



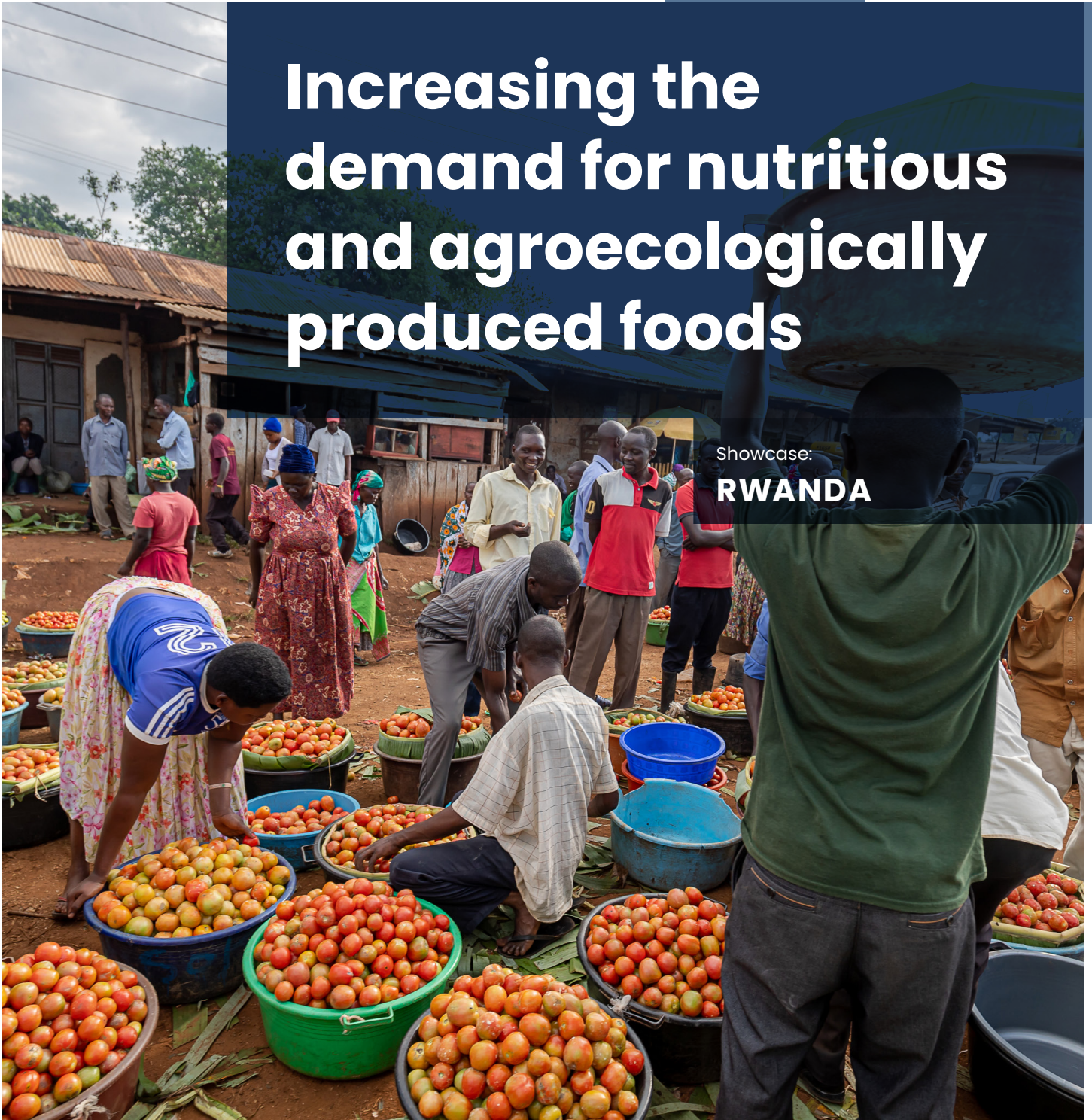
# NUTRITION *in* CITY ECOSYSTEMS



Knowledge & Demand leaflet 1

## Increasing the demand for nutritious and agroecologically produced foods

Showcase:  
**RWANDA**





The current food system is failing to produce and deliver high-quality diets to meet the nutritional needs of more than 8 billion people worldwide. About a third of the world's population suffers from some form of malnutrition, and many countries face a triple burden of malnutrition, the coexistence of overnutrition, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

Our globe is experiencing booming urbanization with people moving away from rural areas into towns and cities, leading to changes in nutritional intake due to readily available highly processed, nutritionally poor food. There is an urgent need for improving health outcomes in urban and peri-urban settings and transforming our food system towards more sustainable ways of producing and consuming foods.

The Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project works to improve nutrition and reduce poverty by increasing the supply of and demand for nutritious and agroecologically produced foods in six secondary cities across Bangladesh, Kenya, and Rwanda. The NICE project works closely with local governments at city level and aims to facilitate locally led actions to improve nutrition through agricultural, food, and health sector collaborations and public-private engagements, with strong emphasis on the role of women and youth entrepreneurs (see › [Project Factsheet](#)).

In the NICE project, a participatory process with city officials from different sectors (agriculture, health, education), local businesses, farmers, civil society, and consumers, led to the selection of food value chains the NICE project focuses on. Additionally, activities for demand generation are being implemented. These activities include work in schools and health facilities, as well as with early childhood

**Agroecology** is a holistic and integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agriculture and food systems. i

Source: FAO

**A nutritious food** is a food that in the context where it is consumed and for the individual that consumes it, provides beneficial nutrients (e.g. vitamins, major and trace minerals, essential amino acids, essential fatty acids, dietary fibre) and minimises potentially harmful elements (e.g. antinutrients, quantities of saturated fats and sugars). i

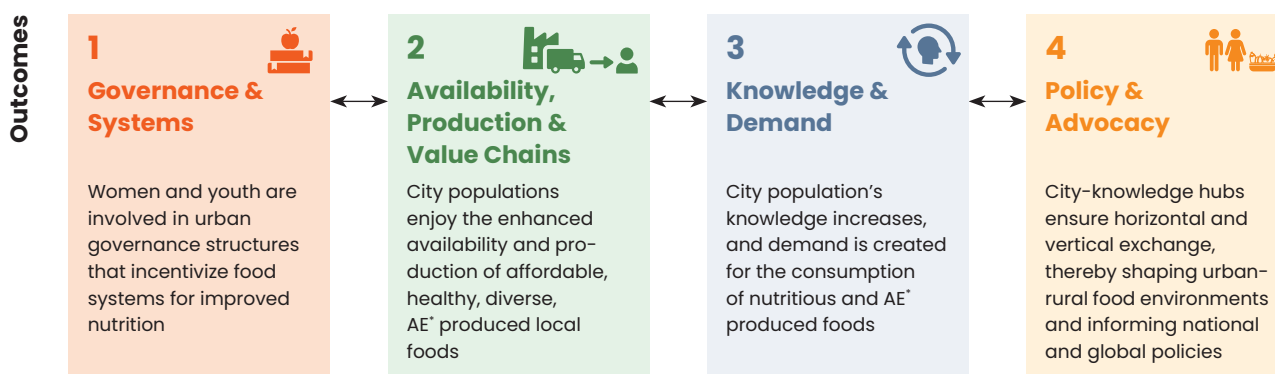
Source: GAIN



Figure 1: Tomatoes, carrots and onions are some of the Rwanda-specific value chains in the NICE project

development centers, and small grant schemes to support cooperatives and reach vulnerable population groups that lack the means to purchase nutritious and agroecologically produced foods.

This leaflet presents more information about the demand creation workstream of the NICE project, which aims at creating knowledge and demand for nutritious and agroecologically produced foods.



\*AE = agroecologically

Figure 2: The four main outcomes of the NICE project



## Why is there a need to create demand for production and consumption of nutritious and agroecologically produced foods?

It is widely recognized that access to and availability of a certain food does not necessarily guarantee its utilization or consumption. We need to go beyond supplying and informing, and instead use effective measures, such as emotional appeals and social influences, to enhance food production, improve

supply practices, and stimulate demand for nutritious foods. In a world of multiple options and widespread misinformation, we need to gain key insights on motivators and nudge farmers and consumers towards better production practices and consumption choices for themselves and their families.

The demand creation efforts include four stages:

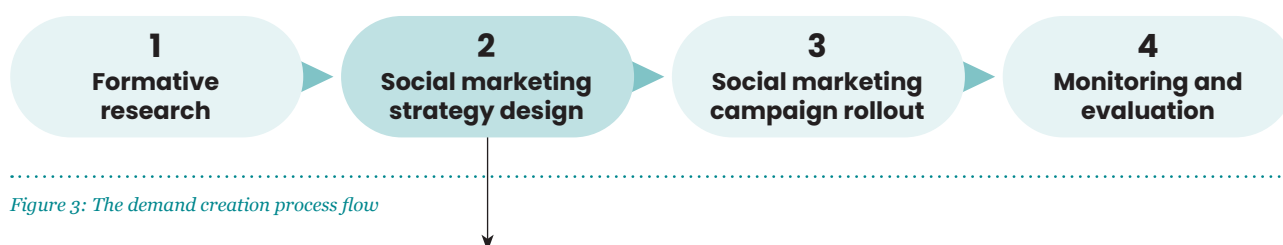


Figure 3: The demand creation process flow



Figure 4: The social marketing strategy design process

**Formative research** is the basis for developing effective strategies, including communication channels, for influencing behaviour change. It helps researchers identify and understand the characteristics – interests, behaviours, and needs – of target populations that influence their decisions and actions. i

Source: FAO. Term Portal

**Social Marketing** seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviours that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. A social marketing campaign seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programs that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable. i

Source: International Social Marketing Association, 2013

## How did we design the formative research study for the NICE project?

### Rwanda case:

The objective of the formative research was to interview farmers and consumers to obtain insights that could inform the development of a comprehensive social marketing campaign for nutritious and agroecologically produced foods in two cities, Rusizi and Rubavu, in Rwanda.

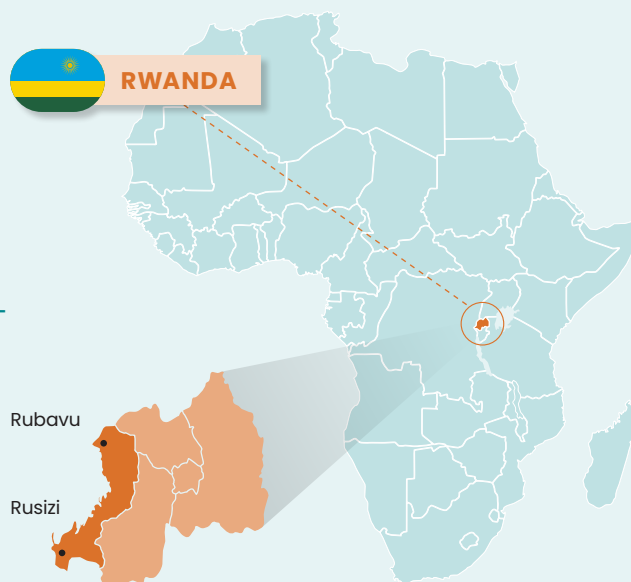


Figure 5: Map of Africa and Rwanda, with the Western Province, where Rubavu and Rusizi City are situated

### The used qualitative research methods were comprised of four different data collection methods:

- 1 **In-home and farm observations:** we observed practices and behaviour at home and the farm.
- 2 **Shop-along observations:** we observed consumers to monitor purchasing behaviour.
- 3 **In-depth interviewing:** we developed a topic guide to deeply understand food production, supply and consumption practices, health and nutrition knowledge and beliefs of consumers.
- 4 **Qualitative market scanning:** we surveyed the fruits and vegetables markets, the local kiosks and boutique stores which sell fresh and whole foods as well as packaged and branded foods and beverages, to understand the complete external landscape that our consumers are exposed to in terms of choices for purchase and consumption.

The target sample for this study comprised a total of 45 respondents: 30 household respondents, mainly young women and women of reproductive age, and 15 male and female farmers, who are being considered as food producers and consumers. The research questions for households focused on food purchase, preparation, and consumption behaviours. On the other hand, for the farmers, in addition to

understanding food consumption, the research questions were focused on farming practices, challenges, and sources of information. At a general level, the study also aimed to understand personal motivations and aspirations that could be used to build relevance with the targeted consumers and farmers in Rubavu and Rusizi.

## What were the general findings obtained from the formative research?

### Motivations and anxieties around food production, purchasing and consumption among Rwandan consumers

Among interviewed consumers, there is a general understanding of what constitutes healthy and balanced diets:

*“Healthy foods provide the body with energy, disease protection, and growth, and the preparation process is essential in preserving the nutrition in these healthy foods.”*

*Young mother, Rubavu*

Consumers recognized that a diverse diet needs to include different food groups and they identified the food groups as:

- › **Energy-giving foods:** Starches featured in all meals, such as potatoes and green bananas.
- › **Body-building foods:** Main proteins consumed, such as small fish and beans.
- › **Fight diseases foods:** Vegetables regularly consumed, such as carrots and amaranth.

Home-cooked food is preferred by the interviewed consumers because it is equated with trust, is less expensive than purchasing ready-made meals, and allows for greater hygiene control.

Shopping for food items is done either in a general market, from a neighborhood kiosk or boutique shop. Decisions around grocery shopping are primarily driven by cost, children's preference, and nutritional content. Due to budget constraints, pregnant and lactating women usually do not purchase or consume special food for their condition. They would, however, eat more fruit if they had a larger budget.

Social and healthcare workers and other women, such as relatives and neighbors, are considered the most trusted sources of information regarding health and nutrition.

Additionally, information about new foods is mostly obtained through market traders, trial and error, peer and adverts in radio and television.

Lastly, to develop an effective social marketing campaign that connects emotionally with consumers, it is necessary to understand the values and beliefs of the community. Harmony and peace of mind were found to be the most important cultural values. A true sense of achievement is linked with being productive, smart and resourceful, while also being highly agreeable and cooperative.



Figure 6: Young male cooking at home



Figure 7: Neighborhood kiosk

## Aspirations and worries around food production among Rwandan farmers

The local farmer in Rwanda is a male or female family head, typically 25–45 years old, who is optimistic and keen on growth:

*“I plan to have a good harvest to feed my home and sell the surplus to earn money and use the same money to raise the living standards of my family.”*

*Crop farmer, Rusizi*

Crop farmers get at least 80% of their household income from what they sell at the market, whereas fish farmers depend on farming for at least 40%. Their main customer base are wholesalers and middlemen.

Farmers’ main technological investments include farm inputs, agri inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides, underlining their limited farming innovation. Local cooperatives, government bodies, international partners, and financial institutions support farm practices in various ways through training. The different forms of support needed mentioned in the formative research comprise agricultural supplies to enable crop irrigation and fishing, facilitated access to subsidized fertilizers, and financial or non-financial capital, such as poultry, and trainings for good agricultural practices. However, it was observed that crop and poultry farmers received more support compared to fish farmers.



Figure 8: Woman and man crop farmers in the field



Figure 9: Fish farmer in Rusizi/Lake Kivu

Most farmers are part of groups that serve their social needs beyond farming, where they talk about self-development including health insurance and savings. Very few farmers work by themselves, they value being part of the community. Farmers’ aspirations were also seen to be linked to peace of mind and harmony – with others and even with the environment. Farmers aspire to expand their practice by incorporating new crops, especially vegetables and fruits, and accessing various farm input tools, such as fertilizers and cold rooms.

Lastly, radio is the most common media platform through which farmers access information and advertisements.

## Why is a targeted social marketing campaign important?

The formative research helped ascertain that apart from financial limitations, there are gaps between what the consumer perceives as healthy and nutritious and what their practices are. The social mar-

keting is an effective way to address this gap in the perception of nutritious and agroecologically produced foods and any potential barriers to increased purchase and consumption of these foods.

**A social marketing approach aims to encourage the target audience to modify their behaviour in either of the following four ways:**

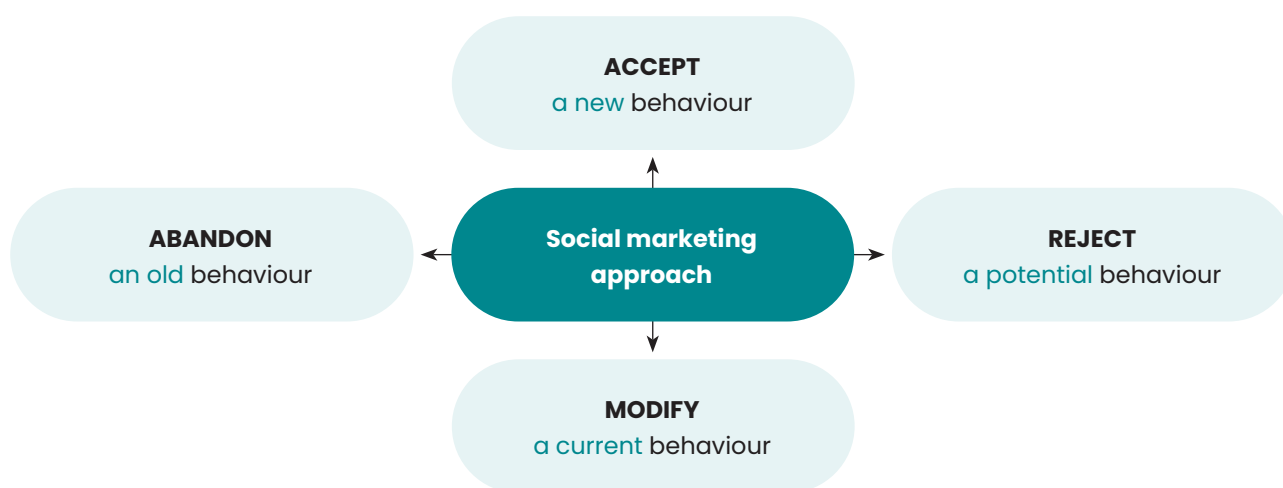


Figure 10: Four ways through which behaviour can be modified in a social marketing approach

## What does the social marketing campaign look like in the NICE project?

The social marketing campaign in the NICE project speaks to a broad audience with the target segments being pregnant and lactating women and their husbands, mothers with at least one child under 5 years and their husbands, adolescents and their parents, and farmers.

The aim of the NICE social marketing campaign was to build awareness about dietary diversity, clean, tasty and local food in an inspirational, appreciative and positive way. In this regard, a local Rwandan creative agency helped to design a branded and

targeted social marketing campaign called *Neeza*, which means “All is well” in Kinyarwanda. The campaign idea is rooted in the consumer and farmer aspirations of a life where everybody lives in harmony and works and succeeds together.

Healthier choices are conveyed as the means to this aspired life. The overall campaign idea *Neeza* speaks to each target segment differently with specific messages conveyed through different channels. For instance, *Neeza* (All is well) is articulated as *Hinga Neza* (Grow well/farm well) for farmer-facing

interventions specifically, *Baho Neza* (Live well) and *Rya Neza* (Eat well) for the general population and *Kura Neza* (Grow well) for mothers specifically.

The first phase of this social marketing campaign lasted for 3 months.

### The first phase of the NICE social marketing campaign comprises activations in three main settings:



› **Market activations** consist of a community roadshow wherein a skit is presented in a common market ground and attracts up to 800 people. The campaign's key messages are woven into the skit and there is information for everyone to learn from.



› **Health facility activations** involve a Nutrition Champion, a well-known and experienced health worker or nutritionist, who addresses a gathering of mothers in an interactive session. During the activations the health worker speaks about feeding practices for children and during pregnancy encouraging parents to make better food choices during purchasing and consumption.



› **Farmer activations** involve male and female farmers registered in local farmers' cooperatives. Champion farmers speak to a gathering of farmers in an interactive session and discuss the advantages and challenges of agroecological ways of farming and how to navigate these.



## How will a monitoring & evaluation of the social marketing campaign help?

M&E is carried out accompanying the social marketing to assess the impact of the social marketing campaign. After the campaign, it will be repeated with the same sample to assess its effects.

In summary, the key findings of the M&E will help assess the awareness level among consumers and farmers for nutritious and agroecologically produced foods. For instance, thanks to the M&E we will understand if the campaign improved the awareness around the production and consumption of healthy foods and diverse diets. Additionally, we will identify if the consumption of the selected food value chains increased among women of reproductive age. We will also determine healthy purchasing and cooking practices and be able to initiate interventions to support these behaviours. Moreover, we are tracking the agroecological practices used by Rwandan farmers and the most common agroecological principles applied before and after the social marketing campaign.

In the second phase of the social marketing campaign, building on the awareness created about diverse, clean, tasty and local foods, we will focus on fostering more excitement and credibility around the concept of production and consumption of nutritious and agroecologically produced foods. Additionally, there will be a deeper focus on each target segment; pregnant and lactating women, mothers with at least one child under 5 years, adolescents and farmers. This second phase of the NICE social marketing campaign will aim at achieving positive and sustainable behaviour change.

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Further information is available on the **NICE webpage:**

[nice-nutrition.ch](https://nice-nutrition.ch)