

Report Food Diamond Dialogues

Final event, June 2 2026

Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directorate Inclusive Green Growth (IGG))





1. Introduction

In May and June 2026, the Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP) convened a series of four structured dialogues on Dutch international food and nutrition security (FNS) policy, commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directorate Inclusive Green Growth, IGG). Together, these sessions formed the Food Diamond Dialogue series: an initiative designed to bring all corners of the Dutch 'Diamond' into conversation: knowledge institutions, civil society organisations, the private and financial sector, and government, with the aim of generating concrete input for future Dutch international FNS policy from 2027 onwards.

The dialogue series was prompted by a convergence of pressures: a shifting geopolitical landscape, shrinking development budgets, renewed policy emphasis on partnerships, democratisation, good governance, gender and climate, and the publication of the AIV advisory report 'Voedsel in een wankele wereld' (Food in an unstable world, 11 May 2026), which called for a coherent, long-term Dutch international food strategy. The sessions were designed to move from parallel sectoral conversations to a joint, cross-sectoral policy dialogue, culminating in concrete recommendations addressed both to the Ministry and to the Diamond actors themselves.

2. Food Diamond Dialogue session 2-6-26

Opening and presentation of sub-session results

Ivo Demmers (NFP) opened by framing the purpose of the day: to move from inspiration to concrete action: producing policy recommendations for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and taking action within the Diamond itself. He noted the atmosphere across the three May sessions had been energetic, dynamic, and 'too short'. The inspiration for the series came from Thijs Woudstra (BZ), and a key design principle was to first discuss within each corner before bringing the full Diamond together, in order to better understand both differences between and within corners.

Ivo Demmers presented the cartoon overview of the three sub-sessions and their main findings:



INTRODUCTION

FOUR QUESTIONS FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. What opportunities for collaboration within the Dutch Diamond remain untapped?
2. What forms of collaboration / programming deliver both economic opportunities and societal resilience?
3. Who are our strategic partners of the future?
4. What difficult conversations must we have more often within the Dutch Diamond?



12 MAY

RESEARCH & KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS

What do we actually mean by food security?

Whose knowledge counts?

Is win-win really possible?

How do we organise critical reflection?



BUILD A STRONG KNOWLEDGE BASE

- Invest in strong analysis
- Use independent, place-based evidence
- Include LMIC and local research voices
- Clarify what food security means in context
- Make room for critical reflection and dissent

13 MAY

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

For whom is food and nutrition security?

How do we share power more fairly?

How do we strengthen locally led approaches?

How do we invest in civil society?

How do we build policy coherence?



INVEST IN CIVIL SOCIETY

- Put equity at the centre
- Invest in civil society and the middle ground
- Shift power and resources more fairly
- Make programming genuinely locally led
- Bridge humanitarian and sustainability work

18 MAY

PRIVATE & FINANCIAL SECTOR

What policy instruments fit private sector realities?

Where can business realistically invest?

How do we move from talk to action?

What is the local value proposition?

When is win-win possible?



MAKE PARTNERSHIPS PRACTICAL

- Use policy instruments that fit private sector realities
- Do not assume business can or will invest everywhere
- Be transparent about interests and trade-offs
- Focus on viable local food systems and market development
- Simplify procedures and move from talk to action

12 May: Research & Knowledge Institutions: Build a strong knowledge base

- Invest in strong analysis: urged everybody to start with a robust analysis of what they plan to achieve
- Use independent, place-based evidence
- Include LMIC and local research voices
- Clarify what food security means in context
- Make room for critical reflection and dissent
- Reciprocity: not only for our benefit

13 May: Civil Society Organisations: Invest in civil society

- Put equity at the centre; power analysis: how can you improve locally led approaches?
- Invest in civil society and the middle ground
- Shift power and resources more fairly
- Make programming genuinely locally led
- Bridge humanitarian and sustainability work



- Whose food security, a central and recurring question

18 May: Private & Financial Sector: Make partnerships practical

- Use policy instruments that fit private sector realities; there should be a market, which makes working in the Diamond difficult
- Do not assume business can or will invest everywhere; is win-win always possible?
- Be transparent about interests and trade-offs; instruments should be tailored
- Focus on viable local food systems and market development
- Simplify procedures and move from talk to action

Common denominators across sessions

Six themes were identified that cut across all three sector dialogues:

- Whose food security? What is the specific objective of Dutch FNS policy, and are we willing to state that honestly?
- The Dutch Diamond model: When is the Diamond the right form of collaboration, and are we willing to put that to the test?
- Equal partnerships requires more than rhetoric: What constitutes an equal and reciprocal partnership, and how do you test that?
- Fragmentation and lack of long-term commitment weakens continuity and FNS impact: How do we organise long-term commitment, and who dares to guarantee it?
- Climate, biodiversity and resilience are integral to food security: How do we deal with policy coherence across trade, climate, biodiversity, agriculture and food security?
- A changing world order demands flexibility: How do we respond flexibly to crises and urgency, and are we willing to experiment even when outcomes are uncertain?

3. Panel discussion

Panel members: Thijs Woudstra (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Karin Andeweg (Wageningen University & Research), Heske Verburg (Solidaridad), Johannette Klapwijk (Koppert Foundation).

The panel was asked: which question do you think is the most avoided question in Dutch food and nutrition security policy?

In their answers, they included the 6 topics that came out of the former Food Daimons sessions. The Panel discussion did not resolve the central question on whose food security The Netherlands wants to contribute to, but they clearly named: Dutch international food and nutrition security policy serves multiple objectives that are not always aligned, but can be improved through better transparency and collaboration, as well as clearance on the target groups to reach. The reluctance to state this openly is itself an obstacle to more effective policy and impact.



Definition of interests, coordination within the Dutch Diamond are conditional for more effective policy and more meaningful collaboration. A clearer focus on target groups is necessary, mentioned were: Subsistence farmers, urban populations and mid-range consumers, entrepreneurial farmers (who can and will), women, most insecure people.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed during the breakout sessions on 2 June and are grounded in the sector dialogue inputs from May. They are presented per theme, structured around the four themes selected by participants via the Mentimeter poll, followed by synthesis recommendations on the two remaining themes drawn from the May sessions. Each set of recommendations is accompanied by the distinctive contributions from the sector groups that informed them.

Whose food security?

Guiding question: What is the specific objective and who are the beneficiaries of international FNS policy?

- Start with a profound analysis and strategy at the country level. In addition: share who is doing what and where. Develop a theory of change per country in which Dutch interventions (ODA and others) are plotted and linked, align project and programme proposals to it. A promising entry point to contribute to food security of the least food secure and the ones that are at risk of becoming food insecure is often through food system transitions, market system development and sector approach, or a combination of these interventions. Hence not always directly targeted at the most insecure people directly.
- Millions and billions: align Dutch bilateral ODA investments (millions) with the direction given to multilateral organisations such as IFAD, World Bank and FMO through funding criteria and policy guidance (the billions). The leverage effect of aligning these flows dwarfs bilateral project spending.
- Better use of data and evidence: define and measure whether programming is on track not only at the project level but at the impact level: are people actually becoming less food insecure? Evaluate our own assumptions periodically and remain willing to adjust course.

Distinctive sectoral contributions:

- Knowledge institutions: invest in an independent long-term knowledge base; address the question of which knowledge gaps the sector must be able to answer in 10 years.
- Civil society: explicitly focus on the 700 million most food insecure people in LMICs as the starting point; map CSO activities per country to reduce fragmentation and strengthen coordination.



- Private sector: distinguish between ODA-funded programming targeting the poorest and other (f.e. trade or combi) instruments and support; be transparent about which instrument serves which objective.

4.2 The Dutch Diamond model

Guiding question: When is the Dutch Diamond the right form of collaboration, and are we willing to put that to the test?

- This theme was not selected for the plenary breakout session. The following directions are drawn from the May sector dialogues and the plenary (panel) discussion. -

- Apply the Diamond selectively and deliberately: assess for each context whether the Diamond configuration is the most appropriate form of collaboration, rather than treating it as a default. Flexible selection of actors can be more effective depending on the specific country context.
- Mirror the Diamond: invest in building a local Diamond on the partner country side as a prerequisite for genuinely equal collaboration. This requires upfront investment in relationship-building, local capacity and cross-sectoral alignment.
- Build in periodic reality checks: is this still a Diamond in practice, or has it become an administrative template? Regular honest evaluation is essential.
- Agree on a shared definition: confusion about what the Diamond is, and how it differs from other multi-stakeholder approaches, undermines both internal coherence and external credibility. Clarity on this is a prerequisite.
- The Diamond approach is a means to an end.
- Note: do not assume a functioning local Diamond exists everywhere. Not all contexts allow for freedom of association. The question of 'align with local agendas, but with whom?' must be answered honestly per country context.

4.3 Equal partnerships

Guiding question: What constitutes an equal and reciprocal partnership, and how do you test that?

- Make balanced partnerships the starting point: ensure that everyone's power dynamics, interests and gains are explicitly defined within a partnership. Give space and opportunities to parties that may not currently have them, including local research institutes, grassroots movements and partner-country civil society.
- Give space and opportunities to certain parties that may not currently have them. This includes actively creating conditions for parties with less power or resources to participate meaningfully.
- Design for continuity beyond the project period: partnerships must be structured so that impact continues after funding ends. Local ownership and local institutional anchoring are prerequisites, not afterthoughts.



- Leverage complementarity: the different corners of the Diamond are often complementary in where they work and what networks they have. Collaboration and sharing of insights across corners is an underutilised route to greater collective impact.

Distinctive sectoral contributions:

- Knowledge institutions: address knowledge hierarchies within partnerships: local knowledge and LMIC research voices must be structurally included, not merely consulted.
- Civil society: meaningful inclusion means genuine influence over what is measured and how success is defined, not just a seat at the table.
- Private sector: ask the difficult questions openly; step out of the shadows on interests and trade-offs.

4.4 Fragmentation and long-term commitment

Guiding question: How do we organise long-term commitment, and who dares to guarantee it?

- Core funding for longer-term plans, based on a local vision on systems change: invest in this with catalytic financing. Any short-term project must be designed to be catalytic, contributing to a longer-term objective that exceeds the project period.
- Align with local agendas: government and other local stakeholders, including from the local Diamond, should set the direction. Small programmes must lead to longer-term objectives that are co-owned locally. Mutual trust and trustbuilding are prerequisites.
- Focus on Dutch strengths and align with others in the donor and actor landscape: the Dutch contribution is relatively small in financial terms. Where do we add ultimate value? Focus on that, and coordinate with others rather than duplicating.
- Adaptive programming: build flexibility into programme design and management to deal with changes over a 10–20 year horizon. Procedures and instruments must be fit for purpose; current requirements are often too rigid.
- Local ownership: not only government; anchor programmes with clear ownership in the countries where we operate, involving private sector, civil society and other local actors, not only governments.

4.5 Climate, biodiversity and resilience

Guiding question: How do we deal with policy coherence across trade, climate, biodiversity, agriculture and food security?

- Make a clear choice to prioritise biodiversity and climate as this fundamentally affects FNS. Contextualise per country: not every context requires the same approach.
- Introduce minimal do-no-harm mechanisms as a floor standard: if not all policy boxes can be ticked, at least ensure that what is done does no harm on the dimensions not addressed. Some



quick wins have long-term harm; this must be considered at the programme design stage. The intention should be to do good; do-no-harm is the minimum, not the aspiration.

- Introduce joint values in conversations and translate these into pricing systems to ensure biodiversity and climate resilience: true pricing, payment for ecosystem services, and other mechanisms that internalise environmental costs rather than externalising them.

Distinctive sectoral contributions:

- Knowledge institutions: invest in the evidence base for how agroecological, regenerative and low-input approaches can be scaled; these are complementary to, not competing with, high-tech solutions.
- Civil society: address the question of Dutch-promoted export sectors (dairy, potato, horticulture) and whether they are the right direction from a climate and biodiversity perspective. Use food-based dietary guidelines to steer agricultural production.
- Private sector: be transparent about the risk of creating new dependencies through Dutch technological solutions; low-to-mid tech pathways are often more scalable and locally appropriate.

4.6 A changing world order

Guiding question: How do we respond flexibly to crises and urgency, and are we willing to experiment even when outcomes are uncertain?

- This theme was not selected for the plenary breakout session. The following directions are drawn from the May sector dialogues. -

- Accept uncertainty and build it into programme design: experiment deliberately, name the possibility of failure openly, and build in learning loops. Adaptive management is not a risk mitigation strategy; it is a prerequisite for relevance in turbulent times.
- Leverage the EU more strategically: the Netherlands should more deliberately use EU channels, frameworks and funding to amplify its impact on food security. This is currently underutilised.
- Use geopolitics as an entry point: the current global context, including supply chain vulnerabilities, the energy transition and shifting alliances, creates openings for food security conversations that did not previously exist. Be willing to use them.

5. Commitments and additional topics

5.1 Commitments made on 2 June

At the close of the plenary session, participants were invited to share a commitment or concrete action their organisation would take forward based on the outcomes of the group discussions. The following offers and comments were made, based on current experiences and programmes:



- Revision of the multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) guide to a 2.0 version, adding political economy and conflict elements to make it fit for the current context.
- Provision of data infrastructure for scalable food system partnerships, enabling actors to build on existing concepts rather than reinventing the wheel.
- Sharing insights from local agribusinesses and nutritious food processors in African countries;
- Offering a network of local partners, civil society actors, grassroots, women's and farmers' groups, working on biodiversity and food security.
- Offering researcher networks on food security, local and indigenous knowledge, sustainable food systems, co-creation of knowledge, and power dynamics.
- Start piloting local Diamond approaches in their implementing countries of operation across three regions.
- Commitment to developing guiding principles for reciprocal partnerships, willingness to share experiences as an example of Dutch Diamond practices, including for the MSP guide 2.0.
- Continuation of coordination with NFP and synergy-finding on trade and Dutch Diamond approach, including on agrologistics.
- Commitment to keeping gender on the agenda; offering access to networks focused on empowerment, gender and access to finance for farmers and women in 15 focus countries.
- Making flexibility guidelines for food security programming, available to practitioners and donors.
- NFP Connects Platform can be used for sharing knowledge, case studies and commitments; NFP is committed to set this up.
- Commitment to continuing these dialogues and moving towards more action-oriented phases, looking at roles, responsibilities and how to work together across all corners of the Diamond.

5.2 Conversations that were not covered

Beyond the six shared strategic themes, the sector dialogues surfaced a number of substantive topics that were raised but could not be fully explored within the scope of the sessions. These themes do not fit neatly within the six shared concerns, 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.

- 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?
- Fragile contexts and conflict: food security programming in fragile states and conflict-affected areas requires fundamentally different approaches. 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. This needs to be pointed out honestly, not worked around.

- Nutrition as a distinct policy theme: nutrition and food security are frequently discussed in the same breath, yet they are distinct policy areas with different target groups, interventions and indicators. A more explicit and separate Dutch position on nutrition is needed.
- Democracy and governance as prerequisites for food security: the relationship between democracy, rule of law, good governance and food security was raised as a thematic line, particularly by civil society. Food security cannot be sustainably achieved without inclusive political structures and accountable institutions. Engaging meaningfully on these dimensions requires sustained investment and patience; sensitive issues are more productively raised through long-term dialogue than direct confrontation.
- Unemployment and income improvement in LMICs as an underexposed priority: the private sector raised unemployment in LMICs as a factor largely absent from the Dutch FNS policy agenda, despite being closely linked to food insecurity, stability and the viability of local food systems. Employment generation and market development deserve more explicit attention alongside traditional smallholder-focused programming.
- Knowledge asymmetry in partnerships: beyond financial reciprocity, whose knowledge counts in Dutch-led partnerships? Local knowledge from research institutions, grassroots organisations and farming communities is systematically undervalued in programme design, monitoring and definitions of success. Addressing this asymmetry is a prerequisite for genuinely equal partnerships.