



**FEED<sup>THE</sup>FUTURE**

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative

# Empowering Women in Agriculture: Maximizing Nutrition Gains

Anna Herforth

Gender webinar series - March 26, 2014



Photos: Anna Herforth



## “Women are the nexus”



“Women are the nexus of the agriculture, nutrition, and health sectors” (*“The way forward” report 2011*)

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

“Work with women farmers” one of the top 4 evidence-based factors of success; Strategy presented around women as the nexus (Sept 2012)



THE WORLD BANK

“Invest in women” one of the top 4 recommendations to improve nutrition impact (Jan 2013)

UK Hunger  
Alliance

“Empower women farmers” one of the top 3 recommendations to improve nutrition impact (April 2013)



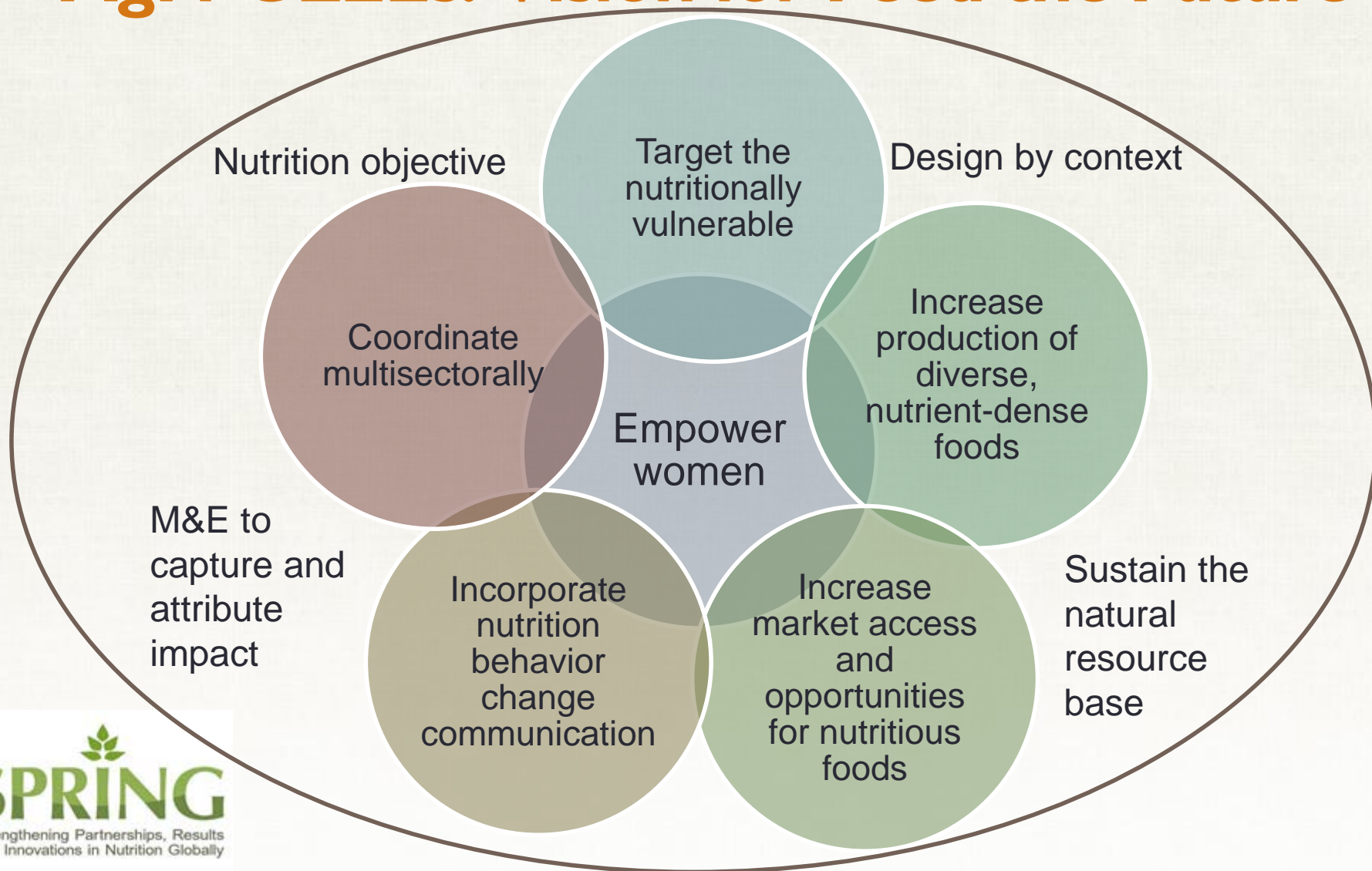
**Review: “Empowering women” discussed as a core principle in 100% of agency guidance documents (May 2013)**



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## AgN-GLEEs: Vision for Feed the Future





# Why? What we know:

- Women have key roles as farmers and caregivers
- Women's empowerment linked to >50% of reductions in all child stunting from 1970-1995 (mainly through education)
- Evidence from many studies, in many parts of the world: Women's discretionary income has greater impact on child nutrition and food security than men's (UNICEF 2011, Smith et al 2003)
- Among agriculture projects that have improved nutrition, women's active involvement has been a consistent element (World Bank 2007, Leroy and Frongillo 2007, Hawkes and Ruel 2006)
- There are gaps in access to assets and information
- Agriculture can pose various harms to nutrition when women are not empowered



# Potential for harm

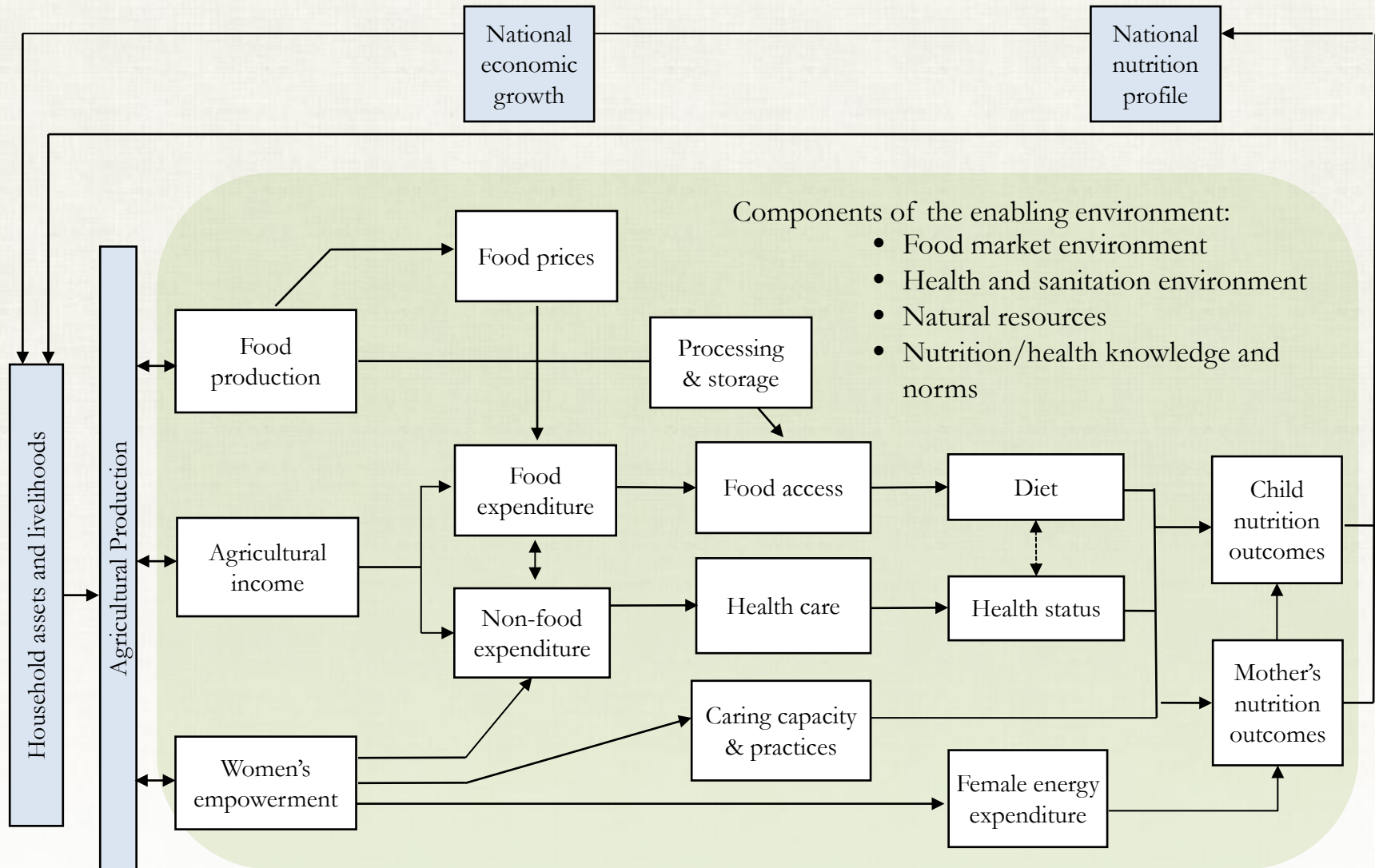
- Labor requirements that are incompatible with optimal infant and young child feeding
- Time poverty can limit opportunities for earning and learning
- Excessive physical activity during pregnancy increases risks of low birthweight and preterm birth; also can reduce lactation
- Women are more likely than men to suffer from seasonal energy deficiency and seasonal weight loss.
- Occupational health hazards in agriculture can have an impact on women, and on their children in-utero. (e.g. agrochemical use, heightened malaria risk)





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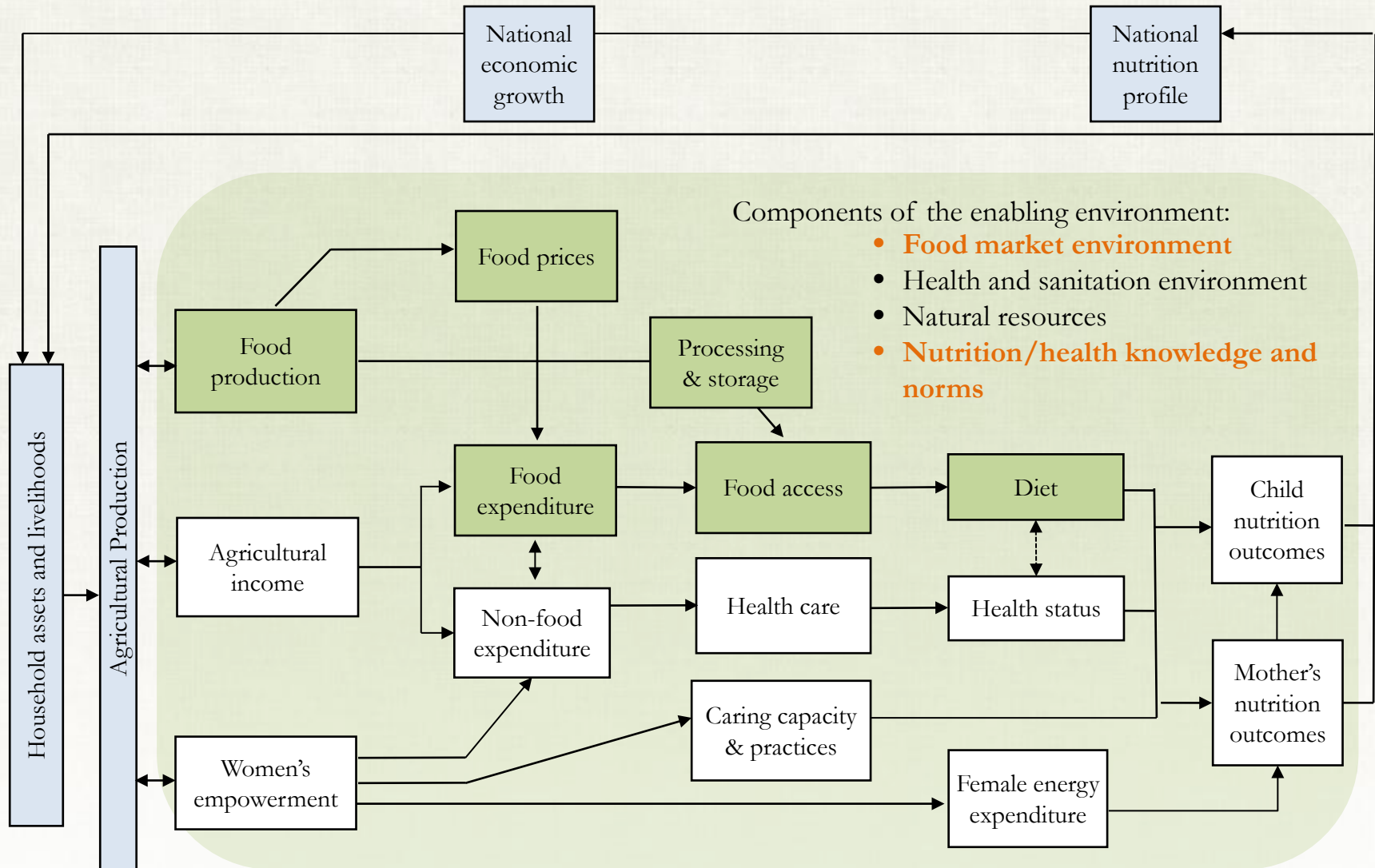


Adapted for Feed the Future by Herforth and Harris and SPRING, from Gillespie et al. (2012) and Headey et al. (2011).



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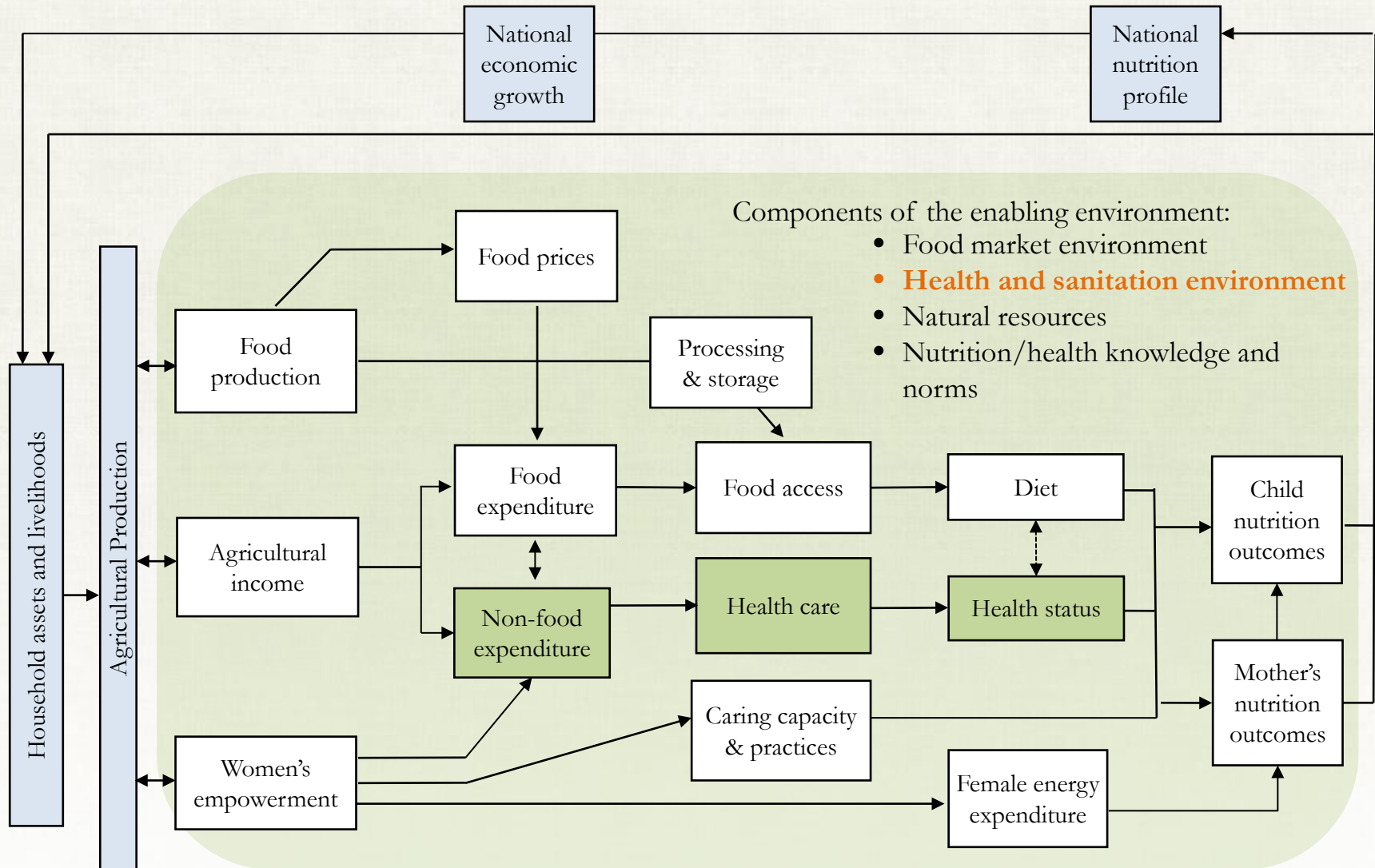


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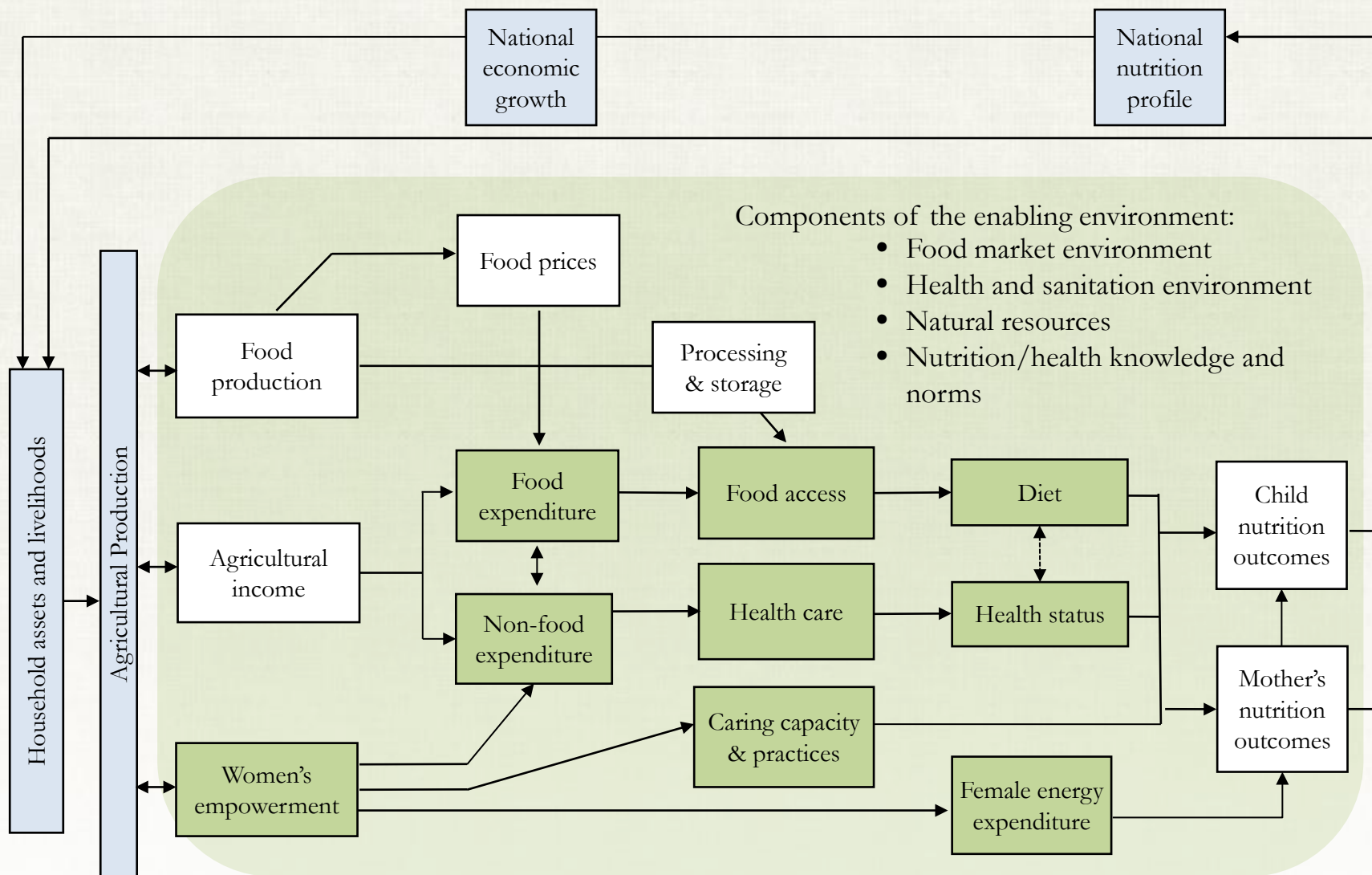


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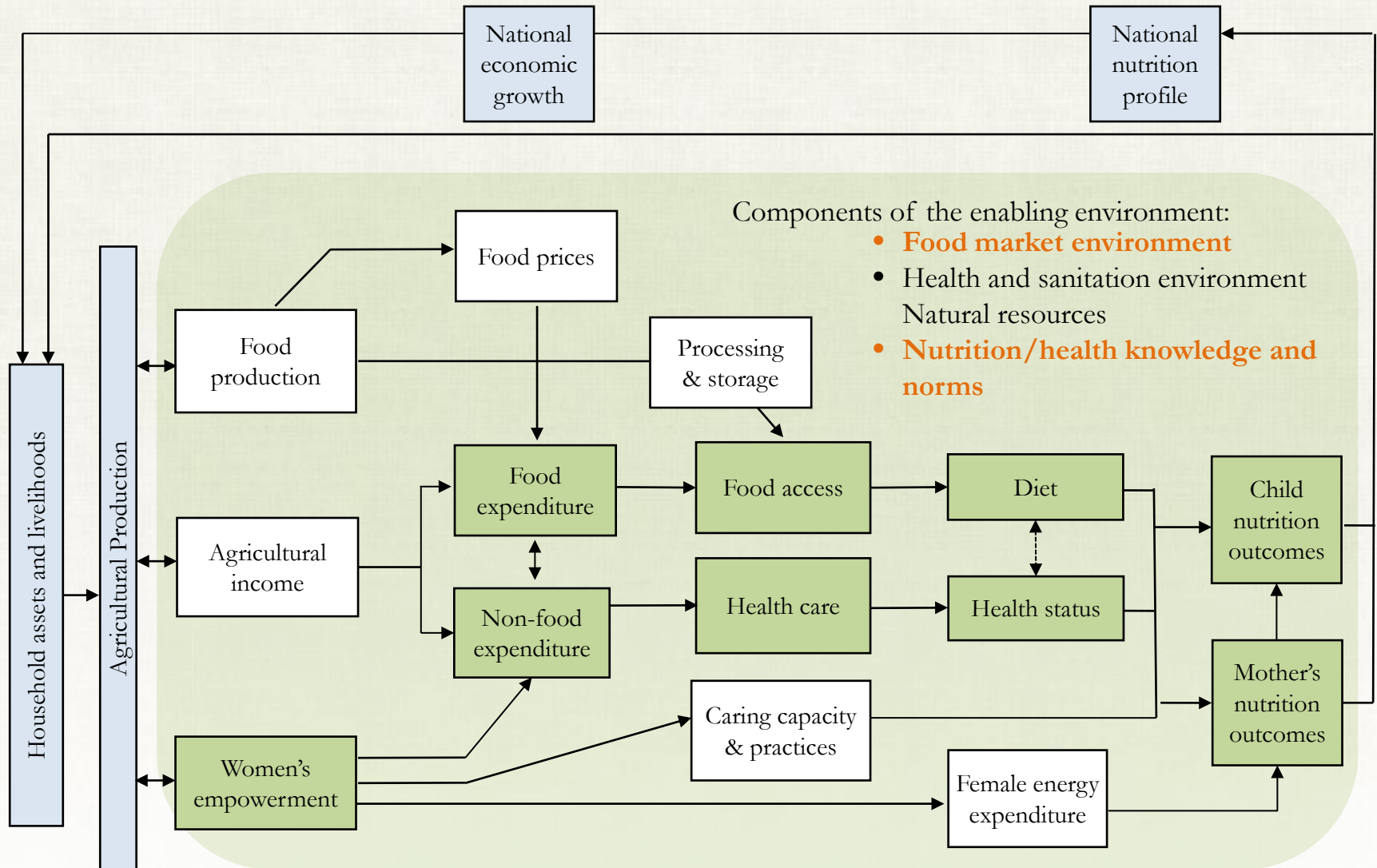


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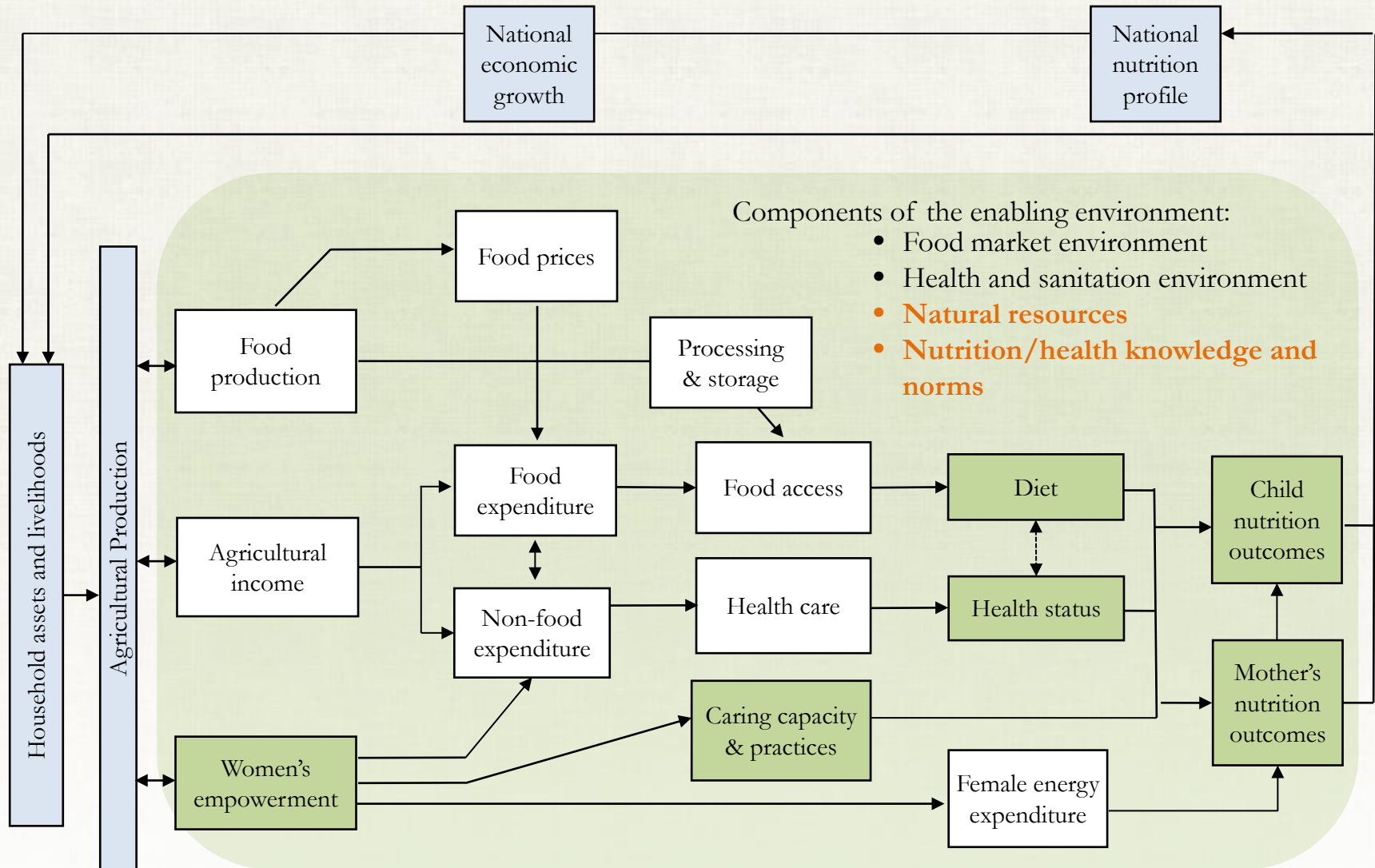


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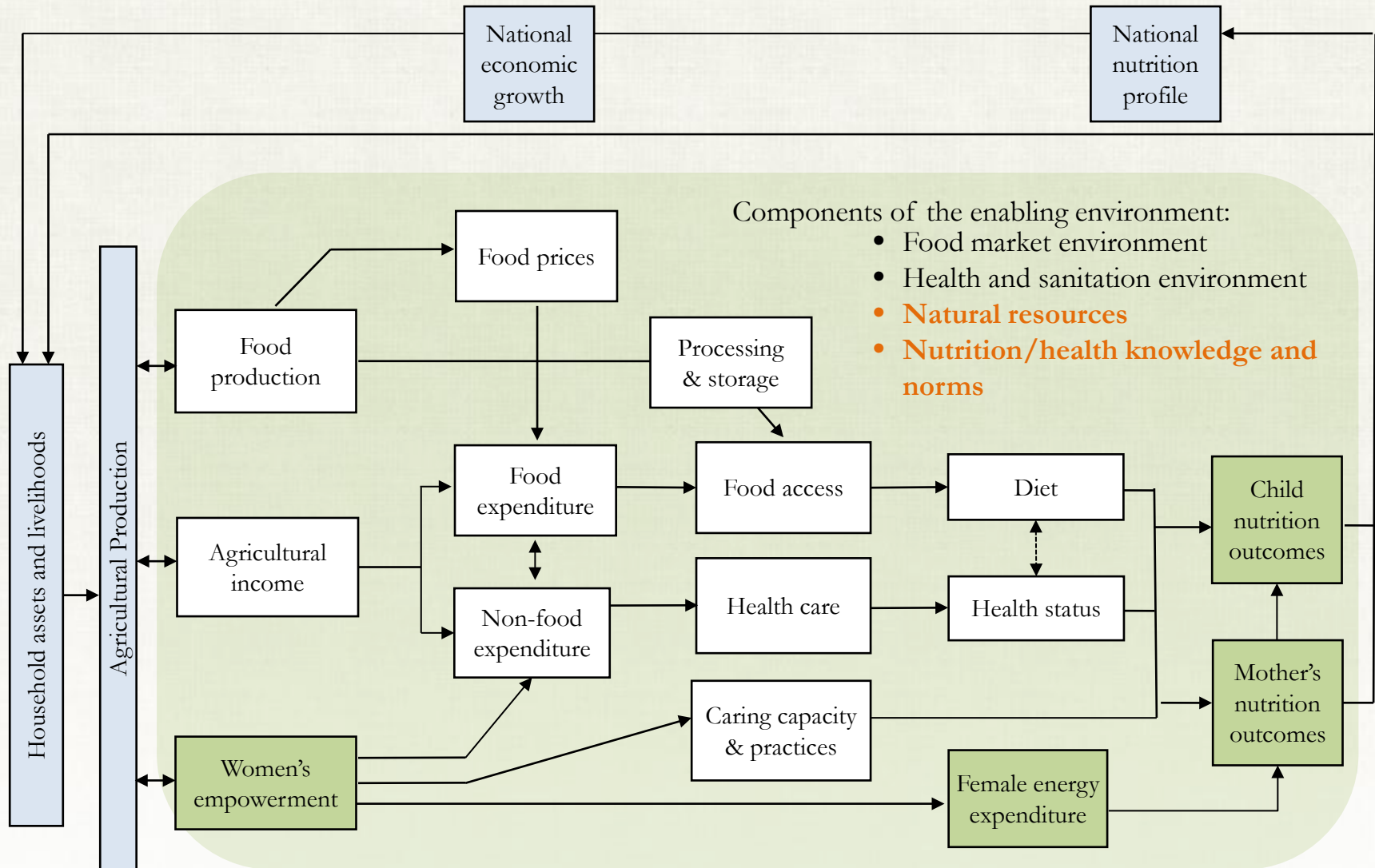


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## SYNTHESIS OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON AGRICULTURE PROGRAMMING FOR NUTRITION

- **Empower women, through:**
  - (i) increased discretionary income, especially via increased attention to crops/livestock produced by women;
  - (ii) improving women's access to extension services, financial services, technology, inputs, markets and information;
  - (iii) avoiding harm to their ability to care for children;
  - (iv) investing in labor- and time-saving technologies targeted to women;
  - (v) supporting their voice in household and farming decisions
  - and advocating for policies to support women's rights to land, education and employment.





## Kinds of empowerment

- Income
- Time/labor
- Knowledge
- Assets
- Decision-making power



# What we don't know

- Best ways to empower women through agriculture in different contexts (little evidence from program evaluations)
- Best ways to *measure* improvements in empowerment in a program setting
  - Which aspects of empowerment are likely to change due to a given program?
  - Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index is a beginning
  - Priority: hone measure of income control



# Income

- Promising recommendations
  - Add gender considerations to crop choice; Focus on crops/livestock over which women control decisions and income
  - Explore opportunities for processing/preservation
  - Improve market access for women, entrepreneurship, support to form cooperative groups
- Need to know
  - How women's income control can be maintained in profitable ventures
  - How to measure



Photo: Anna Herforth



## Time and labor

- Need to know:
  - How to avoid income/time trade-offs for nutrition (evidence is strong that both are important...)
  - How to avoid harm in this area from plantation agriculture
- Equitable opportunities to earn and learn should be compatible with safe pregnancy and young child feeding
  - If not: low participation! and/or poor nutrition
- Promising recommendations
  - Time-saving or productivity-enhancing technologies for tasks performed by women (e.g. weeding, food processing, water)
  - BCC and program structures to avoid heavy work in pregnancy



Photo: Anna Herforth



Photo: Farm Concern International

## Knowledge

- Nutrition/IYCF knowledge
  - Can be empowering, usually needs to reach the whole family or at least key decision-makers (e.g. Aubel et al. 2004)
  - Positive synergies with income
- Agricultural training
  - Extension targeted to women's needs and crops
  - Enabling participation (e.g. childcare onsite)
- Need to know:
  - How to link nutrition knowledge with agricultural training (Fanzo et al. 2013)



## Assets

- Across regions, women have less access than men to productive resources and opportunities.
  - land, livestock, labor, education, extension and financial services, and technology
- If women had the same access to productive resources as men...
  - Yields on their farms would increase 20-30%
  - Total agricultural output in “developing countries” would increase 2.5-4%
  - Hunger reduction of 12-17%
- Promising recommendations:
  - Eliminate gender discrimination under the law
  - Improve land rights for women and educate women (and community leaders and officials) on land rights



Photo: Anna Herforth



# Decision-making power

- Build women's priorities into projects: When choosing project priorities, ask both women and men
- Support food crops for household consumption
- Increase discretionary income
- Avoid assuming participation is good and time costs are bad
- Need to know:
  - How to measure (probably qualitative)



Photo: Anna Herforth



## In sum: **What Feed the Future can do**

- Add gender considerations to crop choice
  - Crops/livestock over which women control decisions and income
- Improve market access for women – with care
- Support technologies for tasks women perform
- Ensure women are able to participate
- Support nutrition knowledge for the whole family
- Advocate for increased access to land rights and other productive resources



## How Feed the Future can help fill knowledge gaps

- **Measure** (e.g. WEAI and other tailored indicators)
  - **Listen** – qualitative information
- **Build evidence** on what works to empower women through agricultural projects, and how to measure it



# Discussion

