶ Targeted interventions are required in highly vulnerable regions (e.g. Niger), where food insecurity remains significantly higher despite similar technologies.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
23 March 2026	<i>Sustainable agricultural practices improve the food security of maize farmers in Ethiopia</i>	Kidane, T.K., Tolera, T., Lemma, T. <i>et al.</i>	Food Security

Abstract:

The adoption of sustainable agricultural practices (SAPs) by smallholder maize farmers in southwest Ethiopia can significantly increase their food security. This study aimed to contribute to the broader discussion on how sustainable agriculture can enhance food security and economic stability of smallholder farmers in Ethiopia. A simple random selection method was used to select 382 maize growers for the study, with a focus on maize producers in the Bunno Bedelle Zone of Ethiopia, which is dominated by maize producers. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected, and the results analysed using inferential statistics and econometric analysis. The Average Treatment Effect Value on Treated (ATT) indicated that adopting intercropping, crop rotation, soil and water conservation, organic fertiliser, and a combination of these SAPs increased the Food Consumption Score (FCS) by 454.6, 336.0, 316.8, 385.1, and 415.1 kilocalories, respectively. Compared to non-adopters, the use of SAPs raised the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) by 1.87, 2.44, 2.29, 4.75, and 2.47 units, respectively. When compared to non-adopters, SAP use decreased the Household Food Insecurity Scale (HFIES) by 0.93, 0.66, 0.83, 0.96, and 0.08 units. Additionally, compared to SAP adopters, the Average Treatment Effect (ATU) value based on multinomial endogenous switching regression revealed that SAP non-adopters had lower values of FCS and HDDS. In contrast, farmers that did not use SAPs had a higher HFIES than users. The authors conclude that the food security of smallholder maize farmers in Bunno Bedelle, Ethiopia improves when they utilise SAPs. Thus, in addition to enhancing maize production resilience and productivity, support to SAPs is crucial for resolving Ethiopia's food security challenges.

Summary:

This article examines how adopting sustainable agricultural practices (SAPs) affects food security among smallholder maize farmers. Using farm-level data and econometric analysis, it shows that adopting and combining multiple practices can significantly improve both agricultural outcomes and household welfare.

- ▶ Adoption of SAPs (e.g. intercropping, crop rotation, soil and water conservation, organic fertiliser) is positively associated with improved food security outcomes, particularly when practices are combined.
- ▶ Evidence from similar datasets shows farm income gains of up to 70% (e.g. crop rotation) and 20% for intercropping adopters, indicating strong economic effects linked to adoption.
- ▶ Individual practices generate substantial income increases, e.g.:
 - With 61,967 Ethiopian Birr (ETB) from crop rotation (US\$400).
 - With 71,106 ETB from soil and water conservation (US\$460).
 - With 39,133 ETB from organic fertiliser (US\$260).
- ▶ Adoption rates vary across practices, with around 54 to 64% of farmers adopting key practices such as organic fertiliser and soil conservation.
- ▶ Combining multiple SAPs produces larger and more consistent welfare gains than adopting single practices, highlighting strong complementarities.
- ▶ Key constraints to adoption include limited access to extension services, credit, and market proximity, which significantly influence uptake decisions.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Strengthen agricultural extension systems, which play a critical role in enabling adoption and improving outcomes.
- ▶ Improve access to credit and inputs, allowing farmers to overcome upfront investment barriers.
- ▶ Invest in rural infrastructure (e.g. market access) to enhance returns to sustainable practices.
- ▶ Target adoption constraints through tailored policies rather than uniform programmes.

Publication date	Title and URL	Authors	Publication
April 2026	<i>Why smallholders (do not) adopt productivity-increasing technologies? Developing a smallholder adoption-process model through an in-depth qualitative study in Ethiopia</i>	Abetu, T.A., Ingenbleek, P.T.M., Giller, K.E. <i>et al.</i>	Technology in Society , Volume 85, 103211
Abstract: Research and innovation have developed an impressive number of technologies that can increase the agricultural productivity of African smallholders. The impact of technology is nevertheless hindered by the heterogenous and unpredictable adoption patterns of smallholders. Most current studies examine farm-level constraints and environmental barriers (e.g., distance to market and			

access to financial capital) as the main explanation for variations in adoption. The authors take a complementary approach that draws on adoption theories from consumer psychology, thus considering the interplay between contextual barriers and the micro-level decision making processes of smallholders with regard to the adoption of technology. Qualitative data on the adoption of legume technologies by Ethiopian smallholders reveal barriers that hinder adoption at three stages of the process: as negative expectations, as impediments to translating adoption intentions into behaviour and as impediments to impact after adoption, thus hindering the continued use of technologies. To overcome adoption barriers, the findings suggest that more attention should be devoted to business innovations through effective product design and the marketing of the technologies, as well as to the development of value chains and business ecosystems within which to bundle technological products with other products and services.

Summary:

This article examines why smallholder farmers fail to adopt or sustain use of agricultural technologies despite their potential benefits. It develops a process-based model showing how barriers emerge at different stages (from initial perceptions to sustained use) shaping adoption outcomes. Key findings are:

- ▶ The study identifies three critical stages of adoption failure: (1) negative expectations before adoption, (2) constraints between intention and actual uptake, and (3) barriers to sustained use after adoption.
- ▶ Many farmers form negative expectations early on, reducing willingness to adopt even before trying the technology.
- ▶ A major gap exists between intention and behaviour, where farmers who plan to adopt are unable to do so due to practical constraints (e.g. access, cost, knowledge).
- ▶ Even after adoption, continued use is often limited, as farmers face challenges in achieving expected benefits or integrating technologies into their systems.
- ▶ Barriers are multi-dimensional and cumulative, meaning constraints at different stages reinforce each other and reduce overall adoption rates.
- ▶ The study highlights the importance of complementary systems (value chains, input delivery, services) rather than focusing on standalone technologies.

Policy implications:

- ▶ Move beyond one-off technology promotion and instead support the entire adoption process from awareness to sustained use.
- ▶ Address behavioural and perception barriers early, including risk perceptions and expectations about technology performance.
- ▶ Close the intention–adoption gap by improving access to inputs, credit, and information.
- ▶ Strengthen value chains and business ecosystems, ensuring technologies are bundled with services (e.g. inputs, training, markets).
- ▶ Focus on post-adoption support, not just initial uptake, to ensure long-term impact.
- ▶ Adopt a systems approach to innovation policy, recognising that technology success depends on complementary institutions and market structures.

Institutional

Institution	Publication date	Title and URL	Authors
FAO Emergency Response	15 March 2026	<i>Global agrifood implications of the 2026 conflict in the Middle East</i>	N/A
Summary: This publication is an analysis of the implications of the escalation of conflict in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Middle East on risks to global energy, fertiliser, and agrifood systems. As the Strait of Hormuz is a critical chokepoint for oil, gas, and fertilisers, the war has raised energy and agricultural input costs worldwide. Fertiliser shortages and higher energy prices threaten crop yields, while remittance losses and potential shifts to biofuel production could amplify food price volatility, particularly in Africa, Asia, and other import-dependent regions. Immediate measures such as developing alternative trade routes, strengthening market monitoring, providing financial support for farmers, and offering targeted aid for vulnerable countries are needed to stabilise supply chains. Longer-term strategies should focus on domestic agriculture, sustainable fertiliser production, renewable energy, and structural adjustments, while diplomatic efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz remain essential to safeguard global energy and food security.			

Institution	Publication date	Title and URL	Authors
IIED Brief	March 2026	<i>Can agroecology-based food system transitions work in humanitarian crises?</i>	Adolph, B., Morell-Ducós, J., Koordt, S.K.Vognsen, Fabienke, R.
Summary: According to this brief (based on pilots in Kenya, Lebanon and Nepal) agroecology can work in humanitarian and protracted crisis settings, not as a replacement for emergency aid, but as a complementary approach that links relief, recovery, and long-term resilience. The key policy challenge is enabling safe, phased, and well-supported transitions, rather than questioning feasibility. Agroecology offers a system-level alternative by reducing reliance on external inputs and fragile supply chains, by strengthening local production, ecosystems, and institutions, and by supporting self-reliance and social cohesion. As such it provides a pathway from emergency response to recovery to resilience strengthening. However, the brief also shows that agroecological transitions are not risk-free, especially in crisis settings where households have low tolerance for failure, poorly designed interventions can increase labour burdens (especially for women) and undermine livelihoods, while weak markets reduce incentives for producers and fragmented institutions and short funding cycles hinder systemic change. Policy recommendations are:			

- ▶ Mainstream agroecology. Integrate into food security, climate adaptation, and disaster risk reduction strategies.
- ▶ Align relief with long-term transformation. Ensure emergency interventions do not undermine local systems and instead build future resilience.
- ▶ Adopt risk-sensitive approaches. Combine agroecology with social protection, finance, and gender-sensitive design.
- ▶ Invest in institutions and learning systems. Support local governance, extension, and participatory platforms.
- ▶ Reform funding frameworks. Enable long-term, flexible, and integrated programming across sectors.

Institution	Publication date	Title and URL	Authors
IIED Report	March 2026	<i>Food security in a warming world: who is at risk, why and what comes next?</i>	Bharadwaj, R., Karthikeyan, N. and Kumar, B.A.
Summary: The report argues that achieving resilient and equitable development in the face of climate change and systemic shocks requires a fundamental shift in how finance is designed, governed, and delivered, particularly for the most vulnerable countries and communities. Current global financing systems are fragmented, short-term, and often inaccessible to those most in need, limiting the effectiveness of climate adaptation and development efforts. The evidence shows that locally led approaches, where resources are channelled directly to national and subnational institutions, can significantly improve the relevance, efficiency, and impact of investments, while strengthening domestic systems and accountability. For policymakers, the report highlights the need to reform financing architectures to prioritise long-term, flexible, and locally controlled funding mechanisms. This includes strengthening national institutions, aligning donor requirements with country systems, and shifting from project-based approaches toward programmatic, system-level investment. It also calls for greater coordination across climate, development, and humanitarian finance, alongside increased risk tolerance and learning-oriented funding models. Ultimately, enabling countries to lead their own adaptation and resilience pathways, supported by coherent, predictable, and inclusive finance, is essential for delivering sustainable and scalable outcomes.			

Institution	Publication date	Title and URL	Authors
IFAD Report	March 2026	<i>Rural women as remittance receivers: Prevalence, access, use and opportunities for empowerment</i>	N/A

Summary:

This report shows that remittances are a major but underutilised driver of women's economic empowerment in rural areas. While millions of women receive remittances, structural barriers limit their control, use, and transformative impact. Policy should move beyond access to focus on agency, financial inclusion, and system-wide gender responsiveness. Even when women are central recipients, they often lack control over funds and gender gaps in financial systems limit development impact. As such, this report mentions this is a missed opportunity for inclusive rural transformation and gender equality. Key barriers for women are low financial and digital literacy, lack of ID and documentation, restrictive social norms, limited mobility and autonomy, and dependence on male-controlled accounts. This means women often receive money without controlling it. Control determines empowerment outcomes.

Case studies in Nepal and Gambia show that combining remittances with financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, women-led financial networks, and digital inclusion leads to:

- ▶ Increased savings and investment.
- ▶ Stronger household decision-making.
- ▶ Greater economic participation.

Policy priorities could be:

- ▶ Make women visible in remittance systems, by collecting gender-disaggregated data on remittance receipt and use, linking remittances to financial inclusion indicators, and integrating into national financial inclusion and rural development strategies.
- ▶ Make financial systems work for women by designing gender-responsive financial products, expanding flexible ID (KYC) systems, investing in financial and digital literacy, supporting women-led agent networks, and reducing mobility and time constraints in service delivery.
- ▶ Convert remittances into empowerment by linking remittances to entrepreneurship, savings and investment, and climate adaptation. Also by providing labour-saving technologies, embedding gender-transformative approaches in programmes, and strengthening women's role in decision-making.

Opinions and Comments

Authors	Title and URL	Where published	When published
van Zonneveld, M., Castañeda-Álvarez, N.P., Achigan-Dako, E.G. <i>et al.</i>	<i>Enhancing farmers' access to neglected crop seeds for healthy diets in a changing climate: six recommendations for policy action</i>	Food Security	20 March 2026
Summary: This opinion article mentions that diversifying food systems with nutrient-dense, climate-resilient "opportunity crops" offers a practical pathway to address food insecurity, malnutrition, and climate			

vulnerability. However, progress is constrained less by agronomic limitations than by weak seed systems and policy neglect. Current agricultural policies and investments remain heavily focused on a narrow set of staple crops, while underutilised species receive limited support for research, breeding, and distribution. As a result, farmers, particularly smallholders and women, often lack access to quality seeds, preventing wider adoption despite clear benefits for dietary diversity and resilience.

To unlock this potential, policymakers need to reposition crop diversity as a core objective within food security, nutrition, and climate strategies, while strengthening inclusive seed systems that support both formal and informal channels. This includes investing in breeding and genetic resource management, reforming seed regulations to accommodate diverse crops, and improving last-mile delivery through extension and local networks. Crucially, interventions must go beyond production to connect seeds to markets and consumption, ensuring that opportunity crops are integrated across entire value chains. With coordinated action, these crops can move from the margins to become central to more resilient, nutritious, and inclusive food systems.

Authors	Title and URL	Where published	When published
Bah, A.S., Wang, Y.	<i>Science for Africa's future food security: analysing the impacts of banned pesticide use on agriculture and health</i>	Food Security	25 March 2026
Summary: Africa's food systems are under increasing pressure from population growth, climate change, and low agricultural productivity, intensifying reliance on pesticides to sustain crop yields. Despite international restrictions, the use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs)—including banned herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and nematicides—remains widespread across sub-Saharan Africa. Weak regulatory enforcement, the prevalence of informal markets, and limited farmer awareness continue to enable their use, posing significant risks to human health and environmental sustainability. This opinion article therefore examines the persistence of banned pesticide use in selected African countries and its implications for public health, ecosystems, and long-term agricultural resilience. It highlights critical gaps in data and monitoring, and underscores the need for stronger institutional capacity, improved farmer education, and more effective regulatory systems. The paper calls for a coordinated continental policy response and greater adoption of integrated pest management approaches to reduce dependency on hazardous chemicals and support safer, more sustainable agricultural development.			

Authors	Title and URL	Where published	When published
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Bhumika Mishra, Vandana Vidhani, Devesh Roy, and Mamata Pradhan	<i>Putting women at the center of agrifood transformation: Lessons from Odisha, India</i>	IFPRI Blogs	16 March 2026
Summary: Transforming agrifood systems requires placing women at the centre of policy design, implementation, and outcomes. This blog post is based on evidence from International Food Policy Research Institute work in Odisha, India. The state has made significant progress by embedding gender across its development agenda, including gender-responsive budgeting and targeted programmes, but the blog post shows that simply increasing women’s participation is not enough. Women play a critical role in agricultural productivity and food system transformation, yet persistent barriers such as limited land rights, social norms, and unequal access to resources continue to constrain their full contribution and benefits. The experience from Odisha highlights that effective policy must move beyond counting female beneficiaries toward addressing structural constraints and ensuring meaningful empowerment. Interventions such as self-help groups have improved women’s access to credit, markets, and technology, but they cannot substitute for deeper reforms in governance, data systems, and resource access. The post emphasises the need for gender-responsive institutions, better gender-disaggregated data, and integrated policy approaches that embed gender across the entire agrifood system. Ultimately, placing women at the centre is not only a matter of equity but a prerequisite for achieving more productive, resilient, and sustainable food systems.			

Authors	Title and URL	Where published	When published
Reyes Tirado	<i>Financial standards can help foster green investment in the agrifood transition</i>	IFPRI Blogs	2 March 2026
Summary: This blog post highlights that scaling up green investment is essential for transforming agrifood systems to be climate-resilient and low-carbon, yet current financing remains far below what is needed. Despite growing interest from both public and private actors, agrifood systems receive only a small share of global climate finance, largely due to the sector’s fragmentation, the difficulty of measuring impact, and the complexity of financing millions of small-scale producers. Financial standards, such as common taxonomies, disclosure frameworks, and science-based criteria, are therefore critical to provide clarity, build investor confidence, and enable capital to flow at the scale and speed required. The blog post argues that stronger, harmonised financial standards can improve transparency, track progress toward climate goals, and ensure investments deliver real environmental and social outcomes. Crucially, finance must reach smallholder farmers, who are central to implementing climate solutions, through instruments that support livelihoods rather than increase debt burdens.			

This requires shifting toward inclusive, impact-oriented financing that rewards sustainable practices such as soil restoration and biodiversity protection. Overall, aligning financial systems with clear standards and inclusive design is key to unlocking large-scale green investment and driving an effective agrifood transition.

Methodology

The rapid monthly search for peer-reviewed literature and other relevant sources is carried out through a predetermined list of publications and institutions. The list contains 22 academic journals and 28 institutions (e.g. universities, research institutes, international organisations). Evidence is selected based on relevance, particularly around three key topics:

- ▶ Intersection between Food & Agriculture with the natural environment (e.g. Biodiversity).
- ▶ Food & Agriculture evidence on poverty reduction and inclusive development.
- ▶ Link between Food & Agriculture and resilience to food insecurity.

Citation

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About this report

This Knowledge for Development and Diplomacy (K4DD) Rapid Agrifood Evidence Summary is based on 1 day of desk-based research. It provides a selection of recent relevant evidence and expert thinking relating to food and agriculture with a focus on low- and middle-income countries.

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