

ADDRESSING DIET-RELATED NCDs THROUGH BUSINESS TO BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Food handling, transportation and distribution

The SUN Business Network (SBN) matches the expertise of its Global Members and the needs of its national members (mostly small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)) to support better nutrition. Overweight and obesity may result in diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases (like heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, kill more than 40 million people each year. In order to help address this issue, SBN with the support of the George Institute for Global Health has identified a set of business-to-business (B2B) technical assistance initiatives that could contribute to the prevention of diet-related NCDs. The analysis focused on four countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Bangladesh.

OPTIMISE FOOD HANDLING, TRANSPORTATION, AND DISTRIBUTION IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

In low- and middle-income countries, the cost of transporting foods can sometimes exceed the value of the raw product. It is therefore crucial to support better handling, transportation and distribution of food products. While investments in large transportation infrastructure are not among the areas of SBN B2B support, SMEs from low- and middle-income countries can benefit from guidance on the most efficient and affordable solutions for handling, transportation and distribution of food. Additionally, global businesses can support SMEs to aggregate their handling, transportation and distribution of food whenever possible.

Better food handling, transportation and distribution would lead to reduced food spoilage as well as potential increased quality of the food due to proper handling between the production site and consumers.

WHAT TO DO

To improve handling, transportation, and distribution of foods, SBN Global Members can help SMEs by:

- Supporting the planning and development of strategies to identify local buyers or marketplaces, optimal routes, and transport options.
- Sharing information and delivering trainings on low-cost options to optimise storage conditions during the transportation and distribution of fresh produce from producers to consumers.
- Sharing information and delivering trainings on 'short supply chains,' such as the direct supply of fresh foods to local schools or other public institutions.
- Sharing information and delivering trainings on low-cost improvements in packing and stowing practices during loading and unloading of produce, choice of containers (e.g. to consider ventilation of the contents, minimise wasted space, and protect the contents) and vehicle enhancements.
- Designing and sharing cost-optimisation models per sector and/or per country to help small-scale farmers or retailers make decisions regarding transportation logistics (e.g. route selection, temperature setting, average speed) by weighting transportation costs, cooling costs and product devaluation costs (resulting from deterioration in food quality during transportation).



Interviews with SMEs in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania underlined that local SMEs expect to receive subsidies and other types of government support to improve their food handling, transportation and distribution. While global businesses cannot address all the logistics needs of these SMEs, they could play a bigger role in not only supporting technical assistance programmes but also investing in this area to achieve better food quality from suppliers or potential suppliers. Investments could include:

- Providing plastic crates to SMEs from low- and middle-income countries. Studies have estimated that the costs of reusable plastic crates can be recovered in 10-20 uses; however, many farmers currently cannot afford them due to cash constraints. These crates use 39% less energy to produce compared to single-use containers and produce 95% less solid waste than the corrugated fibreboard containers that are typically used in their place.

These solutions should support SMEs to reduce spoilage and increase the quality of the food they supply. They can also have other positive indirect impacts: for example, short supply chains for food deliveries can help producers build a reputation for their products among the members of their local community and can create and maintain jobs in local communities.



Existing practices for handling, transporting, and distributing foods

International agencies such as the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization Regional Office for Asia and Pacific in 2009 introduced and promoted reusable plastic crates in the Greater Mekong subregion for selected vegetables and fruits and released technical guidance on the proper use, cleaning, sanitization and efficient management systems for returnable plastic crates. Similar support could be delivered by global businesses to increase the quantity, affordability, and quality of food provided by their suppliers or potential suppliers or to improve access to food in low- and middle-income countries.



For more information about the SBN B2B technical assistance platform please consult our [webpage](#)

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