



# Food Diamond Dialogues

*Synthesis report of discussion sessions on 12, 13 and 18 May 2026*

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# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Shared strategic insights across groups</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 The Dutch Diamond model is questioned	5
2.2 Whose food security?	6
2.3 Equal partnerships requires more than rhetoric	8
2.4 Fragmentation and lack of long-term commitment weakens continuity and FNS impact	9
2.5 Climate, biodiversity and resilience are integral to food security	10
2.6 A changing world order demands flexibility	11
<b>The key question: Are we willing to experiment, even when the outcomes are uncertain for all parties?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Distinctive contributions and recommendations per group</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Knowledge Institutions (12 May)	12
3.2 Civil society organisations (13 May)	13
3.3 Private sector / Finance (18 May)	14
<b>4. Remaining complex conversations for further elaboration</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1 The Role of the European Union	16
4.2 Fragile contexts and conflict	16
4.3 Nutrition as a distinct policy theme	17
4.4 Democracy and governance as prerequisites for food security	17
4.5 Unemployment in LMICs as an underexposed priority	18
4.6 The knowledge asymmetry in Partnerships	18
<b>5. Looking ahead: Food Diamond Dialogue on 2nd of June</b>	<b>19</b>

# 1. Introduction

On May 12, 13, and 18, 2026, professionals from knowledge institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector came together in three energetic sessions to discuss the Dutch contribution to food and nutrition security in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The discussions yielded sharp insights, interesting debates, and valuable recommendations.

Convened by the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directorate Inclusive Green Growth - IGG), these exploratory sector dialogues served to evaluate how multi- or cross sectoral cooperation can shape future international food and nutrition security (FNS) policies, amid major challenges in the areas of geopolitics, climate change, biodiversity, health and equity.

Changing policy accents of the current cabinet were presented in a kickoff presentation by a representative of IGG, highlighting the challenges for international cooperation in the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape, resulting in more emphasis on international partnerships, democratization and good governance, as well as renewed focus on gender and climate. Four guiding questions were given by IGG to kick start the discussion:

- 1. What opportunities for collaboration within the Dutch Diamond currently remain untapped? What components of the diamond are still working too much in parallel instead of together?*
- 2. Looking at the new policy: what forms of collaboration or programming yield both economic opportunities and societal resilience?*
- 3. Who are our future strategic partners (f.e. countries, regional organisations, knowledge networks, or private parties) with whom we/you do not yet collaborate?*
- 4. Which difficult conversations do we need to have more frequently within the Dutch Diamond in the coming years?*

The primary objective of all three sessions with representatives of the so-called Diamond<sup>1</sup> was to capture distinct sectoral priorities on international food- and nutrition security interventions, define latent collaboration barriers, future opportunities, and challenge existing paradigms. Driven by a shared sense of urgency regarding global food insecurity and shrinking budgets, participants engaged in a transparent reflection on power dynamics within the food system, long-term

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<sup>1</sup> In NFP's Diamond approach, five parties (corners') are included: knowledge institutes, private sector, civil society organisations, finance sector and governmental institutes, both in The Netherlands as in LMICs. For these Food Diamond Dialogues the Dutch stakeholders were brought together into three groups: private + finance sector, knowledge institutions, and civil society organisations.

commitments, and policy coherence. In total 51 professionals provided their valuable insights and experiences.

This report provides a comprehensive synthesis of the common denominators, unique sectoral recommendations, and “difficult conversations” that surfaced during the sessions. However, it does not do justice to the richness and depth of the input provided during the three meetings. Moreover, we emphasize that the groups themselves were not homogeneous, that the discussions were necessarily incomplete given the time available, and that only Dutch parties were invited to participate in these sessions.

Ultimately, these outcomes are mapped directly into six strategic themes that emerged in all sessions, though with slight differences in perspectives. During the upcoming plenary session on June 2, these sectoral insights will be brought into a joint dialogue with representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to explore them in greater depth and reach concrete, joint conclusions. Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature (LVVN) and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) will also join that conversation. This final, essential session aims to collectively translate these sectoral priorities into concrete recommendations for future international food and nutrition security policies, contributing directly to the development of an overarching, long-term international food strategy for The Netherlands, as recommended in the recent AIV advisory report<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [Voedselzekerheid in een wankende wereld | Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken](#)

## 2. Shared strategic insights across groups

Despite their different institutional roles and perspectives, the three groups -knowledge institutions, civil society organisations and the private / finance sector- converged around a consistent set of strategic concerns. Across all sessions, participants questioned existing assumptions, reflected critically on current approaches, and called for greater honesty about interests, power and long-term ambition. There was broad appreciation that these difficult questions could now be discussed openly, particularly given that they concern major and politically sensitive issues rather than marginal topics. Participants also welcomed MoFA's willingness to extend a hand and create space for a candid and collective conversation on these complex themes.

Six shared themes emerged across all discussions. For each theme, the strategic insight is followed by the core questions that the sector wants to address during the follow up, and by how each group framed it in their own words.

### 2.1 The Dutch Diamond model is questioned

Across all three sessions, participants put questions to the 'Dutch Diamond' model itself - not as a side issue, but as a **central strategic concern**. Discussions highlighted that collaboration should be treated as a means to achieve food and nutrition security outcomes, rather than as an objective in itself. Participants stressed that context and strategic food security goals must determine the partners and form of collaboration, rather than predefined institutional templates.

A recurring concern was that the model is too often applied as a default governance structure, without sufficient reflection on when it is appropriate, at what level, who benefits from it, and whether alternative forms of collaboration may in some cases be more effective.

At the same time, it is explicitly recognized that highly successful examples and practices of multi-sector collaboration exist within the Netherlands, which have already laid the groundwork for impactful international partnerships. However, participants cautioned that the model cannot simply be treated as a plug-and-play export commodity. True Diamond collaboration requires significant upfront investments in relationship building and cross sectoral alignment. It is an intensive process characterized by internal debate and - sometimes- friction, as diamond actors themselves are not always aligned.

Consequently, the framework cannot be structurally transplanted to other countries without carefully accounting for local institutional capacities, cultural nuances, and specific regional

demands. Failing to recognize these challenges risks reducing a process of Diamond collaboration into an unhelpful administrative template.

A further point raised in the discussions is that genuine Diamond collaboration requires equal investment, decision making power and commitment from all four corners of the Diamond and that without this, equitable implementation of the model cannot be achieved.

Several **directions for improvement** emerged from the discussions:

1. The Diamond model is a means, not an end. The model should be applied selectively and deliberately, with an explicit assessment of whether the Diamond configuration is the most appropriate form of collaboration for a given context, and the targeted FNS objectives, rather than a default choice. Also, flexible selection of actors can often be far more effective depending on the specific (country) context and partners.
2. Mirror the Diamond: Investing in a 'local Diamond' on the partner country side - was seen as a prerequisite for genuinely equal collaboration. This requires upfront investment in relationship-building, local capacity and cross-sectoral alignment that is currently often absent.
3. Periodic reality checks: is this still a Diamond in practice, or has it become an administrative template? Building in moments of honest evaluation was seen as essential.

**The key question:** *When is the Diamond the right form of collaboration and are we willing to put that to the test?* The model is widely used, but fundamental questions about its definition, logic, functioning and legitimacy are rarely raised openly. When does it work, and when does it not? Is it always all four parties, or are other configurations sometimes more appropriate?

*Knowledge institutions: 'Why DUTCH Diamond? Is this the only method?'*

*NGOs: 'Reality check: is this still a Diamond when budget cuts prevent full participation of one part of the Diamond, and parties are less facilitated/able to participate?'*

*Private sector: 'Dutch Diamond = wishful thinking? Collaboration as a means, not an end.'*

## 2.2 Whose food security?

The most fundamental question raised across all sessions concerned **whose interests** the Dutch international food and nutrition security policy is ultimately designed to serve? Participants repeatedly returned to the tension between aid and trade interests: development objectives (SDGs, solidarity, stability, human rights) against Dutch commercial and trade interests (security of supply, Dutch welfare, reputation).

While perspectives differed, all three groups acknowledged that Dutch economic interests should not automatically define the objectives of international food and nutrition security programming. Participants stressed the importance of explicitly distinguishing between development goals aimed at reducing vulnerability, dependency and inequality of food systems in LMICs, especially for those who are most food insecure (often women and children), and objectives connected to Dutch trade, investments and economic interests.

The discussions also highlighted the need for more explicit strategic choices regarding target groups, regions and intended outcomes. What objectives are set central in the IGG programming and why? The groups mentioned a variety of possible outcomes, ranging from: job creation in food/agriculture in LMICs, improve access to food, increase income of farmers, more nutritious food production and consumption, land rights, support entrepreneurs and SMEs, food crops vs. cash crops, regional/local market strengthening, improved inputs (seeds), regenerative farming, invest in (local) knowledge and research, focus on women, strengthening stability in fragile contexts, focus on nexus food & water, biodiversity, climate and health for a resilient food system, food governance and democratization, Dutch earning ability and sustainable value chain development.

Several participants argued that current policy discussions often remain too ambiguous about who the programming is ultimately designed to benefit. Also, the definition of (smallholder) farmers, vulnerable or marginalized groups, or business partners / SMEs differ in various programmes and projects. More focus and transparency on aimed target groups is needed.

Participants pointed to several concrete **directions for improvement:**

1. On the government side, a policy vision and funding horizon of at least 10 years, with room for adaptive programming, was seen as a minimum requirement.
2. On the sector side, participants acknowledged that Diamond actors themselves must take proactive ownership of reducing fragmentation: better mapping of who does what and where, more deliberate coordination between actors, and a willingness to refer work to others rather than compete for the same ground. Concrete mechanisms proposed included mapping CSO and private sector activities per country, strengthening collaboration and alignment, and building structured dialogues with local partners as a standard part of programme design rather than an afterthought.

**The key question:** *What is the specific objective and who are the beneficiaries of the international food and nutrition security policy within the Dutch food agenda and are we willing to discuss honestly and choose transparently?*

Is it primarily intended to serve Dutch interests: economic, geopolitical, reputational and commercial? Or is it about achieving the SDGs, reducing inequality and stability, and strengthening (local) food system resilience out of solidarity with the most vulnerable? Or a mix? And if so, when is which approach deployed, and why? The question 'Whose food security?' is therefore not only a substantive one but also a governance issue regarding who decides on those objectives, which investments are made based on which criteria, requiring a fundamental commitment to ensure transparency in the context of programming on food security.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Must development cooperation always serve our interest, or is solidarity possible?'*

*NGOs: 'A yes to Dutch, but not Dutch first, we do it for them - the most food insecure people'*

*Private sector: 'Food security for whom? Not us?' but also: 'should we focus on all (small holder) farmers, or more on entrepreneurial farmers (who can AND will).'*

## 2.3 Equal partnerships requires more than rhetoric

All three groups identified equality and reciprocity as core principles, while simultaneously recognising that current partnerships often fall short in practice. Questions around agenda-setting and decision-making power, representation, and whose knowledge counts surfaced repeatedly throughout the discussions.

Participants challenged the assumption that "win-win" outcomes emerge automatically. Instead, they argued that equal partnerships require openness about divergent interests, stronger local ownership, and mechanisms that allow local actors to shape priorities, implementation and definitions of success.

The discussions also revealed persistent tensions between Dutch-led programming structures and ambitions for locally-led development. Meaningful inclusion was seen not as participation alone, but as genuine influence over decision-making and resource allocation.

**The key question:** *What constitutes an equal and reciprocal partnership and how do you test that? Is win-win truly possible, and for whom exactly? In practice, Dutch actors still largely determine the agenda, the instruments and the definition of success. The assumption that Dutch and partner-country interests automatically align was challenged in all three sessions.*

*Knowledge institutions: 'Whose knowledge counts as knowledge in the Dutch Diamond? Scientific knowledge is also played off against itself.'*

*NGOs: 'Meaningful inclusion, not just tokenistic. Whose voice really counts?'*

*Private sector: 'Equality, how real is it? Ask difficult questions, step out of the shadows.'*

## **2.4 Fragmentation and lack of long-term commitment weakens continuity and FNS impact**

Across all sessions, participants expressed concern about fragmentation in funding structures, policy agendas and implementation approaches. Short political cycles (4 years or less) and consequently shifting priorities were seen as major obstacles to meaningful food systems transformation.

All three groups called for longer-term commitment, to assure continuity of programmes and investments and to ensure local uptake and ownership (generally long term was defined as 10 years). Also, flexibility, adaptive programming, and greater coherence across donors, ministries and policy domains was stressed. Participants emphasized that food security challenges cannot be addressed through fragmented project cycles alone and warned that discontinuity undermines both trust and long-term impact. Besides, some groups indicated that governmental calls for proposals or other finance instruments are not 'fit for purpose' due to complex requirements, rigid procedures, and management requirements that fail to match the realities of the sector.

In addition, fragmentation within the Dutch food security landscape itself was identified as a challenge. Participants pointed to overlapping initiatives, disconnected agendas and insufficient coordination between actors working on food systems, climate, trade, nutrition and development cooperation.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged their own role in these dynamics, concluding that diamond actors must also look critically at their own practices. There was a strong consensus that sectors cannot solely point to government funding structures as the cause of fragmentation; instead, they need to take proactive ownership by significantly improving coordination, and mutual collaboration among themselves.

**The key question:** *How do we organise long-term commitment and who dares to guarantee it?* All three groups advocated for government commitment of at least 8–10 years, but acknowledged the impact of political transitions. There is a clear need for a strategic vision and policy horizon of more than 10 years, with room for adaptive programming and scalability built in beyond the first years of implementation.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Long-term programming > 10 years. Strategic programming, integrating.'*

*NGOs: 'At least 10 years. Discourage fragmentation.'*

*Private sector: 'This is the time to really implement new ideas and assure local impact, but procedures and funding cycles don't allow for it.'*

## **2.5 Climate, biodiversity and resilience are integral to food security**

Climate change, biodiversity loss and resilience emerged in all three sessions as inseparable from food security itself. Participants emphasised that technological innovation alone is insufficient and warned against approaches that create new forms of dependency through proprietary inputs, externally driven value chains, or solutions that bypass local knowledge and capacities.

Across the three groups, participants argued for combining Dutch technological innovation with local knowledge, low-input and agroecological strategies, including regenerative agriculture. A 'high-tech solution trap' was seen as a real risk. Complementarity, rather than technological dominance, was seen as essential for resilient and context-appropriate food systems, including greater attention to local genetic diversity and neglected and underutilised species, currently underrepresented in Dutch food security programming.

Participants also highlighted the growing impact of geopolitical instability and climate-related crises, reinforcing calls for adaptive approaches and a stronger willingness to experiment with new forms of cooperation and financing.

**The key question:** *How do we deal with policy coherence: trade, climate, biodiversity, agriculture and food security together?* Food security policy is not coherent with adjacent policy domains like climate (including climate finance), water, agriculture, biodiversity, trade, health. The scattered landscape of donors and policies compounds this problem. Trade is not the same as reciprocity: Dutch export interests are not automatically complementary to the development of local food systems in partner countries.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Low tech → agro ecology → regenerative. They are complementary, not competing.'*

*NGOs: 'Biodiversity and climate have a lot to do with resilience - regenerative approaches, locally led, putting the most vulnerable people in the lead.'*

*Private sector: 'We/Dutch are really good in tech, but it does not always fit. It can also create new dependencies. That is not what we need.'*

## **2.6 A changing world order demands flexibility**

The urgency created by climate change, conflict, supply chain dependencies and a shifting world order demands the ability to respond flexibly and scale up food security engagement. In turbulent times, certainty is an illusion, yet the sector often clings to familiar instruments and approaches.

**The key question:** Are we willing to experiment, even when the outcomes are uncertain for all parties?

*Knowledge institutions: 'This is the time to really implement new ideas.'*

*NGOs: 'Curiosity as a core attitude.' and also: 'Experimenting means accepting that we might fail. Are we willing to say that out loud?'*

*Private sector: 'The time is right: curiosity + reflection on how? Adaptive programming and management.'*

## 3. Distinctive contributions and recommendations per group

Alongside the shared concerns outlined above, each group brought distinct perspectives, blind spots and concrete recommendations. Together, these contributions illustrate the complementary roles that different actors can play within future food and nutrition security policy.

Knowledge institutions provide the independent evidence base and the long-term systemic questions. Civil society organisations were the most explicit in addressing power imbalances, solidarity and the interests of the most vulnerable, consistently arguing that food security policy should prioritise those with the least access and the greatest need. The private sector brings pragmatism, market realism and a degree of self-criticism. Together, they form the conditions for a Dutch Diamond that lives up to its name.

### 3.1 Knowledge Institutions (12 May)

Knowledge institutions approached the discussions primarily through the lens of evidence, legitimacy and long-term systems transformation. They were the only group to explicitly question the role of scientific knowledge itself within the Dutch Diamond model and to call for an independent long-term knowledge base for food systems transformation. Knowledge institutions were the most explicit in translating their analysis into actionable directions:

*'Why DD? Is this the only method?'*

*'Must Development Cooperation always serve our interest, or is solidarity possible?'*

#### Specific contributions:

- Knowledge institutions were the only group to explicitly question the legitimacy of scientific knowledge itself within the Diamond model, arguing that knowledge hierarchies within partnerships reproduce existing power imbalances.
- The importance of bringing political-economy perspectives into the food discussion, including inequality, limits to capital accumulation and climate justice as structural dimensions of food systems transformation.
- Insufficient evidence currently exists for how science, policy, society and practice together generate systemic impact on food systems transformation. Addressing these interface spaces is a priority.

- The Netherlands as a connector of innovative ideas internationally: a role that must be deliberately pursued.
- Investment in an independent knowledge base: which questions must the sector be able to answer in 10 years?
- Leveraging climate finance for food justice as a concrete link between climate funding streams and development goals.

### **Concrete recommendations:**

- Address knowledge gaps: invest in evidence for how science, policy, society and practice together generate impact for food systems transformation.
- Level the playing field: greater attention to local research institutes, grassroots movements and place-based approaches in partnerships.
- Develop a demand-driven knowledge agenda: invest now in knowledge and research capacity to remain a relevant partner in both the Diamond and for LMICs.
- Position the Netherlands deliberately as an international connector of innovative ideas, not as a provider of ready-made solutions, but as a broker of interdisciplinary knowledge between LMICs, research institutions and policy makers. This role is currently underutilised and should be built into the architecture of future programming.

## **3.2 Civil society organisations (13 May)**

Civil society organisations brought the strongest normative perspective to the discussions and were the most explicit in addressing power imbalances, solidarity and local ownership. They consistently emphasised that food security policy should prioritise vulnerable populations rather than Dutch institutional or commercial interests.

A distinctive contribution from this group was the explicit recognition that civil society plays two complementary and equally necessary roles in achieving food security goals: that of a guiding partner, working alongside governments, knowledge institutions and the private sector to design and implement effective programming; and that of a critical friend and watchdog. Holding other actors accountable and ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable are not lost in institutional processes is an explicit role of civil society organisations, both in The Netherlands and LMICs (through their local partners). Participants agreed that both roles are needed, and that one cannot function well without the other. This point carries particular weight at a moment when the critical

and watchdog role of civil society has come under significant pressure across the sector over the past two years.

*'A yes to Dutch, not Dutch first'*

*'The Dutch Diamond is used indiscriminately, without clarity about what it actually achieves.'*

*'Meaningful inclusion, not just tokenistic'*

*'Trade ≠ reciprocity.'*

### **Specific contributions:**

- 'A yes to Dutch, not Dutch first': the most explicit normative statement across all three sessions.
- The explicit link between democracy, good governance and food security as a thematic line.
- Trade and reciprocity are not the same thing: stated directly and without qualification.
- 700 million people in LMICs as the explicit starting point, not a Dutch or institutional agenda.
- Meaningful inclusion of civil society and local communities in PPPs as a concrete demand, not a principle. Essential for democratization and good governance.
- Neglected and Underutilised Species (NUS) and local genetic diversity, as well as general local knowledge as a concrete and underrepresented policy theme.
- A 'Dutch Food Alliance' or Netherlands Working Group on Nutrition as practical solution pathways for less fragmentation (example of DRA).

### **Concrete recommendations:**

- Map CSO activities per country to reduce fragmentation and strengthen coordination.
- Start structured dialogues with local Diamonds to understand challenges and work towards sustainable partnerships.
- CSO support needs to be restored to be able to fulfil their specific role in the Diamond.

## **3.3 Private sector / Finance (18 May)**

The private sector discussions were characterised by a pragmatic and often self-critical tone. Participants openly questioned the assumptions underlying the Dutch Diamond model and reflected on the limited engagement of the sector itself in food security policy.

*'Dutch Diamond = wishful thinking?'*

*'Collaboration is a means to serve the goal, not the other way around.'*

*'Equality, how real if one party is putting in finance?'*

*'Why are there so few of us?'*

### **Specific contributions:**

- 'Dutch Diamond = wishful thinking?': the most explicit self-critical characterisation of the model across all three sessions.
- A structural focus on market development rather than short-term projects: a shift the other groups barely mention. Long term collaboration is needed for continuity and can be reached by ensuring local uptake.
- Unemployment in LMICs as an underexposed issue and largely absent in the policy agenda but of crucial importance.
- Focus on 'can + will' entrepreneurial farmers rather than on smallholders as a target group: a nuance the other groups do not raise.
- In countries with significant diplomatic challenges, collaboration with local actors is sometimes simply not possible, that should be named honestly.
- The question of the sector's own limited scale and engagement: 'Why are there so few of us?'
- Context-specific programming and caution against an overly narrow focus on high-tech Dutch solutions: low-to-mid-tech pathways may in many contexts be more scalable, accessible and locally appropriate.

### **Concrete recommendations:**

- Simplify procedures, a direct demand on the implementation architecture of future funding instruments.
- Shift from a project logic to a market development logic: rather than designing time-bound interventions, build funding instruments that support long-term market system development, including employment generation, local entrepreneurship and scalable value chains.
- Be explicit about where the Diamond does and does not work for the private sector: in contexts with significant diplomatic or political constraints, honest acknowledgement of limitations is more productive than attempting to force a collaboration model that cannot function.

## 4. Remaining complex conversations for further elaboration

Besides the above 6 topics, the three sessions surfaced a number of substantive 'complex conversation topics' that were raised with clarity and urgency, but could not be fully explored within the scope of the dialogues. These themes do not fit neatly within the six shared strategic concerns outlined in chapter 2, yet they deserve a structural place in the ongoing policy conversation. They are listed here as starting points for further elaboration in future sessions, in policy development, or in cross sectoral dialogues.

### 4.1 The Role of the European Union

Several participants pointed to the EU as an underutilised lever for Dutch food security ambitions. The question is not only one of policy coherence, but of strategic choice: should the Netherlands more deliberately use EU channels, frameworks and funding to amplify its impact, and if so, how?

*Knowledge institutions: 'Strong focus on the EU, both in implementation and policy.'*

*NGOs: 'EU: how do we better shape collaboration?'*

*Private sector: 'What is our contribution within EU frameworks? Can we significantly increase our impact?'*

### 4.2 Fragile contexts and conflict

Participants in multiple sessions raised the question of how food security programming should approach fragile states and conflict-affected areas. This is not simply a matter of adapting existing models: it was stated that the Dutch Diamond model is often an inappropriate framework in contexts where local institutions are weak, political conditions are unstable, or diplomatic space is limited.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Low input should be prioritized in fragile areas.'*

*NGOs: 'How do we incorporate fragility? In those contexts, local CSOs are crucial for FNS.'*

*Private sector: 'In countries with diplomatic challenges, collaboration with local actors is sometimes simply not possible. Name it honestly.'*

### 4.3 Nutrition as a distinct policy theme

Across all three sessions, nutrition and food security were frequently discussed in the same breath, yet they are distinct policy areas with different target groups, interventions and indicators. Several participants argued that The Netherlands should develop a more explicit and separate position on nutrition, rather than treating it as an implicit component of broader food security programming.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Inclusion of interplay nutrition, climate — needs its own framing.'*

*NGOs: 'Netherlands Working Group on Nutrition as a concrete coordination mechanism.'*

*Private sector: 'Food & nutrition security: are we clear on the difference and our role in both?'*

### 4.4 Democracy and governance as prerequisites for food security

The relationship between democracy, rule of law, good governance and food security was explicitly raised as a thematic line, particularly in the NGO session. The argument was not simply that governance matters as a precondition, but that food security cannot be sustainably achieved without inclusive political structures and accountable institutions. This raises difficult questions about how food security programming engages with, or avoids, the political and governance dimensions of the contexts in which it operates.

Engaging meaningfully on these dimensions requires both investment and patience. Counterparts need to experience genuine commitment over time and not just stated intentions. Sensitive issues such as human rights or civic participation are more productively raised through sustained dialogue than through direct confrontation. The how matters as much as the what: a patient, grounded approach that keeps the conversation open is likely to be more effective than one that risks being perceived as prescriptive.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Stability: work on good governance, gender, land rights.'*

*NGOs: 'Bringing democracy to countries is not the way, working on inclusive and sustainable food systems and investing in civic participation is. Hunger and democracy are not separate questions.'*

*Private sector: 'Unemployment in LMICs is barely mentioned in the policy agenda, yet it is a crucial issue. Job creation in agriculture and food sector more central in programming.'*

## 4.5 Unemployment in LMICs as an underexposed priority

The private sector raised the issue of unemployment in low- and middle-income countries as a factor that is largely absent from the Dutch food security policy agenda, despite being closely linked to food insecurity, stability and the viability of local food systems. Employment generation, especially for the growing youth population, and market development were proposed as structural approaches that deserve more explicit attention alongside traditional smallholder-focused programming.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Market development instead of projects: a structural shift the field barely discusses.'*

*NGOs: 'We target small scale farmers and help them with entrepreneurship. But is that enough?'*

*Private sector: 'Unemployment in LMICs is underexposed, an issue missing from the policy agenda but crucial.'*

## 4.6 The knowledge asymmetry in Partnerships

Beyond questions of financial reciprocity, participants raised the issue of whose knowledge counts in Dutch-led partnerships. Local knowledge, whether from research institutions, grassroots organisations or farming communities is systematically undervalued in programme design, monitoring and definitions of success. Addressing this asymmetry was seen as a prerequisite for genuinely equal partnerships, rather than a secondary concern.

*Knowledge institutions: 'Scientific knowledge is also played off against itself.'*

*NGOs: 'Meaningful inclusion means influence over what we measure and how we define success, not just a seat at the table.'*

*Private sector: 'Levelling the playing field: local research institutes and grassroots movements need to be structurally included, not consulted.'*

## 5. Looking ahead: Food Diamond Dialogue on 2<sup>nd</sup> of June

The three sessions have surfaced a shared sense of urgency, a set of honest questions, and a range of complementary perspectives. Where concrete directions emerged, e.g. on coordination, local Diamond-building, knowledge architecture and clear strategic FNS policy goals, they are reflected in this report. But on the more fundamental political and strategic questions, the sector has been clear: these cannot be answered by any one corner of the Diamond alone.

On 2 June, representatives from all corners of the Diamond will come together in a plenary dialogue. The goal of that session is not to resolve every tension, but to move from parallel conversations to concrete recommendations for Dutch international food and nutrition security policy from 2027 onwards.

This means moving from problem analysis to solution directions: which commitments are realistic, which trade-offs must be named openly, and which forms of collaboration are worth investing in for the long term. This report is not the conclusion, but the starting point for that conversation.

We would like to sincerely thank all participants for their commitment, their openness and honesty in sharing their perspectives, and their valuable suggestions for the way forward. We look forward to receiving your further input on the 2nd of June!

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