

A partnership for baking better biscuits

A case for building sustainable food partnerships for better nutrition, developing inclusive value chains and creating business models for green growth in Ethiopia.



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BACKGROUND

Introduction

In Ethiopia, over 20 million people faced food insecurities in 2022¹. Ethiopia's lowland pastoral areas, as well as the densely populated and food insecure highland districts called Woredas, suffer from frequent droughts due to climate change, which led to reduced yields and limited access to nutritious foods. The shortages were magnified by unrest and political turmoil in major parts of the country. As a result, 27% of Ethiopian women were malnourished or undernourished and 40% of children suffered from stunting². The major causes of malnutrition were persistent food insecurity, poor maternal nutrition and child feeding practices, and limited access to quality nutrition services. To address this, the Ethiopian National Food and Nutrition Policy Strategy (2019)³ aimed to operationalize a renewed food and nutrition policy. The strategy identified seven priority intervention areas; one of which is targeted at ensuring the availability and utilization of diversified, safe, and nutritious foods.



ABOUT THE SFP

Funded by P4G, The Sustainable Food Partnership for Better Nutrition through Inclusive Value Chains in Ethiopia (hereinafter referred to as SFP) was established in July 2020 by a consortium consisting of [DanChurchAid](#), [Arla Foods Ingredients](#), [Novozymes](#), [Engsko](#), [GC Rieber Compact](#), [Bopinc](#) and [Moya Food Complex \(Moya\)](#). The SFP was established with the aim of bringing systemic change to the food system through market-based solutions, while focusing on creating access to nutritious and affordable food for mothers and children.



ANYTHING BUT JUST A BISCUIT

The SFP innovated to produce affordable, healthy, and nutritious biscuits from chickpea flour. The recipe contains enzymes and whey protein from partners Novozymes and Arla Foods Ingredients (AFI) respectively. Chickpea flour was used as a blending ingredient, resulting in a biscuit with a much higher protein content than other biscuits in Ethiopia. The biscuit comes in two flavors, tailored to address the likes and needs of pregnant and nursing mothers, as well as children who are most vulnerable to malnutrition. It offers a nutritious alternative to the less nutritious traditional fully wheat-based biscuits.

1. WFP Ethiopia Country Brief (2022)

2. Ethiopian Demographic Health Survey Report (2016)

3. Ethiopian National Food and Nutrition (2019)

Policy Strategy (2019)



GREEN GROWTH

Beyond producing a better biscuit, the SFP was designed such that the partnership and business model can be replicated by other actors in the food industry in Ethiopia or neighboring countries. The technology used to fortify the biscuits can also be applied to other pulses and even certain fruits. To ensure green growth and sustainability, a key aspect of the partnership was the development of an inclusive value chain that supports smallholder farmers and incorporates sustainable practices. This included sourcing local products, using climate-resilient crops like chickpeas, and implementing environmentally friendly agricultural techniques such as avoiding mono-cropping.

THE PARTNERSHIP

Partnering for business and development

As a multi-stakeholder partnership, the SFP covered both businesses, a civil society organization and local stakeholders. The mix of actors brought in different areas of expertise and market experience, which helped to foster innovation and increased knowledge transfer. The SFPs combined knowledge and ability to act, allowed the partnership to develop effective solutions to complex challenges, such as designing a sustainable and inclusive value chain that connects smallholder farmers to manufacturers. Having DCA as a project lead to define clear roles and responsibilities helped to create the right conditions for the project to succeed.



OVERVIEW OF PROJECT PARTNERS

Moya Food Complex

Moya is one of the fastest growing cookie manufacturers in Ethiopia. They set the objective of providing consumers with high-quality snack products that are affordable and nutritious and have co-developed the Sunny biscuit.

Novozymes

Novozymes is the world leader in bio-innovation with core expertise on industrial enzymes and microorganisms. Novozymes strives to have an impact by spearheading environmental and social change while balancing doing good business. Novozymes supported the product development and innovation process.

Arla Foods Ingredients

Arla Foods Ingredients is known for its knowledge and technical expertise in food technology, whey protein and product innovation, as well as recipe development. They actively supported Moya from ideation through development to production and packaging design.

ENGSKO

ENGSKO United Milling Systems is specialized in the production of grinding mill plants, mill stones and milling equipment. ENGSKO supported the project by providing technical expertise on the chickpea milling equipment.



DanChurchAid

DCA was project lead for the partnership and contributed to developing an integrated and inclusive value chain approach with the active participation of key public and private stakeholders, both at the federal level and in selected regions of the country. As a civil society organization, DCA strives to save lives, build resilient communities, and fight inequality.

GC Rieber Compact

GC Rieber Compact is a leading company within the humanitarian field and produces unique food products for severe and acute malnutrition. They have long-standing collaboration agreements with UN agencies and NGOs worldwide. The company contributed technical support, mainly on product testing to meet product quality standards.

Bopinc

Bopinc supports companies to bring impactful products and services to market in low-income countries. They have played a crucial role in the market development for the biscuit. More specifically, Bopinc carried out consumer insight studies, and outlined the positioning, marketing and branding of the product. All with the aim of bringing the biscuit to market successfully.



OVERVIEW OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS



Ministry of Industry and the Pharmaceuticals Industry Development Institute

The ministry and institute provided policy and technical support for the project, helped facilitate product development and were responsible to strengthen the food system in the country by scaling this initiative.



Ministry of Agriculture and its Regional Bureaus

The ministry and its line office in the Amhara and Oromia regions helped to develop the chickpea seed base by supporting farmers and farmer institutions. They provided support in creating market linkages and allowing sustainable supply of inputs to chickpea farmers.



Private sector institutions

Institutions such as the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and the Ethiopian Flour Millers Association provided valuable insight on sourcing and processing chickpeas and supported developing chickpea flour consistently and reliably.



Federal Cooperative Agency and its Regional Offices

Facilitated and supported Cooperative Unions in its regional network to work with the seed and grain market linkage business for benefiting smallholder producers through a sustainable market linkage with food processing units.



Federal Environment Protection Authority

FEPA is the secretariat of the National P4G Platform Coordination Body and it had the primary responsibility of coordinating the local stakeholders to deliver the required support during the implementation process.



PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The partnership model depicted below illustrates how the SFP worked in practice. The local, public stakeholders and the commercial partners worked to create an enabling business environment. DCA, as a civil society organization, took care of the project coordination. Together with public and commercial partners it worked to increase private sector investment in the food system and reach the objectives set for the partnership.

THREE STREAMS

Designing an inclusive value chain model

The SFP was designed to establish an inclusive value chain that could help transform the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. It did so by creating new business opportunities for smallholder farmers (who will grow chickpea) and linking them to food processors like flour millers and biscuit manufacturers. The contractual arrangements that were necessary to make this happen were agreed by the entire value chain and will be put into effect when commercial production of the biscuit starts. The below graphic illustrates the three streams of the inclusive value chain approach.

THREE STREAMS FOR AN INCLUSIVE VALUE CHAIN



UPSTREAM

Take care of the production and supply of ingredients.

Production and supply of ingredients (such as chickpea) by smallholder farmers.



MIDSTREAM

Ensure sustainable ways of manufacturing the biscuit.

Research and development, and production of the nutritious new product.



DOWNSTREAM

Arrange the marketing, distribution, and sales of the product.

Branding, marketing, and sales in stores, supermarkets, school programs and via kiosks in refugee settings.

STREAM

VALUE CHAIN ACOTRS

Seed enterprises

Input suppliers

Chickpea farmers

Grain collectors

Cleaning and sorting

Transporters

Flour millers

Whey protein from AFI

Enzymes from Novozymes

Other ingredient suppliers

Biscuit manufacturers

Product testing

Product improvement

Marketing

Distributors

Sales channels

Consumers



RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CONDUCT

Integration of Responsible Business Conduct (RBC) principles and practices has been a foundational approach to advance and demonstrate that respect for human rights and the environment is a key driver to enable long-term sustainable development. Building on the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights (UNGPs), RBC is reflected in consortium commitments and project design, where ongoing assessments and stakeholder engagements have informed and guided project developments and activities. RBC also emphasizes the critical role of ongoing due diligence processes and the continual need for human rights impact assessments, action plans, and stakeholder engagement as part of an impact-driven initiative like the SFP.

Through DCA's facilitation on integration of RBC principles in the project implementation, SFP partners have taken measures to integrate RBC into the business model specifically through the operationalized approach and guidance of the UNGPs, as well as linking key learnings and challenges in regional and international advocacy. The continuous endorsement and support of the RBC component of the project by all members of the consortium has been central to the success of the project in its goal of establishing a sustainable value chain and viable business model.



DISCUSSION

Beyond the scope of the project



CALL FOR COLLABORATION

One of the main achievements in the project was an increased focus on the nutritional quality of biscuits across the industry. The Sunny biscuit demonstrated that there are better ways to bake biscuits; that it's possible to make biscuits that are both tasty yet nutritious and thus more appropriate to be consumed by children and mothers vulnerable to malnutrition. All whilst providing an inclusive model for smallholder farmers and making use of climate resilient crops.

The support structure of the partnership played a crucial role in the development of a complex and nutritious biscuit. It facilitated collaboration and knowledge sharing among the partners, leading to the success of the project. For instance, Arla Foods Ingredients and Novozymes shared their expertise on proteins and enzymes with biscuit producer Moya, while Bopinc helped bring the prototype biscuits to consumers, refine the recipe, and create a suitable marketing strategy. Other partners from the public and private sector also contributed to the development of the biscuit. As the lead partner, DCA learned a lot through the process of overseeing the collaboration.



BEYOND THE PROJECT

The success of projects like SFP is crucial for achieving widespread agricultural transformation and improved nutrition. Another avenue worth exploring further is the potential of the institutional market, such as emergency food distribution programs for displaced people or school feeding programs. These channels present significant market opportunities and can help address malnutrition.

In addition, the partnership is hoping to replicate its success beyond this project. With the blueprint for a more nutritious biscuit in place, other organizations in the industry are invited to reflect on their portfolios of baked goods and consider making the switch to a more inclusive and nutritious offering.



GET IN TOUCH

The Sustainable Food Partnership, and the many stakeholders that it represents, have proven that with the right recipe, it is possible to produce a nutritious high protein biscuit. The partnership model is here to replicate, and other actors in the baked goods industry are welcome to build on our work and set up alike initiatives. If you wish to discuss starting a similar project, please reach out to privatesector@dca.dk.

