



# Impact of food systems foresight

## Action Research: Quality and Evaluation Guiding the Impact of Foresight in Food Systems

*September 2024 – December 2025*

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and Foresight4Food (F4F) initiated an action research project on 'Impact and food systems foresight', with the financial support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

### Objective

The goal of this action research is to support regional African multi-actor food system transformation efforts through the development of, and dialogue around, a **Practical Guide on 'Quality Criteria and Evaluation Approaches for Guiding the Impact of Foresight in Food Systems Transformation'**.

This guide will enhance the quality and impact of foresight and scenario analysis at regional, national, and local levels. The Guide will **provide users support** in commissioning, guiding and assessing quality foresight work, and **empower practitioners** of foresight with working principles, learning questions, methods and applicable cases to improve action-orientation and utility of foresight work.

### Urgency

The field of foresight in food systems, climate action and socio-environmental systems is rapidly expanding. There is a **growing need for systemic change facilitation, transformation thinking and anticipatory policy** in a context of frequent, recurring and deeply interconnected crises across the world. There is increasing interest of governments, civil society organisations and institutions in the use of foresight as a way to support systemic change initiatives and for navigation of complex situations. Now, the next step is to try to better understand and assess what constitutes **high quality and impactful foresight for food systems transformation**

### Research questions

1. What defines the impact or added value of foresight work in food systems transformation?
2. What can we learn from a diverse range of cases (where foresight has been applied and reviewed) on what factors affect how foresight interventions, scenarios, or 'foresight seeds', effectively land in the policy and institutional environment?
3. How can foresight processes be proactively guided to enhance transformative action perspectives?
4. How can we learn from experiences of monitoring, learning and evaluation of foresight in other sectors and disciplines?



## Foresight, impact and evaluation

**Interest in foresight for food systems change is growing.** With increasing use, it is essential to explore how foresight contributes to impact on food systems transformation. In the past, foresight practitioners rarely built-in measures to assess success or impact. Here, we can learn from evaluation practice. Evaluators are often asked to look back, whereas futurists look forward. Foresight requires thinking in complexity: often a wide range of stakeholders together operate in these spaces and answers are not straightforward. A review by the Association of Professional Futurists (APF) Evaluation Task Force highlighted various challenges including the following:

1. The level of certainty foresight is delivering
2. Salience of impact
3. Goal achievement
4. Attribution
5. Craft
6. Cost and value for money

While various approaches and methods are being explored, there is no widely established practical experience, particularly for countries in the Global South. This is the knowledge gap this research seeks to address. Approaches such as developmental evaluation and principled-focused evaluation will be explored to set a frame. Work done by evaluation and foresight communities in other domains can serve as a useful starting point to think about principles and practical quality guidance.



## Key outputs envisioned

### Research outputs



- Inception research agenda report
- Inventory and brief synthesis of existing experiences of MEL in foresight
- Publication and promotion of a 'Quality Criteria for Foresight for Food Systems Transformation Guide'

### Dialogues and engagement



- 3 hybrid and participatory write-shops across Africa
- Capacity strengthening within FARA, African Union and regional communities of practice
- 3 online interactive dialogues oriented towards policy-makers, international development agencies, researchers and food systems stakeholders.

## Partners involved

The project will be delivered through FARA and its Africa Foresight Academy (AFA) and the CAADXP4 partners (AFAAS, CORAF, ASARECA & CCARDESA), with support of the Foresight4Food Initiative, with experts in the field of foresight and evaluation, and IDRC staff. The Food Systems Transformation Group, part of the Environmental Change Institute at the University of Oxford will be involved to provide research and technical expertise.



The project is funded by, and co-created with, the IDRC.

More information? Reach us via [info@foresight4food.net](mailto:info@foresight4food.net)

