



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/taking-comprehensive-approach-agriculture-nutrition-and-food-security>

Taking a Comprehensive Approach to Agriculture, Nutrition and Food Security

In a rural village in the southern delta region of Bangladesh, Rajopa lives with her husband and their four children. She says that for years she and her husband have struggled to feed their family on a marginal income. Like many other illiterate women in her village, she was unaware of the need to provide complementary foods to her six-month old child, who was not receiving the calories and nutrients needed for proper growth. But with help from Feed the Future, Rajopa has learned how to turn the unused land around her house into the nutritious fruits and vegetables her family needs to thrive.

Feed the Future has helped thousands of families like Rajopa's across the globe by providing much-needed technical assistance and access to seeds, irrigation and other inputs needed to improve crop production, food quality and availability. But while improved yields and diversified crops are important for smallholder farmers, they don't always mean better nutrition – a prerequisite for future generations of healthy adults with the physical and mental capacity to break cycles of poverty.

Recent research suggests that to make a meaningful impact on chronic malnutrition, agricultural interventions must be sensitive to how they affect access to nutritious diets. For example, programs that seek to empower women need to be mindful of how they affect mothers' time and ability to breastfeed. Likewise, a portion of increased income from better crop yields should be in mothers' hands to best contribute to a healthy, diverse diet for their families.

Feed the Future is shifting mindsets to help agriculture and livelihood programs make greater contributions to nutrition. In Bangladesh, the Farmer Field Schools that Rajopa benefited from have long spread innovation and local best practices among rural farmers by promoting adult group learning and observation. Embracing the need to bridge the gap between field and fork, the USAID-funded **SPRING Project** now calls these learning spaces Field Nutrition Schools, tailoring agricultural education at the family level while also linking crops and animals to the nutritional needs of mothers and children under the age of two.

In small groups, pregnant women and mothers like Rajopa receive both agricultural training and counseling on a package of essential nutrition and hygiene actions. These easily "doable" actions focus on dietary diversity, women's nutrition and hygiene to prevent disease transmission and reduce maternal and child undernutrition. Reaching the community through local NGOs and government agricultural experts ensures sustainability, with SPRING passing on the skills and expertise local institutions need to be able to train women and their families in the future.

By linking agriculture and nutrition knowledge and skills, Feed the Future is striving to end the vicious cycle of malnutrition, bringing the best of agriculture, health and nutrition programs together to make a lasting impact on vulnerable families and communities around the world.