



# HOW CAN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT REFORM FACILITATE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR GROWTH?

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PRESENTATION AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

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*Julie MacCartee:*

I would like to welcome you to the October Ag Sector Council webinar titled "How can enabling environment reform facilitate agricultural sector growth?" The monthly Ag Sector Council series is a product of the USAID Bureau for Food Security and is implemented by the Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development project. My name is Julie MacCartee and I'm a knowledge management specialist with the USAID Bureau for Food Security. I'll be facilitating the webinar today, so you will see my name in the chat box pretty often and hear my voice during the Q&A session after the presentations.

We're excited to have a great lineup of speakers online today to discuss several analyses of Feed the Future's work towards reducing legal, regulatory, and institutional barriers to agricultural growth in developing countries. But before we get started with the content, I would just like to provide a few reminders and kind of housekeeping issues. First, the chat box is your main way to communicate today. So thanks to everyone who has introduced yourselves in the chat box. It's always really fun to see that we've got a global audience for these events.

Throughout the webinar we encourage you to use the chat box to network, to share links and resources, and to ask questions about the presentations that we'll pose to our speakers in the second half of the webinar today. We'll be collecting your questions throughout and asking them once the presentations are finished. Next, today's presentation is available to download on the Agrilinks event page for this webinar, so you'll see some resources on the left. You can click on the event page link there and download the presentation. We'll also have that available later in the webinar on your screen, and we are recording this webinar and we'll post the recording, the transcript, and other resources to Agrilinks within a week or two.

If you're watching the webinar right now that means you're already on the email list to receive a link to the recording, so keep your eye on your email and we'll make sure you have a recording of this so you can share it with your colleagues or review any of the content. If you're having any technical issues, please start a private chat with the AV tech who you'll see at the top of the attendees pod there. You can hover over his name and start a private chat, or just let us know if you're having technical issues in the chat box and we'll do our best to help you out.

Okay, let's go ahead and dive into our discussion of the agricultural enabling environment. To give us an intro to the topic and to our speakers, I would like to introduce Kelley **Cormier**. Kelley is an agricultural economist and oversees inclusive market development with the Bureau for Food Security and so I'll pass the mic to Kelley for a brief introduction and she'll introduce our speakers.

*Kelley:*

Thank you, Julie. I'm happy to kick it off today. I will introduce the speakers in just a minute, but first I wanted to provide some brief context. Since the beginning of the initiative, Feed the Future has acknowledged the important role of a sound enabling environment to achieving inclusive ag sector growth and improved nutritional status. We do this through facilitation of more predictable market linkages along key value chains, to increase domestic and cross-border trade, or new public and private investments in agricultural technology and market infrastructure for example.

And while many of you are familiar with the term "enabling environment" I wanna be clear that we have used a broad definition of the enabling environment to include the complex set of laws, regulations, and institution, both the formal and informal rules that shape behavior within markets for production, trade, and consumption of agricultural goods and services. This is deliberately broad. We've hypothesized that the enabling environment heavily influences the long-term success and sustainability of gains and food security achieved under Feed the Future. The analyses that we'll learn about today were motivated in part by an interest in testing this hypothesis and expanding the evidence base on the role and practice of enabling environment changes in achieving sustainable improvements in food security and nutrition.

So first, Amy Chambers and Meaghan Murphy with the Feed the Future enabling environment for food security project will share findings of a review of enabling environment reform investments in order to catalogue what has been done, what's working, and what lessons have been learned that can help identify technical gaps and improve technical coherence across project activities. Next and similarly we will hear from Justin Lawrence and Gwen Varley of the Feed the Future Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development project who will share enabling environment related findings from Feed the Future monitoring and evaluation data sources. So now I'll briefly introduce our speakers and then we'll get started with the presentations.

First, Amy Chambers. Amy is a legal, regulatory, and institutional reform specialist. She is currently the deputy chief of party for the Feed the Future Enabling Environment for Food Security project, which was launched in late 2015 to address policies, loss, institutions, and regulatory factors affecting agriculture and food security outcomes. Meaghan Murphy also with the Feed the Future Enabling Environment for Food Security project leads the knowledge management activities under the project.

Justin Lawrence is a monitoring and evaluation professional with the Feed the Future knowledge-driven agricultural development project. He currently serves as assessing and learning portfolio manager. Finally, Gwen Varley is a qualitative research specialist for the Feed the Future Knowledge-Driven Agriculture Development project where she provides analysis of monitoring and evaluation data across Feed the Future activities. Now Amy, over to you.

*Amy Chambers:*

What do we mean by the enabling environment and why does it matter? Kelley touched on this in her opening remarks, but I think given just to frame the discussion it bears going into a little more detail. So first of all, the Enabling Environment for Food Security accomplishes all of the policies, laws, regulations, and institutions that govern the behavior of actors throughout a market system from the regulation of agricultural research and inputs all the way to the quality standards that are imposed on final products in a supermarket.

Basically what we're talking about is the rules of the game, whether we're talking about formal laws and regulations on the books, or the more informal and customary often unwritten norms that can influence what actually happens in practice. The market system as you can see from the diagram on your screen is made up of interactions across a vast number of interconnected players well beyond the Farm Gate from input suppliers all the way to the final consumer. The enabling environment constraints faced

by these different actors can have important impacts on agricultural sector growth, both the rate of growth and also who benefits.

The cumulative transaction costs that occur over the course of the value chain can add up to overall costs that reduce investments in the sector and the total amount of wealth generated, and then the structure and content of those rules matters as well. It can either empower or limit small holders, women, and other disadvantaged groups. It can stimulate vibrant competition, or it can protect narrow self-interest at the expense of food security. What the rules say and how the norms operate and how they are applied is central to achieving inclusive agricultural sector growth.

Finally, the enabling environment matters because it impacts the sustainability of reforms. Systems, norms, and behavior are hard to change. Even changing a regulation as some of you may know from experience can be a long and cumbersome process, but without addressing these systemic enabling environment constraints, other gains in other areas such as productivity may not be sustainable when program funds end.

So the Enabling Environment for Food Security project was launched in late 2015 by the Bureau for Food Security's Office of Markets and Partnerships in recognition of the importance of the enabling environment to achieving Feed the Future goals. The project's objectives are to provide technical support to missions in enacting on-the-ground reforms and also to build the evidence base of good practice in enabling environment reform. So we have not only a focus on the design and implementation of reforms on the ground but also strong knowledge management components to support learning across the agency and the broader development community.

That component is part of what led to this review that we're here to talk about today, and our knowledge management officer for the project, Meaghan Murphy, is here with me today and will be responding to your questions as we go in the chat box and later participating in the Q&A, so welcome, Meaghan. So the review we're here to talk about today was one we conducted in the late spring and early summer of this year where we evaluated Feed the Future investments and enabling environment reform over the past five years.

Our objective was to catalyze what has been done, to analyze the results, and to identify common restraints and lessons learned that could inform future programming. This required us to not only identify all the projects and investments with enabling environment component, but also to find out on what activities were actually conducted and what was accomplished, and then to synthesize that information into different categories of investment to be able to distill common constraints and lessons learned.

This had the potential to be an absolutely massive undertaking and it still was, but even the limited time and resources we wanted to make sure we could accomplish our objectives without going completely overboard, so we set out some basic parameters to define the scope of the analysis. First of all, we had to define enabling environment for food security. As Kelley said before, we define this relatively broadly to include all laws,

regulations, and institutions, both formal and informal, that shape market behavior related to the protection, trade, and consumption of agricultural goods and services.

So while we included projects that had government engagement in the areas of food safety, nutrition, resiliency, and climate smart agriculture, we excluded general poverty reduction strategies such as social safety nets even when those could have an impact on consumers. The next thing we did is we looked at the source of funding. As all of you know Feed the Future is a whole government initiative, but that was just too broad, so we decided to focus our review on investments by USAID and specifically those by USAID focus missions and Feed the Future focus missions and the Bureau for Food Security.

We were a lot more lenient on the project dates. We generally included any project that was implemented in whole or in part during the period of 2011 to 2016. We approached each mission portfolio sort of like a story, so we looked back at what was preexisting when Feed the Future started, and we looked at how those projects and the new projects were incorporated into the multi-year strategy. To some extent we've also included recent projects but mostly as a reference point for future readers of the report.

Finally, we limited the geographic scope, which I'm gonna get to in a minute. I'll come back to that. I wanted to also note from the outset that for time and resource reasons we had determined that this had to be a desk study. So we were also limited in our review to publicly available resources. You can see in that textbox on data sources the types of resources that were available to us, which we found through looking through the deck and through knowledge sharing platforms like Agrilinks and of course just through online research of specific projects and their impacts. And there's more on that in the report if you're dying to know all the details of how the methodology worked.

In terms of the geographic scope, we quickly realized that we couldn't do every focus country, so we chose a subset and we chose them based on the level of Feed the Future funding or a known commitment to enabling environment activities while making sure that we included at least one bilateral mission and one regional mission from each of the five Feed the Future regions. At the end of the day our goal was to gather information that was representative of the breadth of enabling activities conducted and not to be 100 percent comprehensive across all of Feed the Future. Ultimately I think we got a good representative sample of that, and if we were to continue to do this it probably wouldn't have changed the categories and dimensions of the analysis.

So in total we reviewed more than 240 investments across seven bilateral missions, five regional missions in the Bureau for Food Security. Of those, 103 were found to have an enabling environment component. In looking back, we went all the way back to looking at how policy reform was incorporated into the Feed the Future framework, how it impacted the selection process for focused countries, and we found that enabling environment reform and policy reform were an integral component of all the multi-year strategies for all of the missions selected.

In practice, six of the seven bilateral missions and all five regional missions had invested in one or more dedicated policy reform projects. And then we look at results, it became

a little more challenging. We have Feed the Future monitoring system reporting data for policy reform indicators, which can offer us sort of an initial insight into the pattern of investment in these reforms, but it doesn't tell the whole story. So the qualitative analysis we did looking at actual project documents and reports was much more time consuming but allowed us to gather and reveal the common challenges.

We divided the analysis into three different dimensions. First we looked at the programming structure, so what were the differences between how missions and the Bureau for Food Security approached enabling environment reform. Second we looked at the methods of engagement. So how specifically did USAID staff and implementing partners engage in these efforts. Lastly we looked at priority policy areas. What were the main issues that rose to the top, and why?

In terms of programming structure, in the end we saw that the enabling environment and its impacts on markets from farm to export have featured heavily in Feed the Future programming, from dedicated agricultural policy projects to micro level policy and interventions as part of broader value chain programs. While we found that pretty much every mission and every office within the Bureau for Food Security had a dedicated policy reform project, at the bilateral mission level enabling environment activities were often wrapped into value chain projects ranging from dairy in Rwanda and Kenya, horticulture, and mango and aquaculture in Bangladesh. So a wide range of factors.

At the regional level it's what you might expect. There's a lot of focus on regional harmonization, which required a high level of regional analysis to support those efforts, and then the Bureau for Food Security focuses at a more high level and more global focus including mission support programs such as the Enabling Environment for Food Security project and its predecessor, Enabling Agricultural Trade or Eat project, which are demand-driven mechanisms that can cover a wide range of topics, and to support four agricultural research programs through U.S. land grant universities, CGIAR centers, and managing multi-donor initiatives such as the multi-donor truck fund and funding other entities such as AGRA as well as facilitating public private partnerships such as the Global Development Alliance and the Grand Challenges for Development and the New Alliance.

So the methods of engagement looks at the mechanics of what was done. What were the activities undertaken and what were the roles of the donor and the implementing partner in accomplishing these goals. When we looked across what was done, we came up with six main categories or methods of engagement that were undertaken. The first is looking at technical analysis.

So this is providing expert reviews to provide input into public dialogue, into the design or monitoring of policy reforms, and technical analysis has also been used as an advocacy tool. So for example, the West Africa Agri-business and Trade Promotions program successfully lobbied to lift a four-year ban on poultry trade in Burkina Faso by providing a cost benefit analysis of the negative effects of those bans.

The technical analysis often yields recommendations that can lead directly into opportunities for technical assistance such as embedded advisors and ministries or

capacity building training for ministries, private sector, and civil society sometimes in the form of things like study tours. Within ministries a lot of the capacity building focuses on issues of budgeting, management and data systems. Then the other role that donors and their implementing partners often play is in bringing people together, so convening stakeholders either through one-off roundtables and focus groups or by building sustainable public private mechanisms and networks for ongoing policy reform engagement.

So for example, in Kenya the dairy sector competitiveness program established a National Dairy Task Force, and these have also been used to coordinate on regional initiatives such as the East Africa Compete project that was able to organize joint border inspections by the customs agencies from a variety of countries as a precursor to introducing a single customs window in the region. Public private partnerships have been both large scale such as the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, and also small scale local programs.

For example, in Rwanda the private sector driven Agricultural Growth Project issued value chain competitiveness grants to promote innovative value chain solutions for certain focus commodities. Lastly, there's been a lot of engagement in the area of advocacy, diplomacy, and communications. This can be anything from participating in parliamentary discussions and donor working groups to policy papers and conducting communications and awareness campaigns.

The final dimension of our analysis was activities and accomplishments related to specific areas of the enabling environment. The priority policy areas covered quite a few. I'm not gonna go into them all today, but you can see a list there and find more detail on all of these in the final report. One of the core areas was the agricultural policy making process itself. This is a macro level examination of the processes and capacity needed to formulate and execute good policy for agriculture and food security including evidence-based policy making, public private dialogue, and effective monitoring of policy implementation.

So in Bangladesh the Policy Research and Strategy Support program was able to assist in establishing a policy support unit within the Ministry of Agriculture, and in Guatemala the Policy and Regulatory Support for Economic Growth project provided support for the food security and nutrition secretariats in Guatemala and provided advocacy training for civil society groups. On a more micro level, projects have engaged in specific policy areas in response to specific needs. So for example, the Kenya project conducted policy research and held stakeholder workshops on a variety of topics as needs arose, such as on fertilizer policy, value added tax and excise taxes, and policies around genetically modified food.

There's been a tremendous amount of effort in building a robust private sector driven input sector throughout all of the Feed the Future countries, a sector capable of providing high level high quality inputs to small holder farmers at an affordable cost. The challenge with these efforts is that in most countries this often meant tackling what was traditionally a government controlled industry and transitioning it to what was often a nascent private sector in a sustainable fashion.

To support this, projects have engaged in research on the impact of input subsidy programs to encourage phasing these programs out. There's been a lot of effort in private sector development through prioritization of the inputs industries, providing investment incentives, and lowering investment costs and regulatory burdens that limit entry for new seed companies for example. As the private sector develops, projects also focused on transitioning the government's role to one of strengthening quality and enforcement of existing regulations to promote competition and good quality in the market.

So for example, the Uganda ag inputs project focused on supply chain management to tackle the prevalence of counterfeit inputs in that country, and there has also been a heavy focus on regional harmonization of input policies to lower the costs of and the obstacles of cost border trade and inputs. This can include both enabling regional commitments and getting those passed, and also looking at how to domesticate or how to give those regional commitments implemented on the ground in each of the member countries through things like national test lists and regional seed variety catalogues.

Regional harmonization and facilitating the open flow of goods across borders is also a strong area of engagement for both inputs and output markets. There was a lot of focus on cross-border trade and regional trade in particular. These activities often centered on trade facilitation reforms. So for example the Ghana Trade and Investment Program for a Competitive Export Economy project – it's alphabet soup. I'm reading out all the names of the projects here, but I recognize that they are very long.

So the Ghana, I think it's called the TIPCEE program, embedded an advisor within the Ministry of Trade and Agriculture to help facilitate trade facilitation reforms, and across the globe in multiple regions there was a strong focus on putting in practice one of the more well-known good practices, which is initiating a custom single window. This occurred in East Africa with the support of the Compete Project. The regional mission in Asia had a similar one for Avion, and also within the Mission for Central America and Mexico. Lastly, there's a focus in the regional and cross-border trade on compliance with global regional trade commitments. So for example, the RDMA focused on capacity building for both the APEC and Avion secretariats.

So looking across all of these investments, certain common challenges emerged as themes, and studying these in a little more depth could help us to design more effective programs going forward. One of the main ones the projects cited was a challenge in generating widespread stakeholder buy-in from reform. Projects have often suffered when government officials have lacked time or had differing priorities. This can happen when for example parliament is in session, or during an election cycle when the focus of the government officials that are the necessary partners in these reforms shift.

Projects have solved this in part by trying to align their activities with government planning cycles and national strategic plans. Projects also emphasized the importance of strong communication at project startup, both to improve coordination going forward and to build trust with government counterparts as a show of respect. Buy-in comes not just from local stakeholders but also between development partners, so including other donors, between projects, and also even within U.S. government entities, so

USAID missions and embassies within regions, each of whom often has its own agenda but all of whom could benefit from working more closely together.

So even where there is political will and a stakeholder buy-in into policy reform, these reforms can be undermined where there's a lack of sufficient resources and capacity for policy reform formulation and implementation. So multiple projects cited a lack of reliable agricultural sector data and complicated policy reform procedures as an obstacle to achieving the reform objectives. Delays have also been caused when there are too few resources for implementation either due to a lack of trained staff or high staff turnover or insufficient budget allocations to the necessary ministry.

This can be particularly acute in rural areas where there's either a low government presence or even where power has been decentralized to the local government. Projects have often found that government to be poorly equipped. Building trust and buy-in requires clear communication from the outside as we mentioned before. Some projects have struggled to gain traction where the project itself lacked a clear scope and performance indicators, or where the project suffered from high staff turnover that can lead to stalling a policy reform objectives midstream.

In other cases the scope may be clear, but it may be just too rigid to adapt to evolving priorities on the ground and there's a need for greater flexibility in program design to allow projects such as the Kenya \_\_\_ project that I mentioned before to be able to engage as needs arise in specific policy issues. Finally, while working through local partners has strong benefits in terms of sustainability, we need to recognize that these partners may need capacity building at the outset and build that into our program objective, recognizing that achieving that means also we may need to revise down policy targets in the early years of the project.

Ultimately policy reform has to be driven by local ownership and advocacy, both to ensure its legitimacy and to ensure its sustainability. Achieving traction among key constituencies such as government officials and facilitating these reforms all the way from formulation through implementation takes a lot of time. It can easily be thrown off by elections, the appointment of a new minister that suddenly stalls ongoing efforts, and even greater political upheaval than that. In the typical three- to five-year project timeline it's nearly impossible to advance through all of these different stages of policy reform.

Unfortunately this has often led projects to either focus on quick wins instead of laying the groundwork for more systemic reforms, or to avoid policy targets altogether. There were some projects that reported dropping their policy components in favor of productivity activities or at a minimum dropping the reporting on policy indicators, which under the Feed the Future monitoring evaluation framework have been not mandatory but declining to report on those indicators and targets in favor of other targets that are easier to show impact on. Obviously this is a challenge for us at the back end such as now when we're trying to show what kinds of impacts have been done, and we lose a critical opportunity to really track what's being accomplished.

So what has been accomplished? So over across all of the Feed the Future focus and align countries, the Feed the Future monitoring system recorded more than 4,500

policies, laws, and administrative procedures that passed through at least one of five stages of policy reform during the period of 2011 to 2015. The table on the screen shows the cumulative data reported across all these projects on the relevant policy reform indicators.

These measure the five stages of policy reform, which includes everything from technical analysis to stakeholder dialogue, the technical drafting of laws and regulations, through the approval of new laws, and then their ultimate implementation. You see three different indicators on screen in the table. The first one is the main policy reform indicator. There are two of them, largely because it was slightly refined, which actually slightly refined in 2013, so there are numbers for both versions for 2014 and 2015, and in 2013 it was also introduced an indicator specific to regional missions to help to better capture the stages of policy reform in terms of implementation of regional initiatives.

So by themselves these numbers don't tell us a lot. They do show us a steady increase in engagement and progress on policy reform activities, but they don't really tell us the whole story of what's actually happening on the ground. In just a little bit I'm gonna turn things over to Justin who's gonna talk a bit more about some of the more detailed data that's contained in the performance narratives that accompany these numbers, but for our purposes here they don't really tell us exactly what happened. There are also out there custom indicators that each project comes up with to track their activities.

So for example, in a policy reform project that might include the number of seminars and trainings conducted, the number of policy papers drafted. There is a lot of interesting data to be culled from those custom indicators, but because they do not feed into the Feed the Future monitoring system it will take a lot more time and effort to compile all of that information. So in order to get a clearer picture, we had to dig deeper into qualitative reports of what was actually done by the projects. So these include the annual and final reports for different projects as well as technical publications and press releases and policy papers that show the actual activities conducted.

These are necessarily more anecdotal and harder to track down, but they contain a lot of the best information out there to support whether what we're doing is actually working. So to give you a few examples, from the perspective of programming structure, we found evidence that the dedicated policy projects and the value chain projects that incorporated an enabling environment component are both effective just in different ways. The value chain projects can build trust. They have the longevity and relationships necessary to engage in longer-term policy dialogue processes that can yield results in specific sectors.

So for example, technical support through Feed the Future projects assisted in the enactment of 22 dairy sector policies in Kenya, and new warehouse receipt systems through Mozambique, Kenya, and Ghana. And then the dedicated policy projects also have benefits in terms of working closely with policy makers across the Ag sector policy-making process. So where there is political will they have the ability to accomplish some significant institutional and structural reforms.

So for example, policy reform activities led to the creation of a dedicated agricultural policy support unit in the Bangladesh Ministry of Agriculture. In Rwanda the Prefer project was able to shepherd through the privatization of the fertilizer industry, and the Tanzania farrow project through a policy brief and evidence of the impact of a maize export ban was able to convince the government of Tanzania to lift that ban. Through its own investments, the Bureau for Food Security has made significant contributions to building analytical tools and data sets and starting new partnership models to better leverage our resources in enabling environment reform.

So over the course of the past five years, USAID has made substantial investments specifically in benchmarking the enabling environment for agriculture. This includes indexes such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture index, the Agri-Business Regulation and Institutions or ABRI index, and also support of the World Bank's Enabling the Business of Agriculture index.

So benchmarking measures the time costs and procedures of agricultural or enabling environment regulations. This can provide a snapshot of both the quality of the laws and regulations against global good practice, and can also show the impact of the enabling environment on the private sector rather than just what is actually in the laws on the books. Benchmarking can also be a powerful tool for generating momentum for reform and providing transparency and monitoring the progress of those reforms. However, it's important to notice that benchmarking does not provide the whole story.

Like I said, it provides a snapshot, and so it can point to symptoms, but we still need to provide a more detailed cause analysis in order to fully understand the whole context and how to address systemic constraint. USAID through the Bureau for Food Security also facilitated new public private partnership models such as the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, which has to date or at least to date as of spring of summer of 2016 leveraged \$1.8 billion in private investment in support of Feed the Future.

So looking forward, at the end of the day this review gave us a broad understanding of the work that's been done, what has been successful, and where the key challenges are. So as we turn our focus forward and begin to design new programs particularly in light of the new global food security strategy, these results point us towards a new list of questions and a variety of areas for further research. We are posing a few questions here and I hope that we can discuss these later in the Q&A and of course through the chat box.

So first of all, how can we do a better job of tracking data and results and enabling environment reform? We pose this from the point of view of both quantitative tracking, and we've talked a bit about what the indicators are that are in the Feed the Future monitoring framework, but also benchmarking as a new avenue for measuring our progress on enabling environment reform. And ultimately what we hope to see for enabling environment reform is impact on high level macroeconomic data. However, that takes time, a lot longer than you can really monitor on the project level.

So in practice we use the indicators that we've discussed today. Aside from the quantitative aspects of that, how can we do a better job of tracking our qualitative

results? Throughout the course of this review we face significant challenges in actually identifying what was done. We had not a whole lot of difficulty finding a summary of what the project set out to do, but actual reporting across what was done and data on what was accomplished including that quantitative data is very hard to find either due to lack of tracking it or lack of publishing that online, or lack of complying with reporting requirements through the deck.

So I think we can do a better job, but I'd be interested in hearing what your thoughts are on that. Also, what are the additional tools and types of analysis we need to understand these issues and design effective strategies for reform? Looking forward there's a lot of new trends and new areas that we'll be moving into that haven't been covered by the work done in the previous five years, so we'll be looking for new analytical frameworks and tools for understanding things such as challenges with urbanization, youth and employment issues, climate change, and natural resource management.

Finally, what new approaches can help us to overcome some of the common challenges encountered in the past five years? With that, I'm gonna turn things over to Justin to give you a comparative perspective on the results they found from their review.

*Justin Lawrence:*

Thanks so much, Amy. So Amy brought up a really good point and I think it actually ties in very much into what we've been doing at KDAD over the past year. How do we better keep track of our qualitative results of what the Feed the Future initiative has accomplished over the last five years? And that's really what we set out to do about a year ago. So many of you are probably familiar with the Feed the Future learning agenda, which goes across six key areas: ag productivity, research and development, markets, nutrition, gender, and resilience.

We set out to actually look at the breadth of performance evaluations and impact evaluations that were done across the Feed the Future initiative to help address these learning agenda questions. So in order to do that and to better track and be able to really keep track of all the knowledge that exists in these evaluations, we used a qualitative research software called Deduce. What Deduce allowed us to do is to upload each of the 196 performance evaluations that qualified as food security evaluations.

We were able to load them all up and then we were able to highlight excerpts, key passages that helped address certain learning agenda questions and sub-questions, and then within those excerpts we were allowed to apply codes that basically would help categorize certain interventions or certain outcomes or indicators that were being reflected in these passages. What we amassed throughout this process is we had over 5,000 different excerpts that talked about various learning agenda themes. So again, this is much more broad than sort of the enabling environment specifics, but it's really looking across the Feed the Future initiative in terms of some of these key questions.

So for those of you that are particularly familiar with the learning agenda, there isn't too much that's really referenced in terms of the enabling environment, but what we did find that very much corroborated Amy's findings is that enabling environment although not explicit within the learning agenda and not explicit in some of these reporting, it was really, really present and a key project.

One very basic example is under the realm of ag productivity, farmers might be able to grow a surplus and despite those gains without enabling environment that allows for those surpluses to actually get to market, then really the true benefits are not real. So that's just one thing that we certainly saw across a variety of different ag products. So the process of kind of categorizing and looking at the breadth of evaluations that were done across the Feed the Future initiative was a really good process for us to go through and to help us actually be able to categorize learning across the focus countries, but it also left us to look at the other side of the coin.

Okay, so, great, that's midterm evaluations, that's final performance evaluations, but what about this Feed the Future monitoring system? Amy had referred to this that they pulled specific indicators out of this database that were reporting on certain policy initiatives that were made, but what we did is looking at each of these implementing mechanisms, they also have to provide about a two-page summary about their project's success over the past year. So what you're seeing on the slide here is exactly what the guidance is, is every single Feed the Future mechanism gives a summary, talks about their fiscal year performance, their successes, their challenges, and expected activities.

So with this format, we actually took a look across all of the over the past two fiscal years every single mechanism and what were some of the common successes and challenges that they met, which you can probably imagine actually tells us quite a bit about the issue of the enabling environment. As we talked about earlier, so much of the progress that can happen across the enabling environment and across policy reform just really doesn't lend itself to quantitative expression. So these narratives actually really did help us kind of understand policy and we very quickly realized that we needed to flush out a pretty ornate coding structure just to really get at the nuance of some of these policy measures that were being accomplished.

So looking across this project and looking at all of our different monitoring data, it gave us a really uniform way of looking at what Feed the Future was accomplishing, but the nice thing about being able to code it and have it archived is that we would be able to query it later on to ask much more specific questions around the enabling environment. With that, I'm gonna actually turn it over to Gwen who will talk a little bit about those outputs. Gwen?

*Gwen Varley:*

Thanks, Justin. So as Justin just mentioned I'll be speaking in a bit more detail about what we found when we analyzed the performance narratives specifically for our findings from two small investigations that we did, one that was focused on trade, and the other that was focused on market. So in neither of these did we explicitly focus on enabling environment as Justin was mentioning, however clearly trade facilitation and strengthening markets are clearly important aspects of the enabling environment.

So when we looked at these topics, several of the themes and the trends that appeared were very similar to what Meaghan and Amy found. So first, just some quick background on what questions these two analyses were trying to answer. For trade we were approached by an individual at USAID who was working on a report and who asked if we could search these performance narratives for anything related to trade,

particularly a list that they had of about 17 specific topics. These range from SPFs, to terrorists, to cross-border trade, and the full list is there on the slide.

This report was also focused specifically on regional missions, and so we only looked at the performance narrative from those missions. And then for the analysis on markets, on the other hand this was something of an ongoing effort aiming to assist the preparations for an upcoming event sharing learning surrounding markets in the Feed the Future programs.

The first question that we were trying to answer was simply what activities are out there related to markets. Who is doing what and where? Secondly, the organizers of this event gave us a list of about 20 themes and questions that they wanted to address, and our job was to look for potential case study projects that focused on those particular themes.

I'll get back to the details on that in just a minute, but first, let's take a quick look at what we found for trade. So for this, one of the simple things that we did was just report how often each of those 17 topics from the previous slide appeared in the performance narrative. Because of the nature of the coding process that Justin just described, we were able to very quickly see quantitatively that for example many, many more projects are addressing SBS and bio safety issues than are addressing land tenure.

That's another venue that aligns very closely with what Meaghan and Amy found. Another angle that we were able to look at was variation according to region. So within any topic or code we can isolate a particular region and look for trends within that region as compared to other missions. So for example, in the case of trade facilitation we see in East Africa many more projects that are focused on standards and practices surrounding livestock health and pastoralism whereas in Asia there was more of a focus on fisheries and labor rights, or in Latin America on pesticides and compliance with U.S. food safety laws. In a similar vein we can compare projects by the common challenges that they faced.

So as Justin showed there's a specific section in each performance narrative for projects to describe their successes and challenges. So for regional trade, one of the crucial factors was unsurprisingly a strong partnership with national governments, and another was the quality of the data collection that they were able to obtain through their local partners. But some of the most compelling results came from trends that appeared in the narratives that weren't necessarily captured in those 17 codes that we applied.

A good example of this is that increasing access to market information. This was a topic that appeared in nearly every region and we identified at least six programs conducting activities explicitly focused on increasing market information, and what I mean by that is projects that are publishing information about prices, about import and export flows, technical guides for products, and often publishing these through online platforms. So this is a trend that we might not have necessarily identified if we weren't able to search through all these regional programs as a whole simultaneously. So moving quickly on to our analysis of the markets programs.

So the first thing we wanted to know was just how many markets programs are out there. So looking at the 2015 performance narrative we included this time not only the regional missions as we did with trade, but also all the Feed the Future focus counties, BFS, and all the Align missions, and we found that in a single year there were over 160 programs that incorporated some aspects of markets, whether that be strengthening value chains or enabling trade policies or conducting economic research.

Once again similar to the trade analysis we were able to highlight notable successes and challenges that were described by these projects. The second half of this task was to identify potential case studies for particular themes to be discussed. One of those themes was creating enabling environments that expanded market activities and reliability. So to compliment this discussion on enabling environment, I thought I would just quickly highlight some of those projects that we identified. Once again our findings really support Meaghan's and Amy's because you can see a few of those projects are also featured in our analysis.

So one thing that we're looking for in good case studies is programs that not only reported their successes but also gave an explanation of how they got there. So a good example of that was the Rwanda Dairy Competitiveness project, which was very successful in strengthening dairy markets in Rwanda because they had such a strong effort to get out social campaigns to encourage people to drink more milk and also this process had been improving their system for tracking farm level data.

And another thing that's really helpful for sharing lessons across projects is when the performance narrative gives a strong sense of the ideas that it has for the future and how it wants to improve. So one good example of that again from Rwanda is the trade infrastructure program on which gave a good description of trying to anticipate future challenges and opportunities by taking into account the trade environment in which it operates. So in the case of Rwanda they found that there's a large amount of informal trade, it's occurring across national borders, and it's often being conducted by women.

So informal trade presents challenges in collecting reliable data, but it also presents some opportunities for interventions that address both trade facilitation and gender integration. So we don't have time today to go through each one of these programs that we found in detail, but you can see that there's a wide variety of projects here. The content of the projects are quite different, but they all have lessons to share regarding enabling environment and it's exciting to think about the prospect of allowing these programs to learn from each other.

So to conclude, I hope that what Justin and I have been able to illustrate is something of a response to one of the looking forward questions that Amy raised, and that's how do we do a better job of tracking both quantitative data and qualitative results for enabling environment reforms from these Feed the Future activities. In closing what I hope that you take away from this is perhaps less about the ins and outs of trade and market from these analyses and more about the potential that this approach presents for managing the vast amounts of knowledge and lessons the Feed the Future projects are generating every year, and utilizing this learning to its full potential by making it more accessible and more easily shared. So on that note of learning and sharing, I think that we can open up the discussion and start taking questions. *[End of Audio]*