

Research on food system policies and market innovations for non-communicable disease prevention

Deadline for Submission: Friday 3 July 2015 (17:00 Eastern Daylight Time)

Eligibility Criteria: This call is open to organizations based in low- or middle-income countries in South Asia, South East Asia, and Latin America. The lead applicant organization must have a legal corporate registration in an eligible country.

The lead applicant must also be a citizen or permanent resident with a primary work affiliation in a low- or middle-income country in South Asia, South East Asia, or Latin America.

Other participant organizations may be based in countries other than those targeted, however the research project must take place in a low- or middle-income country in South Asia, South East Asia, or Latin America.

Note: This is the first of a series of funding opportunities related to this area of research. It is expected that future activities and funding opportunities will be extended to other geographic regions.

Duration of research grants: Two concurrent funding streams are envisaged in this Call.
Exploratory Research Stream cannot exceed 24 months
Consortium Research Stream cannot exceed 36 months

Budget: Approximately 12 grants are anticipated for this Call (6 in each stream).
Exploratory Research Stream must range between CAD 100,000 and CAD 300,000.
Consortium Research Stream must range between CAD 600,000 and CAD 1,200,000.

Objective:

The aim of the Call is to reduce and prevent malnutrition and food-related chronic illnesses, in ways that are environmentally sustainable. The main objective is to explore and understand public policy interventions and market innovations that improve the quality and diversity of food and enable adoption of healthy and sustainable diets among vulnerable populations.

This initiative will focus on the following two themes:

- Public policy interventions on food systems to impact healthy and sustainable diets.
- Development and/or scaling up of market innovations for changing local and national food systems in ways that impact healthy and sustainable diets.

Contact email: feh@idrc.ca

Documents:

Access to online application system and documents related to this call: food-systems-idrc.fluidreview.com

Funder: This call is being launched by IDRC's Food, Environment and Health program.

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Call for Concept Notes

Research on Food System Policies and Market Innovations for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention

Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is pleased to announce the competitive Call for Concept Notes on Food System Policies and Market Innovations for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention.

This Call marks the launch of IDRC's new program "Food, Environment and Health." A key priority of the program is to develop evidence, innovations, and policies for improved health, healthier food systems, and the prevention of food-related non-communicable diseases. The program will invest in strengthening research leadership in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and build multi-stakeholder partnerships to effectively implement solutions with measurable impacts at scale.

The Call targets applied research on food systems changes that enable and promote healthy and sustainable diets at the population level in LMICs in South Asia, South-East Asia, and Latin America.

Background, Vision, and Objectives of the Call

Key drivers of food systems and diets in LMICs

The world's increasing capacity to produce, process, and trade food is being accompanied by important changes in dietary patterns across all regions. While access to food is increasing for a large number of people around the world, new challenges are emerging. One is the overlap in different forms of malnutrition now common in most countries (including under-nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity). This is being accompanied by a sharp rise in non-communicable disease burdens (e.g. diabetes, hypertension and heart disease), imposing high human, social, and economic costs at all income levels. Low- and middle-income countries are disproportionately affected with more rapidly rising rates of non-communicable diseases in younger populations that further deteriorate health and strain economic resources for all.

A common element in these problems is an unhealthy diet, defined by the quantity, quality, and diversity of foods consumed. Diets based on a diversity of fresh and minimally processed foods have numerous health benefits to individuals, communities, and countries, including disease prevention, lower health care costs, and more productive societies. Innovative policies and market-oriented ideas and practices can improve dietary quality and diversity, offsetting an increasing reliance in LMICs on ready-to-consume ultra-processed food and drink products that are nutritionally poor.

Fresh thinking is needed to promote public and private efforts for tackling malnutrition in all its forms and reduce the economic and disease burdens that it brings. This will need practical solutions that take into account the policy, social, cultural, and economic environments that shape food systems and affect both the quality of food supplies and demand for healthy foods. Many factors influence food supply and demand in a country or region. These include urbanization, affordability and accessibility of food products, marketing and value chains, as well as food-related policies in agriculture and trade.

Addressing the environmental sustainability of food systems is another important consideration today. Resource intensive agricultural and food processing practices, long distance transportation, and food waste have profound impacts on the environment. Managing food-related resources sustainably offers the potential for private and public benefits, conservation of soil health, increased quality and availability of water for human and wildlife use, reduced contamination by toxic substances and pathogens, and protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

Vision

This Call is based on the premise that public policies and market innovations can transform food systems to enhance and promote healthy and sustainable diets, and ultimately optimize prevention and control of non-communicable disease. Market innovations are new or significantly improved ideas that are applied in practice along value chains. Small and medium enterprises experimenting with food product diversification, processing, distribution and/or marketing in local food value chains are examples. While policies provide enabling conditions for influencing and changing food systems, market innovations can enhance the diversity and quality of food supplies, stimulate demand for nutritious foods, and enable healthy eating.

Prevention of non-communicable diseases will require broad alliances for action across sectors (e.g. agriculture, health, nutrition, education, environment, economics, and social development) and between multiple actors (government, civil society, business, academia, non-profit organizations). For this reason, the research promoted by this Call should take a multi-disciplinary and multi-sector approach to guide changes in food systems for impact at population level.

This Call will fund research that is founded on social and gender equity, cultural sensitivity, economic viability, and environmental sustainability (see section on cross-cutting considerations below). Ideas and innovations proposed must be designed and/or implemented as much as possible in ways that are accessible and affordable to all, meet the needs of women in LMICs, encourage consumption of healthy local foods, take into account culinary traditions, and protect the natural environment and resources in the long term.

Definitions of key terms used in this Call are presented in the [online resource](#).

Objectives of the Call

The aim of the Call is to reduce and prevent malnutrition and food-related chronic illnesses in ways that are environmentally sustainable. The main objective is to explore and understand public policy interventions and market innovations that improve the quality and diversity of food and enable adoption of healthy and sustainable diets among vulnerable populations.

Value and benefits of policies and innovations to women, children, and other vulnerable groups should be intended outcomes. Projects should aim to identify and assess food system contributions to healthy and sustainable diets, using indicators that are appropriate and relevant to the setting. Health or environmental impacts such as disease reduction or ecosystem resilience need not be measured.

Diet-related outcomes mediated by changes in food systems may include improvements in accessibility, affordability, promotion, sale and/or consumption of healthy foods and diets, or reduction in these variables for ultra-processed food and drink products. Food system changes that contribute to environmental sustainability may include reductions in overconsumption and waste of natural resources (e.g. water) and/or food, increases in agro-biodiversity, and/or reductions in the use and release of contaminants that are harmful to the environment. Other measurable dimensions of healthy and sustainable diets and associated indicators are also encouraged.

Thematic focus and priority research considerations

The research should focus on guiding and supporting food system changes that will enable and promote healthy and sustainable diets at the population level in LMICs. Applications are encouraged to address at least one of the following research themes:

Public policy interventions on food systems to impact healthy and sustainable diets

Possible topics of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- Research to inform the design, implementation, and/or evaluation of fiscal and regulatory interventions (e.g. labelling, taxation/pricing measures, marketing restrictions) that aim to increase consumption of fresh and minimally processed foods;
- Development and testing of multi-sector incentive programs and financial instruments (e.g. credit-based incentives, agricultural extension services, small-business development and support, market and infrastructure support) that promote economically viable food system innovations for healthy and sustainable diets;
- Cross-sector policy analyses and strategies for improving coherence between public policies and regulations that impact food systems (e.g. agriculture and trade policies, transportation, non-communicable disease prevention and control) and promote healthy and sustainable diets (e.g. national food guides).

Development and/or scaling-up of market innovations for changing local and national food systems in ways that impact healthy and sustainable diets

Possible topics of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- Proof of concept of market innovations at local or regional level that could be scaled-up to impact quality and sustainability of diets at population level (e.g. urban agriculture and/or rural development initiatives along food value chains and their links to local food supply and consumption);
- Proof of concept and/or scaling-up research on novel approaches by small and medium enterprises experimenting with diversification of fresh and minimally processed foods in local food chains, including innovations in food processing and distribution and marketing of healthier food and diets;
- Implementation research on novel interventions linking production, processing, distribution, and/or sale for improving access to fresh and minimally processed foods at points of supply (e.g. food markets, street vendors, supermarkets, community kitchens, and/or restaurants);
- Development and assessment of innovative co-operative partnerships between producers, distributors, processors, retailers, and/or the public sector for improving inclusive access to markets and targeted consumer settings (e.g. schools, work place, street markets, street food, community kitchens, and/or restaurants).

For both research themes above, the proposed research should strive to gain a deeper understanding of local and regional food systems, including drivers of change, trends, relevant food-industry practices, and existing food-related policies and regulations. Improved knowledge in these aspects should guide as much as possible the development and testing of policy and/or market interventions. Assessments of the economic value and trade-offs of benefits and costs to actors in the food system are strongly encouraged.

Cross-cutting considerations

Applications should describe how the cross-cutting considerations presented below will be integrated into the design, implementation, and assessment of the proposed research. While it may not be possible to address all considerations at the same level of depth, they will be taken into account in the selection process.

- **Social and Gender Equity:** Understanding the value and impact of policies and innovations on different social groups, with special attention to enhancing gender equity and fostering improved livelihoods of vulnerable groups.
- **Multi-sector action:** Understanding how best to engage different perspectives (from community members as well as from different academic disciplines) and actors from relevant sectors (government, civil society, and private sectors), as well as the challenges associated with such partnerships, including commercial barriers to policy adoption and implementation.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Understanding the value and impact of changes in food supply and consumption on the natural environment, minimizing environmental harm, and promoting ecosystem resilience.

Funding Streams, Scope, and Duration

Two concurrent funding streams are envisaged in this Call. Interested research teams can apply to **ONLY ONE** funding stream:

A. Exploratory Research

This stream is best suited for projects of shorter duration and/or limited collection of primary data. These may be projects that aim to develop and pilot-test novel ideas or projects that deepen and complement on-going initiatives by introducing new research dimensions that enhance action-oriented knowledge. The proposed research may include the incorporation of public health, nutrition, social, economic and/or environmental dimensions, in line with the priority research themes and cross-cutting considerations described earlier.

Project budgets under this stream must be in the range of **CAD \$100,000 to CAD \$300,000**. Project duration must **not exceed 24 months**, including all research activities and final reporting.

B. Consortium Research

A consortium applying to this funding stream should consist of at least two collaborating organizations (and/or networks) that integrate complementary kinds of knowledge and expertise. Organizations and networks in the consortium may be from a single or multiple low- or middle-income countries.

This stream is best suited for multi-organization applications that aim to develop and test new solutions to practical problems at national or regional scales. It may involve research on policy and/or practice interventions, providing proof of concept of innovations, and/or partnership building strategies for taking solutions to scale. Concept notes should outline the nature of the consortium and how partner organizations will work together. Selected concept notes that are invited to submit full proposals will be required to outline in their submission a strategy for knowledge systematization and management that fosters active engagement of all collaborating partners during project implementation as well as a strategy for disseminating research findings with broader national and international stakeholder groups.

Total project budgets under this funding stream must be in the range of **CAD \$600,000 to CAD \$1,200,000**. Project duration **must not exceed 36 months**, including all research activities and final reporting. Co-funding by national or international donors is highly encouraged but not compulsory.

It is anticipated that **approximately six grants in each of the funding streams** will be awarded over the next two years, depending on the merit and quality of full proposals developed and financial resources available.

Out of scope research

The following types of research are considered to lie outside the scope of this Call and will not be funded:

- Purely descriptive research on food-related problems
- Product development limited to enrichment, fortification, or reformulation of individual food items
- Projects solely focused on improving food production, quantity, and/or access
- Purely epidemiological or observational studies
- Projects solely focused on education, social marketing, and/or individual behaviour change
- Projects solely focused on food safety

Eligibility Criteria

The Call targets research in South Asia, South-East Asia, and Latin America. Applications must be submitted by a lead applicant organization from Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) in these regions¹. Lead applicant organizations must have legal corporate registration in an eligible LMIC.

Countries that are not eligible include: Cuba, Korea (Democratic People's Republic of), and countries from Oceania or Central Asia. Proposals from certain other countries may require approval from IDRC's Vice President – Corporate Strategy and Regional Management, in addition to the approval of the scientific committee, to ensure that local risks are appropriately managed.

International organizations (except United Nations organizations and members of the Consortium of International Agricultural Research [CGIAR]) are eligible to apply as co-applicant organizations (developing country collaborators), provided that they have regional chapters or offices with appropriate legal status to operate and manage funds in the eligible countries where the research will take place. United Nations organizations and CGIAR centers receive significant Canadian funds via other funding windows and shall not apply to this Call as applicant organizations. They may, however, be included in applications by lead applicants as third-party organizations or consultants.

IDRC will only negotiate funding agreements with the lead applicant organizations of selected proposals. These lead applicant organizations will negotiate and develop funding arrangements directly with third-party organizations for specific services. IDRC will not contract directly with third-party organizations. Applications that involve third-party organizations must clearly justify their involvement and explain their role(s). Note that third-party organizations are not required to be located in the eligible countries. The guideline for total third-party participation in a project remains a maximum of 20% of the budget.

Note: This is the first of a series of funding opportunities related to this area of research. It is expected that future activities and funding opportunities will be extended to other geographic regions. For more information about eligibility, please refer to the [frequently asked questions](#).

¹ Eligible LMIC countries are as defined by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) [List of ODA Recipients](#) (Effective for reporting on 2014, 2015 and 2016 flows).

How to Apply

All applications must be submitted through an [online application system](#) by 3 July 2015 (17:00 Eastern Daylight Time). **Concept notes received after the submission deadline WILL NOT be considered.**

Please visit <https://food-systems-idrc.fluidreview.com/> to access the online application system and all the documents related to this Call.

Applications can be submitted in either English or French.

Key Dates:

Deadline for optional letter of intent:	5 June 2015
Deadline for Application Form including Concept Note:	3 July 2015
Successful applicants will be invited to develop full proposals:	7 August 2015
Deadline for submitting full proposals, no later than:	12 October 2015

IDRC reserves the right to cancel the process at any time without prior notice and/or at its discretion to grant all or none of the awards under this Call.

Please note, due to the large number of applications anticipated, only those applicants that are selected and invited to develop full proposals will be contacted by IDRC.

Selection Process and Criteria

This Call is designed as a two-stage selection process. The first stage is a **competitive process** comprised by the submission of a **Concept Note** that will be pre-screened for eligibility and then reviewed according to the selection criteria described below. The review process will draw on the expertise and recommendations of an international and multi-disciplinary Scientific Review Committee set up for the merit assessment and ranking of the eligible Concept Notes.

Concept notes will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit according to the evaluation criteria listed below.

1. Relevance of the proposed research (30%)
2. Research merit and effectiveness (30%)
3. Team strength and collaboration (20%)
4. Project feasibility (20%)

Concept Notes recommended by the Scientific Review Committee will receive a second level of review by IDRC. The following will be considered in making the final selection of teams that will be invited to submit full proposals:

- Overall merit of applications as informed by the scientific review committee
- Balance of priority research themes among applications deemed of high merit
- Geographic balance
- Availability of funds
- Internal approval requirements based on local risks identified

Selected applicants will enter the second stage of this process and will be invited to develop **Full Proposals** for funding consideration by the Centre. Selection process and criteria for the full proposals will be provided to selected applicants. **An invitation to submit a full proposal should not be considered a guarantee of funding.**

Contact for Further Information

Any inquiries related to the Call and application process should be sent by e-mail to the Food, Environment, and Health program at feh@idrc.ca.

A key part of Canada's aid program, IDRC supports research in developing countries to promote growth and development.

International Development Research Centre

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