Notes

- **Update on TOPS ANRM activities since July**
  - *Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting in Uganda* (September 20-22. See resources on the FSN Network website [here](#).)
    - 3 agriculture-related sessions: Strengthening Smallholder Farmer Resilience to a Changing Climate; Seed systems and markets; Engaging Youth in Agriculture: Age and Gender Considerations to Improve Program Design
  - *Updates from the region (East & Southern Africa)*
    - **Case Study Series:** Eric is writing case studies every month to highlight a program or approach that’s working well; use as a knowledge sharing method.
      - Please reach out to Eric ([ECarlberg@mercycorps.org](mailto:ECarlberg@mercycorps.org)) if you would like one of your programs highlighted in a case study. We are looking to highlight agriculture activities that have some evidence of positive impact in programming. These case studies aren’t a rigorous review, but we do want some evidence or indicators that show a positive impact in programming.
    - **Permagarden** refresher training in Karamoja, Uganda a few months ago
    - **Cross visits**
      - Malawi - FFP staff visit Panthunzi, a local organization working to design school gardens. 45 staff attended.
      - Uganda – Visit to Busaino Fruits to learn about Patrick Kirrya’s CSA practices.
  - *Update from HQ-level*
    - Been working on the Resilience Design in Smallholder Farming Systems toolkit
    - ANRM Core Competency Resource List is in design phase
    - **Nutrition-Sensitive Agricultural Value Chains** event on October 26th with SPRING.
      - Co-hosted the event with SPRING. 20 different organizations attended. Non-profit, for-profit and USAID (FFP and BFS).
    - Thoughts from attendees:
      - “Good level of debate around what a NSVC looks like, and wide variety of opinions on how do we go about doing this. Great to get various opinions in the room.”
      - “I thought the specific questions asked from participants were the most helpful for non-nutritionists. Knowing what to look for helps identify existing or needed pathways”
      - “I think this sector could really benefit from intense focus on social and behavior change efforts around the income pathway. Economic growth and income improvement projects will always be around and it’s too good of an opportunity for us to pass up. Decision-making around income planning and use is a critical
behavior to the sustainability and success of any nutrition sensitive intervention. Everyone always posits that the income pathway is the most difficult... all the more reason to focus on it and develop evidence around what works and what doesn’t.”

- **Event materials available** here.

- **Update on TOPS ANRM activities for coming months**
  - In October, had TOPS annual planning; End of June is the current end of activities for TOPS (close-out in August)
    - Working on a Business Plan appendix to go with it.
  - Resilience Design Toolkit – finish drafting end of this year; editors working on it Jan/Feb.
  - Seed response event on February 2nd, Washington DC
    - Putting this ½-day event on in conjunction with Louise Sperling from CRS

- **Seeds event discussion**
  - TOPS is collaborating with Louise Sperling from CRS on February 2nd in DC.
  - “This session will share practical insights for reinforcing the seed security of smallholder farmers. It will review the latest tools available for identifying diverse seed security constraints and share on-the-ground implementation responses to address common resilience and nutrition constraints. The discussion will aim to build capacity for seed security analysis and to design programs that can be affected within 1-4 year time frames.” (Event focus subject to change)
  - Questions for input: What do you want to learn about related to this theme? What intervention phase (Immediate post emergency, Recover/chronic stress, Stable development) are you most interested in learning about in terms of seed security?
    - Among our partners, propagating seeds for sale/distribution is really important. Many times local research institutes and/or other seed production units don't have the production capacity (PC). PC is the constraint, rather than distribution.
    - The importance of the village agents in the input market and the last mile distribution for seed.
      - We need to focus on informal seed sellers in formal markets.
    - Address access to vegetative seed. Lots of focus on cereal seeds, but what about sweet potatoes, cassavas, etc. seeds? Hope the event diversifies in that direction a bit too.
    - In addition to just village workers to distribute seeds important to have village seed sellers or community agro dealers linked to private input suppliers. This model will make it more sustainable.
      - Zambia PROFIT Plus has been extremely successful doing this and was mentioned in the Mozambique RFP
      - CAD's are people from rural villages so they are reaching the last mile
In addition to inputs they also lead farmer field schools, agro business and savings groups and provide nutrition education.

Nutrition-sensitive agricultural value chains discussion
- VC programs historically focus on income, but as ag-nutrition has become increasingly integrated into programs in the last few years, people are looking now if VCs can be nutrition-sensitive or have a nutrition lens as well.
- **Debate Topic: Should NSVC activities be prioritized over traditional value chain activities?**
  - In 2 groups, discuss either: (1) why NSVC activities *should be* prioritized OR (2) why NSVC activities *should not be* prioritized.
  - In your break-out group, discuss your side of the argument. Also note any program examples/evidence that support your argument.
  - If no good program examples arise, think about experience of field teams or other stakeholders who are (dis)interested in the topic at a practical level. Why is that?
  - Elect one representative to present your arguments back in plenary

**PRO-NSVC Arguments:**
- Can be consumed and sold.
- Addresses drivers of malnutrition by having access to nutritious foods
- Nutrition-sensitive value chains are not only about producing nutrient-rich crops.
  - VCs can also be made more nutrition-sensitive through SBCC strategies - such as messaging or other activities to encourage behavior change to using income to purchase more nutritious foods etc.
- Contexts that create opening for high value nutritional crops where there are economic incentives
- Gender power dynamics are improved because women have more control over income and consumption for more nutritious crops such as vegetables or small grains than for more income-focused crops or large livestock.

**AGAINST-NSVC Arguments:**
- VCs that might be prioritized for their nutritional value might be out of alignment with either farmer/producer or national crop priorities.
  - e.g. from Malawi asked to prioritize nutrition-sensitive VC, turned out that pigeon pea VC wasn’t what farmers wanted to do
- Some of the programming principles for nutrition-sensitive agriculture would require a course correction for the way that some traditional value chain activities are executed. these include non-market-focused priorities such as: empowering women, maintaining or improving the natural resource base, and targeting the most vulnerable
- Some of the work that needs to be done to protect the nutritional value of crops along the value chain require stronger testing, research, QA and food safety capacity at the country level than often exists
- Integrating criteria for nutrition into the VC analysis can add a level of complexity for project staff.
- Traditional VCs focus on maximizing income from crop sales; nutrition-sensitive interventions might require that projects divert their focus away from this goal or that they have multiple equally important foci, which may not be realistic in light of project time line, staff skill, market opportunity or funding.

- **Next steps with NSVC**
  - Ideas from attendees:
    - Series of webinars to engage field teams to learn from and share with
      - What should the focus of the webinars be?
        - To optimize field-based perspectives, continuing to have regional events is great.
      - Give people concrete examples – PH processing & maintaining nutrient content post-harvest.
      - Actionable guidance during the webinars would be most helpful.
      - I think that we should also look at gender roles, intra household decision-making, etc. in many of these VC discussions. This ideally would be a recurring theme in all of our events.
      - Suggest gender power dynamics within the household on NSCV.

**Attendees**

Abby Love, The TOPS Program
Andrea Mottram, The TOPS Program
Dan Norell, World Vision
Eric Carlberg, The TOPS Program
Gitau Mbure, World Vision
Jennie Lane, Land O’Lakes
Ladd, ACDI/VOCA
Laura Ostenso, Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation
Makhtar Diop, Regenerative Agriculture Resource Center (RARC)
Sandrine Chetail, Mercy Corps
Sarah Hogan, SPRING
Sarah Simons, Save the Children
Serena Stepanovic, URC
Sophie Hollingsworth, The TOPS Program