

# First Phase Review of the Netherlands Food Partnership: how big is your world?

Final report

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## Preface

Herewith we present our final report of the review of the first phase of Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP). This is the last step of a review process in which first NFP conducted a self-evaluation of the results of the first 1,5 years (Annex 3). NFP management reflected on the questions what went well, which lessons have been learned and what can be improved? Secondly, as external consultants we validated the insights of the self-evaluation by holding thirteen interviews with external stakeholders (Annex 1)<sup>1</sup>. The review was done at the request of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (MoA).

The establishment of NFP was announced at World Food Day, October 2019. In the transition year 2020, AgriproFocus (APF) and Food and Business Knowledge Platform (FBKP) were dissolved and the relevant parts merged into NFP. During this first year, NFP was internally organized while outward looking activities continued as well. As of 2021, NFP became fully operational in its new identity.

The self-evaluation which includes the summaries of the annual reports 2020 and 2021, reflects the above transition as well. For 2020 outputs were highlighted as one full-fledged NFP plan and budget for the next year, and a new governance structure, branding strategy, organizational set up and staffing plan were presented. The 2021 annual report summary puts the convening and accelerating roles of NFP in platforms, partnerships and coalitions at a center stage.

The next chapter follows the main sections of the Terms of Reference for the Midterm Review. Please note that the term “midterm” is slightly misleading as the review covers the first 1,5 year of NFP, and it is the intention of NFP to, - after the review -, look ahead for a longer period, up to 2030. The findings of the review will be a source for this strategic planning.

## Findings

### A. Initial assumptions and strategic goals

#### 1. Food system transformations as strategic goal of NFP: qualify it further

The large majority of interviewees invited NFP to profile itself more explicitly than in the first phase, on the forefront of the food system transformations that the world needs nowadays. Most examples were given referring to profound change in agricultural production systems, nature-based solutions, climate smart solutions, circular agriculture/economy. Moreover, reference was made to the international critique on the Netherlands agricultural export model. This has consequences for the agenda setting by NFP, either through its platform function or through the partnerships/coalition themes it seeks to promote or support. The need to be more explicit about what kinds of food system transformations are needed and pursued by NFP impacts also on the selection of actors, and certainly of Netherlands parties. Interviewees suggested that NFP reaches more out to actors who are at the forefront of innovations and changes in agri-food systems. We recommend to NFP to

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<sup>1</sup> Also, notes of interviews with external stakeholders were used, done by NFP staff in 2021, in preparation of a latest version of the Theory of Change.

“work with transformative companies” and organizations. And to be transparent if and where Dutch government policies hinder this transformative profiling.

## **2. NFP’s international credibility as promotor of food system transformations**

“The Netherlands does have the right knowledge for system transformation in agriculture but does not have the proper history or track record”. In international circles, the Netherlands agri-food system, in particular its export model, is criticized for its unsustainability. This makes “leading by example” for Dutch actors a challenge, also for NFP. The example was given that in the facilitation role of NFP in the Netherlands towards the UNFSS (2021), NFP did not take a stand and should have positioned itself more at the forefront of sustainable and equitable change, also in the Netherlands food system. Whereas the Netherlands has a lot of credibility with its track record of building partnerships and coalitions, which is beneficial for NFP, it needs to prove its frontrunner position on sustainable food system transformation, which is a challenge for NFP as well. NFP has no mandate and role concerning food system changes in the Netherlands. But – at a minimum - NFP should keep track of the debates and developments.

## **3. Validating the assumptions under the ToC**

The Theory of Change (ToC) of NFP is based on the assumption that sharing knowledge and building partnerships and coalitions enhances the efficiency and – ultimately – the impact of contributions by Netherlands parties to national food system transformations. Based on this assumption, services are rendered to improve community engagement through platforms and build/strengthen partnerships and coalitions. These services fill a gap and reach their purpose if (a) no other party undertakes these activities and (b) they remove structural barriers to meet these goals. The first sub-assumption is answered by the question whether the main stakeholders acknowledge the need for knowledge sharing and coalition building, and whether NFP and its services are ‘unique’ in the stakeholder landscape. The second sub-question cannot be answered with the available documentation as no profound analysis of potential obstacles to knowledge sharing and coalition building can be traced. For example, what has been the effect of changes in government funding of ODA agencies in The Netherlands on their corporate strategies? As competition for funding has increased, has this affected agencies’ willingness to share knowledge and engage in coalitions or partnerships? What are the critical conditions for ODA agencies and companies to engage in a coalition or partnership? Is access to funding such a criterion or not?

All together, we recommend that NFP monitors whether all assumptions remain relevant coming years, notably where they affect the efficiency gains and impacts which feature so prominently in the ToC.

## **4. The ToC is confirmed, but how and where to intervene?**

The quality of the (recently newly developed) ToC of NFP is considered very adequate and relevant by interviewees. Relations between impact, outcomes, outputs, pillars (under which services) are well elaborated. And the dependency of NFP on other actors (in partnerships and coalitions) for outcomes and impact is clearly highlighted. “No doubt the NFP ToC will remain relevant for the coming 10 years.” Some interviewees recommended to provide more focus beyond the generic goal

of contributing to Food System Transformations. “It reads like the ToC of a Ministry”. Directions mentioned were such as focus on where the Netherlands is particularly good at, such as the land – water nexus; or intervene at a more concrete level. On the latter it might be noted that for some actors involved in NFP, such as those from the private sector, stepping up to a level of system thinking implies stepping out of one’s comfort zone as well. The biggest challenge for NFP is to sharpen *how* and *where* to intervene (see next points).

A minor issue, but often confusing for outsiders, has been the regular shifts in language for categories in the ToC. It is recommended to stick for a while to the latest version which classifies more than good-enough for the purpose of guiding NFP and its partners.

We recommend keeping the ToC as is and to concentrate on ever sharpening *how* and *where* to intervene.

## B. Services, Outputs and Outcomes

### 5. Transformation into NFP

It is well noted that during this first phase, time was needed for the transformation into NFP. Bringing APF and FBKP to a closure and absorbing the relevant parts into NFP, took time, effort and asked for flexibility of all people involved. The phase of operationalization of the transformation was stressful for all management and staff involved, also for the consortium partners of the Knowledge Program. This part of NFP was executed under a consortium agreement of the three original partners of FBKP, which, according to the self-evaluation, created administrative hurdles but did not block successful collaboration. For the future, more appropriate forms of contracting, as suggested in the self-evaluation, might be considered.

Covid-19 and protective measures all over the world were not particularly helpful for internal and external processes of the emerging NFP. In the self-evaluation (see the summary of results) a considerable drop down of events and meetings is noted as well. Most interviewees were well aware of these circumstances when reflecting on the outputs and services of NFP.

### 6. NFP’s activities and services

The self-evaluation shows in a graph that 75% of all monitored deliverables in 2021 were completed; 15% delayed to 2022 and 10% was cancelled for not being relevant or realistic. In the same year, there has been a remarkable growth in knowledge products; no explanation is given for this.

In the first 1,5 years of NFP, services provided show different pace and intensity. What emerges from the interviews is that activities for community engagement or the platform role of NFP in The Netherlands, were noticed by all interviewees and much appreciated. The services provided for partnership initiation and coalition development lagged more behind the expectations of involved stakeholders. Where these were known however, the quality and relevance of the services was praised. “Without NFP, the coalition would not exist.” “NFP added really good expertise to the study and the position paper.”

We conclude from the self-evaluation and interviews that performance to date by NFP has been satisfactory.

## 7. Community engagement services

NFP strategically convened all parties engaged in preparations in the Netherlands towards UNFSS (2021). This was much appreciated by interviewees and mentioned by almost all. Other events mentioned were the World Food Day (2021), and the consultation process for the new BHOS policy document (2022). Some convening work for parties in their preparations towards UNFCCC COP 26 (2021) and in 2022 towards COP 27 (food central) was less noticed, but certainly appreciated. “**NFP be the Netherlands National Forum** for COP 27.” “NFP is well positioned to break down the silos in which discussions on the future of agriculture take place.” “NFP is able to create synergies between key stakeholders .... and consequently, to reduce negative trade-offs between social, economic and ecological food system outcomes.” NFP as the one entry point for **access to Dutch skills and expertise** was highlighted, especially by stakeholders from abroad. NFP as general **reservoir of knowledge**, repairing fragmentation, and of the sharing of coherent knowledge, is relevant as well. Regularly, appreciation was given for more specialized knowledge events such as webinars and e-courses. And finally, the **lobby and advocacy role** of NFP was highlighted and appreciated. Suggestions were given for future advocacy, such as the worldwide adoption of higher sustainability standards, the further promotion of the importance of agricultural research in the Netherlands or the recommendation to influence the allocation of EU Funds.

## 8. Partnership initiation and coalition development services

The support NFP provides for partnerships and coalition building has been less visible for those stakeholders who were not involved in these activities. But these were labelled by many as particularly important for system change. NFP convenes existing coalitions such as SeedNL, supports new ones, i.e. Clim Eat and helps building new partnerships and coalitions, i.e. on Soils (Fertility) and Digital Ecosystem Services for Smallholders. NFP delivered support to 8 – 10 coalitions; out of 10 that were planned. Most of them were in their initial stages when NFP got involved, what explains partly the level of underspending on the coalitions. NFP deserves the credits that with its support, coalitions work increasingly from a system change perspective. Also, NFP helps with upscaling of coalitions. Interviewees highlighted quite often the “sharp nose” of NFP staff to bring the right **selection of partners** together, including companies. The self-evaluation flagged the preparatory work NFP did in this period: to connect the right stakeholders and reinforce capacities to innovate and jointly develop and influence change agendas. It makes sense that the self-evaluation labels these as preparatory phases for scaling and improving institutional environments. Interviewees stimulated NFP to keep doing the selection of partners and even intensify this: orchestrate, steer, choose, without owning the coalition or partnership, which is a delicate balancing act.

Concrete services appreciated included market and scoping studies, position papers, events organized, meetings convened or chaired, staff expert advice, disclosure of financial resources. Someone summarized it as “NFP takes away the initial transaction costs of creating coalitions.” Overall, the NFP convenor role of coalitions and the provider of backbone support is recognized and valued. And the open invitation is to further substantiate the role – which is one of the intentions according to the self-evaluation (see lessons learned).

## C. Role and performance of NFP

### 9. NFP's added value - "If we did not have an NFP, we should establish it now"

Interviewees referred frequently to what is perceived as the added value of NFP. It is generally acknowledged that facilitating a platform for the exchange of knowledge and information on food system transformations is an important contribution which no other agency in The Netherlands is providing. A second added value – yet to be fully developed – is establishing an 'interface' between national food system transformation processes in LMIC and Netherlands stakeholders. These processes increasingly become the context of interventions by Netherlands parties, but are not well understood, monitored and assessed on their needs for knowledge and expertise from The Netherlands.

We conclude that linking the needs in national food system transformations to (coalitions of) agencies and companies in The Netherlands, who have a relevant offer, is very important and critical to achieving the goals of the NFP. As such, related activities need to be further intensified and capacities to perform these activities strengthened.

### 10. NFP's ambitions are high, it needs tough management attention

The ambitions of NFP, especially on partnerships and coalitions, are high. By 2030 it will have facilitated the initiation of approximately 100 multi-stakeholder partnerships and in the period 2023-2030, NFP will support at least 40 Collective Impact Coalitions for food system transformation in LMIC<sup>2</sup>. Deducted from the needs in LMIC, also as a spin off from global processes (UNFSS, UNFCCC COP 26 and 27), these numbers make sense. It remains to be proven that appetite and relevant offers of Netherlands actors to work in partnerships and coalitions will equal these numbers. Also, these ambitions need careful matching with the – at any moment - available (human) resources of NFP. It implies that it is not enough to 'consciously plan and balance ownership' as the self-evaluation indicates, but also to define and communicate its no-go policies or exit strategies from the start of communities of practice, partnerships and coalitions. So far, this has not been the case (yet).

### 11. The stakeholders of NFP: how big is your world?

NFP refers in its' ToC and other policy documents to the importance of engaging stakeholders in The Netherlands. In fact, NFP considers such stakeholders as their immediate customers, although they do not finance the services rendered. As such, they could also be referred to as beneficiaries. The Netherlands MoFA and MoA and IKEA Foundation are the main sponsors of NFP. Governments, agencies and companies in LMIC are also referred to as important stakeholders. But these stakeholders are again of a different nature as compared to the stakeholders in The Netherlands. To date, it is not yet sufficiently clarified how NFP would like to relate itself to the Rome-based organizations<sup>3</sup>, other multilateral agencies and to the World Bank (or regional banks).

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<sup>2</sup> NFP Concept Note – Break-Fast, 2022., pages 11 and 13.

<sup>3</sup> The interviewee commented that the interview for this midterm review unleashed plenty of ideas for relevant collaboration.

Altogether, reference to the term ‘stakeholder’ does not specify in what relation NFP is to a specific actor. It is therefore recommended that more specific terms are applied for categories of actors and that such terms reflect the relationship better.

## **12. NFP’s capacities, expertise and skills need to evolve**

NFP has been established after a process of merging FBKP and APF. Current staff has its origins in these two predecessors and have brought their specific skills, knowledge and expertise. These include, beyond any doubt, knowledge brokering and management and knowledge sharing skills, project management, partnership building and facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes. Projected against the current ambitions of NFP, not all areas of knowledge, skills and expertise may be well covered. Operating at higher level policy may be such an area yet to be reinforced. Keeping track of food system transformations in key LMIC may be another area which requires reinforcement. It is welcomed that according to the self-evaluation, NFP as of mid-2021, focuses more on LMIC engagement.

NFP has two sources of knowledge and expertise that can be unlocked. The first is to turn towards the expertise of partners and participants in coalitions. In 2021, for example, according to the self-evaluation, NFP availed the expertise and capacities of professionals of over 180 different organizations in the co-creation of agendas, knowledge products and events. Where it concerns up-to-date knowledge of food systems transformation processes in LMIC, NFP can well elaborate its cooperation with Embassy staff, including the agricultural councilors, national representatives from Netherlands agencies and companies and national think tanks and other food system monitoring agencies. “MoFA and MoA are opening doors (Ghana, Egypt) but much more can and must be done by them.” Obviously, another source of expertise is Wageningen University and Research (WUR) as well. A vast body of (social, economic, technical and ecological) knowledge on food system transformations is available at the WUR, albeit fragmented. For the near future, it will be most helpful to keep investing explicitly in partnering with WUR and preferably intensify mutual co-operation. It is the intention of NFP to establish a strategic collaborative alliance.

However, unlocking expertise of partners assumes a certain level of knowledge and expertise within NFP as well. NFP needs to master itself what are key issues in food system transformations in LMIC. Recruiting more senior staff with their origin in the countries where NFP is assumed to support food system transformations could be considered. Such staff would add other perspectives, could either operate in LMIC or join the team at the Netherlands office. It is expected that this would stimulate partnering with partners and (new) networks in the Global South as well – which is one of the ambitions of NFP according to the self-evaluation.

## **D. Future outlook**

### **13. The mandate of NFP needs to be strengthened**

Various interviewees recommended to strengthen the mandate of NFP vis-à-vis partnerships and coalitions initiation. This recommendation was done because centrifugal forces often lurk, especially where competition between partners can be at stake, transaction costs are felt as high, and coalitions are organized around risky, unpredictable transformation processes. Strengthening the mandate for the facilitation and backbone roles of NFP will counterbalance these forces and help creating efficiency and impact. NFP must act upon it, The Netherlands field and certainly powerful



actors in it, must allow ('gunnen') it and Ministries need to support it pro-actively in their various roles towards NFP (interlocutor with LMIC, actor in the Dutch Diamond, customer, sponsor). Next to power, strength comes with being able to provide incentives as well, including (access to) financial incentives for partnerships and coalitions.

#### **14. Intervening in system transformations or lower-level targets?**

Although most interviewees appreciate the ToC as a usual framework, several of them considered it too generic, lacking measurable or tangible results. Questions were raised about the purpose of such food system transformations, whether there are specific food system outcomes ('sustainable agriculture') that fit well Netherlands ODA policy or concrete result areas ('farmers access to improved seeds') which can be achieved with inputs by Netherlands agencies and companies. These questions are related to the level of intervention envisaged by NFP: at national levels, engaging in policy dialogues, contributing to the quality of the transformation processes and/or lower levels such as sectors, sub-sectors or even individual companies and agencies, with impact on households and individuals. It is recommended to maintain the overall ambition of contributing to food system transformations, but to seek specific domains and topics of focus and balance between general process facilitation and achieving lower-level tangible outcomes.

#### **15. Connecting to national food system transformation processes**

A food system transformation interface requires (a) continuous insights in- and monitoring of such national processes, (b) capacities to operate at high-level policy dialogues and (c) sound understanding of what Netherlands parties have to offer and in which format. As to the latter, there are multiple modes of making knowledge and expertise available to meet the needs by parties involved in food system transformations; partnerships and coalitions are just two of such service delivery modes. NFP will have to assess which modes are most effective in delivering a particular service. Moreover, NFP will have to assess what kinds of partnerships and coalitions, if considered effective, are needed: closed agreements between selective parties based on complementarity and highest quality, or broad and open coalitions. To go beyond 'bringing parties together', NFP will need the mandate to intervene, coordinate and even manage a coalition or partnership in its early stages of development. It needs to be checked whether such a mandate is embraced by the wider stakeholder landscape in The Netherlands. Moreover, creating more selective modes of coalition or partnerships may conflict with the assumed broad willingness to share knowledge and cooperate, and be opposed by corporate policies inspired by competition and optimizing financial turn-over.

#### **16. The governance of NFP needs representation of where NFP envisages the change**

The Supervisory Board of NFP is balanced in its careful composition of representatives of the Dutch Diamond – the main beneficiaries among stakeholders in the Netherlands.

NFP has two major funders, MoFA and MoA and is sponsored by the IKEA Foundation as well. To date, it is not fully transparent how NFP relates to Dutch policies of MoA and MoFA. The apparent dualism between funders and beneficiaries could be more explicitly clarified by NFP. Is NFP an independent agency, unbound by government policy or does it have functional relationships as executor of government policy?

Whereas change is aspired in LMIC, representation of the Global South in the Supervisory Board is non-existing. It is recommended to consider including experts with their origin in LMIC.

## To conclude

In summary we recommend NFP to further qualify food system transformations and reach out to actors who are at the forefront of sustainable and equitable change; and with that, prove its' credibility as Netherlands actor.

The ToC of NFP is solid. In the coming years NFP should monitor critically whether assumptions remain relevant, notably where they affect efficiency gains and impacts which feature prominently in the ToC. Regular learning loops on *where* and *how* to intervene, is suggested to be the other point of attention.

From the self-evaluation and the interviews we conclude that performance to date by NFP has been satisfactory. We take into account that transformation into NFP took time and worldwide circumstances under C-19 regimes were challenging. Community engagement services were well noted whereby NFP creates synergies and breaks down silos. The convenor role of partnerships and coalitions and the provider of backbone support is valued and the invitation is to substantiate it further.

Linking the needs in national food systems transformations in LMIC to (coalitions of) agencies and companies in The Netherlands is crucial for NFP. Related activities and connections need to be intensified and capacities to perform by NFP to be strengthened. Recruiting more senior staff with their origin in LMIC where change is assumed to take place, might bring in new perspectives. We recommend to maintain the overall ambition of contributing to food system transformations, but to seek specific domains and topics to balance between general process facilitation and achieving lower-level tangible outcomes.

NFP will need a mandate to intervene, coordinate and even orchestrate a partnership or coalition in its early stages of development without owning it, a delicate balancing act. NFP needs to check acceptance of this stronger mandate with the wider stakeholder community in The Netherlands.

We recommend to sharpen the governance of NFP, by clarifying the relation towards the Netherlands government (re. functional for or unbound). And by seeking presence of the Global South in the Supervisory Board of NFP.

We conducted this assignment with great interest. And observe that the promise that is confined in the NFP is taking shape. We recommend NFP to keep sharpening its pathways which will allow Netherlands stakeholders to contribute to food systems transformations in LMIC. We endorse that platforms, communities, partnerships and coalitions in which Netherlands parties participate and add value are effective instruments to make such contributions. And we hope that the findings in this report will help in further defining and implementing these pathways for food system change and sustainable, scalable innovations.

## Annex 1. List of Interviewees

1. Rene van Hell and Wijnand van Ijssel	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Director Inclusive Green Growth Senior Policy Officer
2. Marcel van Nijnatten	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality	Coordinator Food security Unit
3. Marjo Baeten	HAS University of Applied Sciences	Director International Projects
4. Rasoul D. Mikkelsen	Royal Eijkelpark	Director Strategic Business Development Africa and Asia
5. Marcel Beukeboom	VN Food and Agriculture Rome	Permanent Representative to the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations in Rome
6. Peter Zoutewelle	CARE	Project Manager
7. Nanya Burki	Nuffic Neso Indonesia	Head of Development & Partnerships
8. Trix van Hoof	Nuffic Global	Coordinator Stakeholder Engagement & Public Affairs
9. Kristina Roing de Nowina	CGIAR	Deputy Director Funder and External Engagement
10. Stella Lutalo	PELUM Oost Afrika	Country Coordinator
11. Martien van Nieuwkoop	World Bank Group	Global Director Agriculture and Food
12. Dick Hylkema	NAO – Netherlands Potato Organisation	Director
13. Suzanne van Tilburg and Ruerd Ruben	Supervisory Board NFP	Chair Member

## Annex 2. Consulted documents

- NFP 2030 Stakeholder interviews, 2021
- NFP Annual Plan 2021 and 2022
- NFP Annual Reports 2020 and 2021
- NFP Concept Note Break-fast: bridging experience, actions, and knowledge for accelerated food system transformation, 2022
- NFP Customer profiles, 2021
- NFP Indicator framework and monitoring and review guide, 2022
- NFP Mid-Term-Review Self-Evaluation, 2022
- NFP Powerpoint general, 2021
- NFP Profile, 2020
- NFP Theory of Change, 2021
- Overview of collective impact coalitions currently supported by NFP, 2022
- Stakeholder interviews for Midterm Review NFP, 2022
- This is NFP, 2019
- ToR Midterm Review NFP, 2022

# Mid-Term-Review Self-Evaluation

## Introduction

This document presents the results of the self-evaluation of the NFP's performance during the period January 2020 - April 2022, which is part of the mid term review (MTR) conducted by external evaluators on the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The formation of the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) was formally announced on World Food Day, October 2019. As a result, 2020 became a transition year for AgriProFocus (APF) and the consortium of APF, WCDI and The Broker for the Food and Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) initiative to merge into the new organisation NFP.

The MTR was conducted by two external evaluators. Upon their request, and in mutual agreement with MoFA IGG staff, the MTR was based on a retrospective self-evaluation by NFP staff. For this evaluation we used the findings of several reflections, learnings, planning and implementation cycles that were organised by NFP in 2021 and 2022. NFP participated in a process of self-reflection and learning, and facilitated the MTR by providing information that is being used by the evaluators to reflect on the performance of the organisation, as well as the formulation of conclusions/recommendations.

The self-evaluation was focused on three key questions: what went well, which lessons have been learned and what can be improved? For the reflection, the following sources were used:

- Annual report 2020 and Annual plan 2021
- Annual report 2021 and Annual plan 2022
- Outcome team reflection on results Q1 and Q2 2021
- Interview minutes of stakeholder interviews conducted in Oct-Nov 2021 for the development of the TOC 2030
- Self-reflection session for the period Jan 2020- April 2022 with a representative number of NFP staff members with a monitoring and reporting lead.
- Feedback of consortium members The Broker and WCDI on the NFP staff self-evaluation

This document starts by illustrating NFP's planning, monitoring and learning cycle the organisation has been taking care of since it started. Subsequently, it zooms in on the content of the future strategy, theory of change, and the insights from interviews with key stakeholders that contributed to that

strategy. And finally, it contains a reflection (self-assessment) on the starting phase of NFP complemented by highlights of the Annual Reports of 2020 and 2021.

## Planning, monitoring, learning cycle

Planning, monitoring and learning has been an integral part of our way of working since NFP started operating. In 2020 the work of AgriProFocus<sup>4</sup> (APF) and Knowledge Programme for Food Security (KP) was finalised. Preparatory work was carried out in close coordination with the NFP Steering Committee and consortium partners WCDI and The Broker, to transition towards the formal registration of NFP, including the installation of the new governance structure and the annual plan ambitions of 2021. In December 2020 closing events / activities were organised for KP in The Netherlands, and for APF in the countries with local APF offices. The most important outcomes of APF's and KP's work were also documented during this transition phase.

In January 2021 the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) was formally registered and started implementing the new ambitions as defined in the annual plan 2020. Until December 2022 NFP will receive funds from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (MoAgri., - Both sources of funding are from the existing APF and KP contracts, together with separate funding from the IKEA Foundation. During this period we focussed on delivering on the ambitions defined in the two subsequent annual plans (2021 and 2022). In doing so, we created multiple internal and external reflections, as well as learning and strategizing events that have contributed to the improvement of our short and long term strategic vision, planning and positioning.

It was a milestone for NFP to reach an agreement with MoFA and Min LNV to submit an annual plan that included all the ambitions that are supported by MoFA, Min LNV and IKEA Foundation. The results from 2021 were presented by NFP in a report, which was submitted to each Ministry. The Annual planning and reporting cycle for 2022 is being managed in the same way.

Halfway through 2021, we organised a team meeting to evaluate the results of the first semester. We realised that we had been working on many different initiatives, as well as the development of staff skills and the improvement of internal procedures. We also defined three key priorities of our work for the second semester: more focus on working towards outcomes fuelled by NFP outputs, more focus on engaging local parties from low and middle income countries, and giving priority to delivering on planned activities above responding to new requests for which we were often being approached. As a result of these new insights, the internal work plan 2021 was updated for the second semester with a clearer

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<sup>4</sup> The lessons of APF are collected in a [reflective review](#) and [magazine](#). Lessons of F&BKP are captured in this [evaluation report](#).

focus on expected outcomes and LMIC engagement. The monitoring framework was also improved, which resulted in the collection and documentation of higher quality outcome information in the annual report 2021.

Parallel to the implementation of our annual plan ambitions, we also started a strategizing process that resulted in a clear TOC for the NFP strategy 2023-2030. This process started in May 2021 with three brainstorming sessions, with a number of key representatives from the Dutch Diamond and members of the Supervisory Council. Based on the outcomes of these sessions we developed value propositions for 4 key customer groups:

1. Food and nutrition security (FNS) specialists at MoFA, Min LNV and the EKNs
2. Country Directors and FNS program directors of Dutch INGOs offices based in LMICs (example: SNV, Agriterre and Solidaridad)
3. Country Directors and FNS Programme Directors of multilateral organisation offices based in LMIC's (FAO, SUN)
4. Directors of private sector platforms representing SMEs, cooperatives and financial institutes with a focus on LMIC (for example Topsector, NABC, Plantum)

Each of these customer groups enables us to deliver on our purpose and the outcome areas defined in our TOC. The first group enables us to strive for an optimal FNS policy, by providing opportunities to connect policy and practice and opportunities to implement this through the EKN. These are important actors in influencing the enabling environment in The Netherlands, in LMICs and in some cases at a multilateral level. The second and third customer groups are interested in our network of knowledge and expertise that's held within the Dutch Diamond, and are important for us as they are responsible for the implementation of projects. NFP is not an implementing agency but enables implementing agencies to improve synergy and complement accelerated innovation. The fourth group of private sector platforms enables us to reach out to the private sector in a more effective way as working on a one to one basis creates high transaction costs. The involvement of the private sector is important to reach more long term and self-sustaining changes.

From Sept-Dec 2021 we organised multiple sessions to develop the NFP Theory of Change for 2030. As part of this process, we conducted interviews with representatives of the four customer groups between Oct-Nov 2021. The insights of these interviews were used to finalise the TOC and for the development of the Annual plan 2022. In April 2022 MoFA and Min LNV invited NFP to develop our proposal for funding for the period up to 2030. The first step in this process was the formulation of a Concept Note (CN), which builds on our learnings from the past two years and the design of our TOC.

An important insight of this strategizing process was the (re)confirmation that NFP is an intermediary organisation that contributes to food system processes. We contribute to food system transformation in LMICs by strengthening the Food System transformation community in priority countries and the Netherlands. In doing so, we contribute to: enhanced synergy and complementarity, accelerated innovation, enhanced scaling and an improved enabling environment for food system transformation.

Our self-evaluation is based on the findings generated by this continuous process of planning, monitoring, reflecting and strategising. We feel proud of what has been achieved already, but we are also aware of the multiple opportunities of areas of improvement. It is important to remember that this is only the second year that NFP has been operating. We reflect on the work in progress of a journey towards being the trusted convening partner on food system transformation in LMICs for Dutch Diamond parties and relevant actors.

## Insights interviews key stakeholders

As part of the TOC development for the NFP Strategy 2030, stakeholders representing the four key customer groups were interviewed. These interviews resulted in the following insights:

### **Stakeholders recognise NFPs added value to partnership development and a knowledge-policy interface**

From the interviews it became clear that different customer groups have different focus areas and needs. In addition, expectations regarding NFP's role vary within each customer group and the result is a long list of what the food systems community would like NFP to do. That being said, the feedback from customer groups revealed that they have an interest in receiving support in precompetitive partnership development processes, backbone support for specific impact coalitions and the need to receive NFP's support in creating practical knowledge on food system transformation in an LMIC context, that can be shared with a wider audience. Connecting/bridging stakeholders is recognised as the core of NFPs work. Stakeholders also indicated the importance of receiving support in policy dialogues, lobbying towards policy makers and knowledge sharing on food system transformation, whilst connecting knowledge to practice is key.

### **Stakeholders recognise the added value of NFP as a backbone for impact coalition development and practical learning**

Most stakeholders acknowledge NFP's purpose: collective impact and food system transformation are considered positive components. Furthermore NFPs role is recognised as a convener. However,

stakeholders indicated that the convening role and added value of services NFP provides, needs further clarification. They reflected that the core business of NFP is to inspire and connect. How do you keep partners together and move collectively to action? It depends on the agenda of a coalition, what you will do: e.g. capacity building, or engagement. Major tasks would be faced by the coalitions, which requires process support and refining what coalition's common interests are, what is their inspiration and what their agenda could become. Once the needs of the coalition have been identified, stakeholders stressed that NFP needs to be a process facilitator/neutral enabler, whilst avoiding the framing of NFP as an implementing agency. Most stakeholders agreed that NFP should bring something unique to the field without adding to the pile of activities that are already in place. Questions raised included: "How is NFP positioned in the FST field?" and "Who are the target segments/key partners?", "What should NFP do/offer?". Included within the services mentioned that NFP could offer were: identifying and de-risking innovations relevant to scale, providing the network and strategic guidance for the FST sector, training for entrepreneurs and identifying key drivers for successful partnerships. This confirmed our role in a precompetitive partnership initiation process, by providing backbone support to impact coalition development. Stakeholders also recommended that NFP should avoid adding new reports, whilst instead making information available and accessible in a digestible format, e.g. writing 2-pagers from lengthy documents.

### **The importance of convening: be the backbone organisation**

From the interviews it became clear that NFP should not develop its own agenda but support others to define and act upon their agenda. In LMICs NFP facilitates an impact agenda building on local priority agendas defined in specific national food system pathways, SDG priority areas and climate change agendas. Ownership is key. Stakeholders also advised that NFP should:

- Further develop strategies to strengthen the link between the Dutch Diamond and LMICs, as well as how NFP connects with local stakeholders and initiatives.
- Avoid language that makes the audience think NFP realises ambitions by itself; be clear that results for beneficiaries happen by implementing (coalition) participants.
- Help to create insights on funding opportunities, including business models that go beyond grant based funding.
- Design how coalitions are developed and how to streamline from many initiatives to a few coalitions NFP that can support.
- Develop an exit strategy for NFP support, and help to define and share lessons learned in coalition development processes.

### **What partnerships could look like**

Stakeholders feedback on the question of what a partnership with NFP could look like ranged from sharing knowledge and experience on coalition building, to following up on national pathways and impact



coalitions on food waste, nutrition and climate change. Ten examples of potential partnerships involving NFP were mentioned:

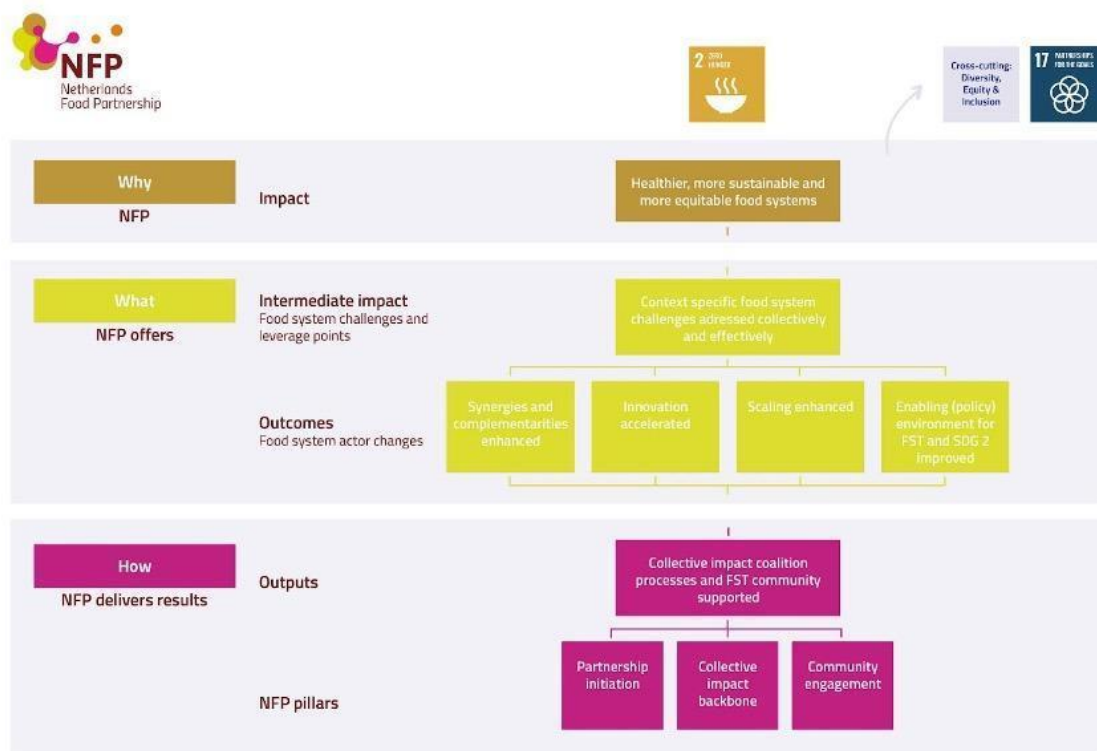
1. Organising a Community of Practice on failures in Food System Transformation.
2. Engaging Dutch experts and practitioners in horti, potato and the dairy sector.
3. Collaborating to improve the quality of national pathways in priority countries IGG.
4. Facilitating policy dialogues in the NL on the international food security agenda.
5. Creating oversight on the Africa ambitions of Dutch private sector platforms.
6. Contributing to the policy dialogue of the international FS agenda and comparative advantage of the Dutch diamond.
7. Connecting with local stakeholders and between networks, e.g. ECDPM.
8. Providing oversight of various Food system models (e.g. WUR-CDI, Aid Environment).
9. Regional collaboration with neighbouring Dutch embassies, with a special focus on exchange and learning.
10. Early stage coalition building: creating trust, a shared agenda and an action plan.

These examples are inspirational and NFP could explore whether sufficient stakeholders show interest and commit themselves to forming a partnership or coalition.

## NFP Theory of Change and Concept Note

The strategizing process from May-Nov 2021 combined with progressing insights from NFPs course and activities in 2020-2021, resulted in a Theory of Change (ToC) vision paper. The document describes how NFP aims to support Collective Impact Coalitions (CIC's) and the Food Systems Transformation (FST) community, in their efforts to contribute to healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food systems. This in turn will ultimately influence the SDGs, with SDG 2 in particular. This vision paper was developed with feedback and input from NFP's key stakeholders during a series of workshops and interviews. As a result NFP was able to define:

- The current food and nutrition security situation, why a food systems lens is needed and the context providing the basis for the NFP 2030 strategy.
- The proposed strategy, including the Theory of Change for NFP (see graph 1)
- How NFP aims to support CIC's and the FST community to collectively address key challenges in the food systems.
- Value propositions for different stakeholder groups.
- How the NFP strategy contributes to the Dutch policy framework.
- NFP's potential key partners and a first overview of their roles in the new strategy.



Graph 1. NFP Theory of Change 2030

The next step after finalising the ToC vision paper was to write the concept note formulating longer term ambitions of NFP, which was submitted to IGG and LNV in early May 2022. It covers NFP’s objectives, positioning and envisioned services and activities for the next seven years. The “Why” of NFP is refined into:

The neutral position of NFP enables us to convene and foster the potential of world-leading Dutch knowledge and expertise on food and agriculture to contribute to food system challenges in LMICs, thereby improving the connections between food system actors, knowledge and know-how in complex environments. NFP builds on a legacy of strong networks in LMICs, allowing it to be a broker between Dutch and LMIC food systems actors. By focusing on pre-competitive collaborations, NFP is able to aim for collective impact rather than isolated impact that is subject to competition for financing. In other words, making the pie bigger rather than supporting partnerships to gain a bigger piece of the pie.

Taking the above learnings into account NFP has further refined its services. In the concept note, the convening capacity has been made more explicit by showing that NFP offers two mutually reinforcing services:

1. Coalition development:
  - a. Partnership initiation support
  - b. Backbone services to collective impact coalitions
2. Community engagement

In terms of delivery, NFP has taken on board that ambitions need to be made more explicit and in line with capacity. In that regard, another improvement is that per service area long term ambitions for 2030 are outlined as follows:

### Coalition development

- **Partnership initiation support:** By 2030 NFP will have facilitated the initiation of approximately **100 multi-stakeholder partnerships**
- Annually NFP will define based upon experience and demand, the critical themes and the outcomes that NFP will contribute towards, according to the outcome areas mentioned in the ToC.
- **Backbone support to collective impact coalitions:** In the period 2023-2030, NFP will support at least **40 Collective Impact Coalitions** for food system transformation in LMICs.
- This support includes support to **common agenda setting and effective linkages**, to the roll out of **mutually aligned activities and shared measurement**, with **communication and external dialogue**, and with **strengthening capacities**.

### Community engagement

- NFP will offer resources via a 'Knowledge Management Facility' (250K/year delivering **10 knowledge products**), to empower stakeholders to initiate co-creation activities, of which the results feed into programmes and policies including better business models ('knowledge@work').
- NFP will **inspire at least 20.000 (future) agrifood professionals** with food system thinking and other new topics, which are important for the forward-looking food systems transformation agenda.
- NFP will also test new (web3) internet applications, identify emerging demands, co-organise online and blended learning trajectories and map the results for agrifood professionals and uptake from their organisations. This will be supported by managing a professional **online platform** (website and interactive platforms).
- NFP will increase its **policy engagement and agenda setting** role in e.g. UN and AU settings, and the support to local food system dialogues and agro-food summits. In relation to this NFP will collaborate with a strategic number and variety of **strategic networks**.

# Self-assessment NFP starting phase

At the start of the evaluation meeting held on 16 May, a timeline was built by a delegation of NFP staff including key milestones, events and results from the starting phase of NFP from January 2020 to April 2022. Reflecting on this timeline, participants asked themselves: what went well, which lessons have been learned and what can be improved? These findings were shared with the directors of WCDI and The Broker. Their feedback on the assessment is included in the text below.

## What went well?

In annex 1 a table is provided that gives the overview of NFP supported initiatives per pillar (NFP broad objective) and per service area. For each initiative key outputs (NFP delivery) are mentioned. In addition, an overview is given of the outcomes that NFP has contributed towards through its delivery. Based upon this overview, a number of tentative conclusions can be drawn. In this next section we reflect on these results.

**Evolving towards a transformational partnership** with LNV, IGG and IKEA foundation on Food System Transformation in LMICs. As a result of strategic account management, whilst grasping opportunities that were created for us by the ministries, strong connections have been made with both LNV and IGG. Three examples of expanding these relationships include: (1) our joint work on the preparations for the UN Food System Summit including NFPs participation in the Dutch delegation for the FSS Presummit, (2) our support to the development of knowledge and innovation agendas for both Ministries and (3) engaging FNS experts from MoFA and LNV at different institutional levels from agricultural councillors to policy makers. In addition, the relationships with Topsector Horticulture and Food, SDG NL, PSD, Wageningen UR were intensified to create more synergy on mobilising networks, knowledge development and sharing, and creating opportunities for collaboration.

The commitment of LNV/IGG, including the appointment of a new Executive Director, resulted in **improved profiling/positioning of NFP** within the FST community both in the Netherlands, priority countries in the Global South as well as multilateral institutes such as FAO/ WB and CGIAR. The newly developed theory of change provides a **clearer value proposition of NFP as well as well defined outcome areas**.

**NFP strategically benefited from the UN Food System Summit dynamic, by strengthening its position within the Dutch diamond ecosystem, whilst obtaining updated insights on the key priorities for Food system transformation in LMICs towards 2030.** NFP organised monthly Dutch diamond stakeholder meetings to discuss the developments related to the FSS preparations and the position of the Dutch government towards the FSS agenda, which enabled parties to get involved in dialogues and game

changing initiatives. This also allowed NFP to position itself as a strategic convener in the Dutch ecosystem of parties involved in Food System transformation in LMICs. Additionally, the organisation of the country and thematic dialogues and the call for game changing initiatives by the UN, has created a clear compass. NFP now uses this information to support coalitions that want to work in certain country contexts.

**Demand driven approach delivering results connected to stakeholder needs in The Netherlands, LMICs and in some cases globally.** Despite NFP being in its start-up phase, ample outputs have been achieved (see Annual Reports 2020 and 2021). Some examples include: providing backbone support to at least 10 impact coalitions (including NEADAP, YALTA, GUFÉ, SeedNL, Digital ecosystem for Smallholder farmers, Potato Sector, Skills for Horticulture, Soil Health, True Value in a LMIC context, saline food system), activities for COPs (Food & Stability, Digital4Agriculture) hosting meetings and co-convening an independent dialogue on multi stakeholder platforms for the UN Food System Summit, facilitating the NL-CGIAR Partnership, and organising e-courses on food systems in collaboration with Wageningen University. The organisation of stakeholder events, such as the those leading up to the UNFSS, World Food Day event, and local stakeholder events in various countries (Benin, Tanzania, Indonesia, Ghana), enables NFP to create a platform through which it convenes relevant stakeholders and contributes to agenda-setting on pressing food system challenges. In addition, NFP has taken up strategic initiatives on the request of LNV/MoFA: e.g. ClimeEAT, Digitalisation scan and support on SKIA.

**NFP is recognised as a convener in two ways.** NFP contributes to agenda setting in Food System Transformation in LMICs, by **strengthening the science-policy interface** in the field. An example is the role NFP plays in the NL-CGIAR Strategic Partnership, a global partnership engaged in research in food security. NFP has also convened **the development and implementation of coalitions, partnerships and communities of practice**. The result is a line-up of 10 strategic impact coalitions that appreciate and benefit from our backbone role. The uptake of new impact coalitions was both demand-driven (partners approached NFP) as well as NFP proactiveness, in signalling challenges and identifying opportunities for collaboration. Overall, it has been recognised that there is high demand from stakeholders contacting NFP for support. NFP's network is used to carry out work together, e.g. external knowledge parties and consultants were deployed to deliver expertise, organise events and boost agendas. The collaboration with our F&BKP consortium partners WCDI and TB have been crucial in engaging in an agile way, high quality experts both in The Netherlands, as well as in LMICs where we have been active.

Our choice to position ourselves as **backbone support to collective impact coalitions**, and focus on delivering the key backbone services, has been recognised in all the 10 coalitions we are currently supporting. The characteristics of the coalitions in which we recently engaged are no longer sector

focused, but aim at food system challenges, such as climate and food, digital ecosystem services for smallholder development, and soil fertility.

**Internal capacity development** has been focused on building knowledge and experience, whilst assuming this backbone support role towards impact coalitions. There has been recognition by partners in NFPs role within this capacity. It is a positive development and NFP has made a further shift in focus, Food Security to Food System Transformation. Knowledge brokering, events, capacity strengthening are all now geared towards becoming a means to that end. Contributing to system change and scale are also now key in NFPs' profile and internal capacity development.

**Collaboration with LMIC partners and building on their demand and opportunities.** Dissolving the local network of APF country networks and travel restrictions due to Covid 19, created challenges for collaborating closely with LMIC parties. Nevertheless, our network of locally based parties (Dutch INGOS, companies, local NGOs, local SMEs and local knowledge institutes) enabled us to continue being involved in local backbone support to various coalitions. Good examples are NEADAP in East Africa which focuses on dairy for nutrition security and local economic development, GUFÉ which contributes to the Ghana Urban food movement, as well as Skills for Horticulture, which is focused on strengthening local capacity for horticulture sector development in Tanzania. Additionally, our collaboration with IKEAa Foundation on Youth engagement in agro ecological initiatives in East Africa proved to be an excellent opportunity to redefine our roles in local coalition development. In each of the four countries, we defined collaboration agreements with locally based reliable partners who are responsible for the administration of locally spent funds and the implementation of activities. NFP convenes the overall project management, and contributes to the strengthening of collaboration among the partners, learning processes and policy influencing activities that contribute to stronger engagement of youth in changing the enabling environment. Hands-on knowledge sharing activities such as our e-courses on Food System transformation which we deliver in collaboration with Wageningen UR, together with the change maker challenge organised by Neso/ Indonesia for South East Asia, provided a great opportunity to create more visibility for our work with new FST community members.

## What lessons did we learn?

### **NFP adds value to early stage coalition development and institutional strengthening processes**

The NFP mandate of being a neutral platform for convening collaboration for food system transformation has been recognised by Dutch diamond parties and organisations in LMICs that work on food system changes. The support of MoFA and Min LNV policy officers in communicating this mandate to their network, and inviting NFP to assume this neutral convenor role in important international policy engagement processes such as the UNFSS presummit, were crucial in the communication and acceptance of our position to Dutch Diamond parties. They now reach out to us for: information on food

system transformation, support for scoping and network building in the early stage of coalition development, and back bone support to coalitions to catalyse their ambitions. The stakeholder interviews confirmed the demand for these services, and their request to NFP to assume these roles.

**Transitioning to a new purpose and approach requires capacity building** The introduction of the collective impact coalition paradigm in the annual plan 2021 contributed to clearer performance indicators, focus on the NFP approach of convening coalition development processes, and the internal and external communication of our USPs. The internal transition required to reach capacity on this approach, has been planned for in the annual plan and budget for 2021 and 2022.

- It takes time and the support of external experts to organise capacity development activities, and also requires the engagement of new team members to build mutual understanding of the new purpose and approach, as well as sufficient capacity to deliver on it. As a convener it is not necessary to have all the skills within our own team.
- The services that NFP provides require more coalition building skills. These are still new for some staff, e.g. affiliation with private sector organisations, their networks, challenges and an entrepreneurial attitude. Moreover, whilst old ways of working for existing staff are challenged, new staff need to understand the context while bringing in new skills.
- NFP needs to be agile and able to respond to multiple demands for which investing in skilled staff and well organised operational systems is necessary. For each activity we have to consider what specific external expertise is needed and involve experts, since we cannot cover all the different themes, sectors and networks.
- We also discovered that limited capacity on communication, events, and secretarial support has been a bottleneck for employees to perform activities in an efficient manner. One of our strengths towards the future is to have a flexible pool of experts in The Netherlands and the Global South with whom we can work closely together.

Community engagement activities, knowledge brokering and policy dialogues are a key to building new partnerships. Community engagement and coalition development processes are intertwined and have provided the following learnings from the start-up phase:

- NFP support should by its nature be temporary and aimed at strengthening initiatives in such a way that they can thrive independently. As such, the longer term owners of the envisioned change should already be in the lead at a very early stage. To avoid NFP remaining with stakeholders indefinitely, it is important to consciously plan and balance ownership for CoP's, partnership initiation and collective impact coalitions.
- NFP should not engage in acquisition processes in order to maintain its neutral position towards a bigger audience of food system transformation actors. However, NFP can contribute to this by providing information on (public) funding opportunities to de-risk the development of a partnership. This can be an important driver to move from an idea for partnership to a clear

commitment before an impact coalition can be established. NFP has learned that by participating strategically in national and international policy processes it can efficiently and effectively connect to stakeholder agendas, help to create an overview in complex processes (example Food System Summit in 2021), and on that basis increase the effectiveness of policy engagement. NFP's collaboration with multilaterals requires endorsement and support from ministries, and a close collaboration with permanent representatives in New York, Rome and EKNs. All this helps to position NFP as a sounding board for a diverse and complex landscape of actors that try to contribute to food system transformation.

- The EKN support facility poses a great opportunity for NFP and the EKNs to contribute towards precompetitive processes of partnership initiation on food system transformation. The added value of NFP is in countries/regions where The Netherlands prioritises on the nexus of Aid and Trade, and where FNS experts and Agricultural attached to the EKN, observe a strategic programmatic approach. The COVID restrictions hampered the possibilities to support and engage in incoming and outgoing missions and as a result limited the engagement in new early stage partnership initiation processes. This will be different in 2022, because the opening of borders and reactivation of long distance travelling has enabled NFP staff to already actively contribute to incoming missions from Bangladesh, Nigeria and Kenya, and outgoing missions to Indonesia and Egypt in Q1.
- Community engagement activities, knowledge brokering and policy dialogues are helpful in building a network of interested parties and to build NFPs reputation as a recognised convenor. This requires an agile way of working to respond to multiple demands, fast and with appreciated services. Working with digital tools and online platforms is part of this agile approach.

### **Measuring the impact of intermediary organisations is challenging**

During this start-up phase we have developed a clear Theory of Change with clear outcomes that are within the sphere of influence of the organisation. We also improved our monitoring framework, IATI indicators and the data collection and data processing method. This helped to monitor and identify quality results in terms of outputs and outcomes, also reported in our annual report 2021.

The key question here is: "Do NFP results create value for our stakeholders?" We deliver a significant amount of output for stakeholders - in line with what we planned - and we have made a difference for stakeholders in setting a collective agenda and in building stronger and new linkages to complement each other's strengths. In a substantial number of cases, NFP has added value to coalitions by supporting them in the roll out of mutually aligned activities in specific pilots, countries and programmes. Overall we received positive feedback that stakeholders have been able to increase their understanding and capacity to apply a food systems approach and are better able to engage in policy dialogue as a result of NFP support.



These are intermediary outcomes that fit with a facilitating organisation which form a basis for stakeholders to take up and apply to their (collective) work. We already see that stakeholders through NFP's emphasis on enhancing synergies have been able to influence the enabling environment especially in The Netherlands. However outcomes in terms of accelerated innovation and enhanced scale are still anecdotal and require further attention.

In line with the collective impact approach, we can improve the data collection on these outcome levels by focussing more on shared measurement within partnerships. In doing so, we can show that the outcomes achieved are partly due to the support provided by NFP. In other words, prove that working with NFP makes a difference. However, we have to be aware that evidence of collective impact will always remain a big challenge for an organisation such as NFP, as the real impact is being created by the work done by the coalition partners.

### **Collaborations with LMIC require strategic collaboration agreements with locally based implementing organisations**

In this start-up phase a large part of NFPs attention and capacity was absorbed by LNV/IGG and Dutch based diamond parties. In addition, dissolving the local AgriProFocus structure in combination with COVID travel restrictions created more distance to the food system community in LMICs. The focus on NL partners is in line with the mission of NFP - connecting the Dutch Diamond landscape better to work on collective impact in the Global South. However, the current emphasis on Dutch based organisations should not overshadow the facilitation of diamond parties in building action oriented coalitions to make a difference in food system transformation in LMICs, such as private companies, NGOs, and investors. Facilitating local stakeholders to build coalitions does not require NFPs local presence but good working relationships with EKNs, excellent local or regional (knowledge) institutes and consultancies, key intermediary organisations, private sector organisations, as well as local WBG and FAO departments. We need to convene NL stakeholders that focus on implementation in LMICs, understand and work from the local context, have strong local partners and relationships with policymakers, etc. (e.g. NEADAP, YALTA, GUFÉ). The customer profile exercise helped us to create more clarity on key actors in the LMIC context, with which we should have strategic partnership relations in order to maintain, renew and enable the local network of key actors to benefit. In early 2022 NFP started to approach these actors more strategically, and are currently in the midst of developing opportunities for collaboration with these parties and organisations.

It is important to reflect on the governance structure for future programming and positioning of the NFP agenda. Currently the F&BKP consortium work is being delivered based on agreements defined within a consortium agreement. Whereas a way forward could be that WCDI/ WUR, The Broker and other strategic partners contribute to NFP on a subcontracting basis.

### **A convening platform needs an independent sounding board**

**During NFP's initial phase**, the membership structure of APF was dissolved. The positioning of NFP as a convening platform requires strategic account management, as well as a clear and simple description of what NFP is (aim, identity), what it offers (approach and value proposition), together with consistent repetition across all communications. In addition, it requires a clear connection, approval and empowerment of the food system transformation community in The Netherlands (Dutch Diamond, as well as the relevant diamond parties in LMICs in order to contribute to significant change. The initiation of a sounding board or advisory committee as part of the governance structure provides information from the ecosystem to the organisation, as well as engagement and acceptance from the network.

### **What can be improved?**

#### **Strengthening existing and engaging in new LMIC networks**

We have taken advantage of our existing LMIC network, which we can further strengthen and renew by:

- Strengthening customer relations with EKNs and local based Dutch NGOs in focus countries.
- Generating partnership initiation leads and coalition backbone support on the ground.
- Developing a stable connection with key LMIC partners to enable regular iterations on relevant demand and support.
- Provide knowledge products on FST in LMICs: mapping local opportunities and constraints for Food System Transformation and converting FSS outcomes, national pathways, climate change commitments into local context maps.
- After closing the Agri-hubs, local presence should be revitalised to regain a regional perspective. The transfer of administrative and local implementation responsibilities to local partners has shown positive results. This approach can be further amplified.

#### **Amplify mechanisms to identify new leads for partnership initiation and impact coalitions**

To build a pipeline for new impact coalitions, we need to reach out to a more diverse group of actors inside and outside the Netherlands. NFP can support public agencies with the formulation of calls for proposals of PPP and help to define relevant thematic or geographical challenges or opportunities to which PPPs can respond. Developing an efficient way to provide information about funding opportunities will also be appreciated by parties that intend to engage new coalitions.

#### **Positioning and visibility of NFP**

A clear communication strategy of the current three NFP pillars (Collective Impact Coalitions/Partnership Initiation/Community Engagement - see Concept Note) helps to position NFP. This is being worked on in 2022 by developing an online platform, the further activation of social media, and shared communication on events and results obtained together with the parties we work together with. . The design and

activation of a strategic sounding board can contribute to improved reputation, recognition, positioning and visibility of NFP.

NFP needs to walk a fine line between being 'neutral' in its strategy and implementation and satisfying demands from the Ministries who fund NFP to support the Dutch policy line. For example, in consultations around UNFSS some actors perceived NFP as biased towards supporting the process, not paying enough attention to potential flaws. Reflection on NFPs positionality therefore remains an ongoing priority.

### **Future proof internal operations**

In 2021 NFP invested substantially in its internal operations and is now making sure that internal operational capacity is future proof by the end of 2022. Outcome focused planning needs to be integrated in all NFP activities, from coalition building to COPs and community engagement. The internal working conditions and relations can be further improved.

### **Always try to create synergy and complementarity with strategic partners**

Despite some administrative hurdles, in terms of development and implementation of NFP, the collaboration between NFP and the consortium partners for the F&BKP work has been successful. Core team members from The Broker and WCDI were seconded to NFP, providing both short-term and longer-term flexible capacity. These staff members contributed to the development of NFP by thinking along, trying out, showcasing, and identifying how certain things are done. See the table below for some examples of results that WCDI and The Broker achieved, in collaboration with NFP.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Results</b>
Convening role around the FSS and around World Food Day	WCDI, NFP	Appreciation for the innovations in this event (creativity; diversity)
Commissioning of technical studies followed by network events	WCDI, NFP	Horticulture study, landscapes, dairy, monitoring framework, true potato
Connecting WUR knowledge with the NFP network.	WCDI, NFP	Food Security e-course, Webinars, sharing key publications
Ghana Urban Food Environments	The Broker, NFP	Project lead, engagement of local stakeholders, introducing knowledge partners

		to facilitate the share learnings from the coalition
Building communities of practice	The Broker, NFP	Briefing notes, Digital Agri-food Collective, Food security & stability
CGIAR ?	The Broker, NFP	Assuming an active secretariat role for the NL-Cgiar working group.
Development of knowledge products for core activities	The Broker, NFP	Flexibility guidance, right to food paper, GUFÉ quick scans
NFP approach development	The Broker, NFP	Collective Impact Approach

The relationship with the Ministries and EKNs has been well managed and is perceived as solid. The different strong points of the three consortium partners have complemented each other and it has been a valuable experience for The Broker team members to experience different approaches and methodologies. It was also nice to be appreciated for aspects that are 'normal' for The Broker team members in their work.

### Overall conclusions and priorities

The first steps in establishing NFP's positioning and operations have been accomplished successfully. Adjustments in strategy and activities took place based on learning-by-doing in 2020-2022, resulting in the current Concept Note for the period 2023-2030. In the meantime many outputs have been achieved ("The renovation will continue during the sale."). There has been strong recognition among food systems actors in NFP's efforts in areas such as policy engagement, strategic networks, linking knowledge and organisations and coalition support. This is illustrated by a growing demand for our services. Based on outcomes of the self-assessment, we see these priorities for the remainder of 2022:

- Building and strengthening connections to LMIC networks is a priority now and for the future.
- Start with the initiation of new collaborations of different kinds (coalitions, partnerships, CoPs, knowledge brokering and agenda setting with strategic networks) to keep the 'pipeline' of NFP's portfolio at a high level.
- Manage expectations by setting priorities and sharp value propositions per customer group: explicit messages about what we can/cannot offer.
- Communicate and position the unique identity, role and added value of NFP towards our customer groups. Clarify the difference between working with strategic partners and coalitions.

- Identify a way to share and amplify tangible outcomes of NFPs impact, e.g. contribution to science-policy interface, added value to coalitions, partnerships, CoPs, and strategic networks, including uptake evidence.
- Build on efforts to become an even more strategic partner for Ministries and Embassies.
- Build capacities of NFP staff to align with the skill set required for implementation of NFP strategy and make more use of external experts and consultants which bring in specific knowledge, experience and networks.

# Annex 1: Results NFP 2020 - 2021

## NFP pillars

**Out of** the supported initiatives roughly 50% fall under the Community Engagement component of NFPs work, whilst Partnership Initiation and Collective Impact Coalitions each represent 25%.

### 1. Community engagement:

- a. Knowledge brokering and networking have formed a key aspect of NFP's work. In 2020 support was provided to various partnerships for policy, research and education. This continued in 2021. Knowledge generation on food and nutrition security and food system change was supported in the Food and business research programme, as well as the NL-CGIAR partnership, resulting in new insights in key issues, the promotion of research based innovations and stronger liaison and synergy with international research.
- b. Through the support of the FNS policy coalition and foodFIRST, a contribution was provided to frontline (policy) debates in 2020, with an emphasis on the Dutch debate but also the preparations towards UNFSS. In 2021 the latter became all encompassing with NFP playing a key role as an effective convenor for Diamond stakeholders towards the summit. Capacity strengthening focussed on young professionals that were empowered by the Talent Pool and support to the YEP-programme, which together with focus on TVET contributes to building an educated next generation. These are processes that need long term support and continued into 2021

### 2. Partnership initiation

- a. In 2020 preparatory work was done on cross sector transformations. For some themes (Food & Stability, Food Systems, COVID-19) knowledge and experience exchange was organised under a 'Community of Practice' approach. This covered themes such as Youth and Circular Agriculture. This experience formed the groundwork to scope out new partnerships in these themes. In addition several projects supported the policy formulation of Embassies and Ministries by scopings and programming missions. Due to COVID-19 field work was subsequently severely hampered.

### 3. Collective impact coalitions

- a. In 2020 many activities related to transformation of agro-food sectors (Dairy, Horticulture, Seed and Potatoes) were delivered. The work emphasised joint analysis and sector visions. These sector activities formed an excellent starting point for coalitions contributing to food system change which were picked up in 2021. NFP planned to support 10 coalitions in 2021-2022 and has managed to already start with 8.

## NFP output

If we compare NFP outputs as reported through IATI the table below provides a quick overview on a few key indicators.

NFP delivery	outputs / outreach 2020	outputs / outreach 2021
# Events / meetings	241	131
# Knowledge products	48	185
# participants	27,585	5,822
# Unique co-organisers / partners	212	182

It is evident that the closing of APF country networks and lockdowns due to the pandemic, that participation for local events was relatively low during this period. We can also see this from the participation numbers. The strong link of NFP to a wide partner network through its support tracks is however a remaining feature. What is also interesting is that the focus on knowledge generation has become more pronounced.

## NFP outcomes

Although comparing 2020 and 2021 is hampered by the fact that APF/KP were winding down their former operations whilst transitioning to NFP, the table below gives an estimated comparison of how NFP services have contributed to its key outcome areas. The table shows that with the exception of “Scaling” all outcome areas have (slightly) increased. This shows the preparatory character of NFP during this period. and ensures the right stakeholders are connected. This in turn leverages processes for new insights and approaches which reinforce capacity to innovate and joint development to influence and change agendas.

NFP key outcome areas	Indicators	% of total delivery to outcome areas	
		2020	2021
Increased complementarity and synergy <sup>5</sup>	Effective linkages created	27%	29%
	Common agenda / vision established		
Scaling enhanced <sup>6</sup>	Mutually reinforcing activities enhanced	28%	16%

<sup>5</sup> Dubbed “Gathered the right people around transformative ideas” in 2020

<sup>6</sup> Dubbed : “Collected, connected and combined the knowledge of all involved stakeholders”

NFP key outcome areas	Indicators	% of total delivery to outcome areas	
	Shared measurement set-up		
<b>Accelerated Innovation<sup>7</sup></b>	Capacities / understanding enhanced	<b>35%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Improved Institutional Environment<sup>8</sup></b>	Policy dialogue and communication enhanced	<b>10%</b>	<b>18%</b>

A weak point is the actual alignment of activities in practice. The high score in 2020 is explained by the myriad of smaller local coalitions which were managed under APF and jointly tackled issues at a country level.

What's important is that NFP contributes through its delivery to all its key outcome areas with 'Accelerated Innovation' and 'Increased complementarity and synergy', by combining two thirds of total delivered outputs in 2021. These outcomes were relevant in themselves as well as conditional for the other two outcome areas i.e. 'Improved Institutional Environment' and 'Scaling Enhanced', which received the remaining third of NFPs support. While NFP scores highest on 'accelerated innovation', the various examples reported in previous chapters show that this is a mixed bag of individual stakeholders and organisations knowledge and perceptions being improved, as well as actual innovations being taken up.

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<sup>7</sup> Dubbed: "Organised reflection and learning" and "Created experimental space to prototype new approaches and solutions."

<sup>8</sup> Dubbed: "Demonstrated solutions and lobbying"



# Annex 2: Annual report 2020 and 2021 synthesis

## Annual report 2020

*This is a synthesis of the annual report 2020, read the [full document](#) for more information.*

### **A year of transition towards NFPs Profile**

The Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) was launched on World Food Day, October 2019. Accordingly, 2020 was the transition year for AgriProFocus (APF) and the Knowledge Programme for Food Security (KP), which was implemented through the consortium of APF, WCDI and The Broker, to merge into NFP. In anticipation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) had asked APF and the KP consortium to work with an integrated Annual Plan 2020 and Report. The joint annual plan also took into account the directions of the NFP Steering Committee (SC) as presented in the NFP Profile.

The NFP profile focuses on building and supporting coalitions, as well as operating as a platform for knowledge exchange to promote the use of Dutch expertise. The SC also defined the contours of the required team capacity of the new organisation. In early 2020 the SC decided that a permanent country presence outside the Netherlands does not efficiently suit the NFP functions. Following this, the APF board decided to discontinue the country operations as per 1 January 2021. A new NFP Director was recruited assuming office on 1 September 2020. A new governance structure was defined, registered in the statutes and implemented.

After collaborating in the years before, APF/KP started working intensively as one team (APF, WCDI and The Broker staff). Several network, coalition and knowledge activities were implemented by mixed teams. Also the work on the organisational change was a joint effort. Regular team meetings were held on ongoing activities and the NFP-process with in-depth discussions on the NFP purpose, portfolio development, required services and criteria for selection. A significant amount of work was done on branding and the website, internal organisation, new procedures, financial management and preparation of the 2021 annual plan and budget.

APF/KP started to steer activities towards the NFP mission and profile, i.e. to contribute to SDG2: end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, as well as promote sustainable agriculture. This included a shift towards a more exclusive focus on food system transformation and healthy diets; accelerating ideas and action of Dutch Diamond (DD) coalitions; and stimulating emerging coalitions to think and act more systematically on sustainable food system change. The COVID-19 crisis reiterated this need for systems thinking and 'building back better to deal with the effects of such a crisis. To become more resilient to any future crisis, a cross-sectoral and multi-pronged approach is needed.

By the end of the year a full-fledged NFP plan was developed for 2021 under the guidance of the NFP Executive Director, with an accompanying budget bringing together the resources under the existing APF and KP contracts. This together with a new governance model, website, branding, organisational framework and staffing plan, set the stage for the implementation of NFP's ambitions, after the formal closure of both the KP programme and the APF organisations.

## Annual report 2021

*This is a synthesis of the annual report 2021, read the [full document](#) for more information.*

The 2021 annual narrative report shows the results of NFP's first year of operation to its funders, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and builds on the preparatory efforts undertaken in 2020. The document reports on the performance towards the three strategic objectives that were defined for 2021-2022:

1. NFP facilitates the Dutch diamond to have an even greater impact on SDG2 internationally by building a **convening platform** where relevant partners find opportunities to increase their impact.
2. NFP supports at least 10 existing and/or new **collective impact initiatives** that contribute to improved food system outcomes in LMICs.
3. NFP will evolve into the **Dutch backbone organisation** with recognised expertise in supporting these collective impact initiatives (coalitions) on food system improvements.

NFP started in a year in which the momentum was fed by global crises (COVID-19 and climate) and an increased international attention for food systems (UN FSS and Cop 26). NFP took this opportunity and geared its capacity to play a convening and accelerating role in the broad landscape of stakeholders committed to tackle food system challenges, fortifying NFP's positioning and work on Food Systems.

### NFP Convening Platform

NFP's activities on building a convening platform contributed significantly to outcomes such as the uptake in enhancing (i) stakeholders understanding and (ii) policy dialogue. Co-creation was high with over 140 organisations contributing (Dutch, international and LMIC) emphasising ownership. It has set NFP on the track of becoming a trusted convening partner within the Dutch sector and beyond. NFP's 'delivery-to-plan' for platform initiatives was largely on target. 'Ministry support' and 'Capacity strengthening' initiatives exceeded expectations; 'Communities of practice (CoP)', 'Strategic networks' and 'Scoping' lagged somewhat although the latter two also became a feature of NFP delivery to coalitions. 75% of specific outputs under these initiatives were finalised in 2021. Partly due to planning that was too ambitious, given that NFP was still building capacity, this also spoke to the limited absorption capacity among stakeholders due to COVID-19. In view of that context, NFP's delivery was at an acceptable level, although it did result in an underspending.

### **Collective impact initiatives**

NFP delivered coalition support to 8 out of 10 collective impact initiatives with 50+ unique stakeholders involved from all diamond stakeholder groups. As a result, one third of NFP support helped coalitions with establishing a common agenda/vision, whilst creating strong linkages that leveraged initial stages of increased complementarity and synergy. Almost half of NFPs support enhanced mutually reinforcing activities, demonstrating that those coalitions are moving towards enhanced scaling. NFP's support contributed equally to the enhancement of coalition partners' and stakeholders' understanding and readiness for policy dialogue. From a demographic perspective, NFP coalition support focused for two-thirds on food system innovations in East and West Africa, while one third involved initiatives that were in the process of setting country preferences. Looking at NFP's regional 'preferences' there is room for diversity.

### **NFP backbone development**

In 2021 NFP has made considerable strides in developing into a strong backbone organisation. NFP grew from 20 to 22 team members of which 17 were on the payroll of the organisation and 5 seconded by consortium partners, The Broker and WCDI. The latter two also provided a valuable base for engaging expertise for specific assignments. Partnering with other organisations in specific projects has also availed necessary capacities. In 2021 NFP drew inspiration from the experiences summarised above from its practice. This fed the development of NFPs collective impact approach, communication tools, results framework,(financial and operational systems and team building. Professionals from more than 180 unique organisations were mobilised and involved in co-creating initiative agendas, knowledge products and events. This enabled NFP to make a strong first leap in its role as convenor and accelerator of collective impact.