

Agriculture-Nutrition Community of Practice (Ag2Nut CoP)

Description and Guidelines for Subgroups

Access and join the Ag2Nut Community at: www.ag2nut.org

Who Are We?

We are a global network of professionals working on issues pertaining to the intersection of agriculture and nutrition. The group is informal, and designed to facilitate information sharing and networking. This Agriculture-Nutrition Community of Practice (Ag2Nut Community) formed in June 2010 when a small number of professionals based in Washington, D.C. discovered that we were all working on guidance on linking agriculture and nutrition for our respective institutions. In order to discuss what we understood as the best evidence and practice on the linkages, and to speak with one voice rather than a multitude of unaligned voices, we decided to meet together. As a small group met to share knowledge and harmonize guidance across institutions, others became interested, and the CoP grew.

Presently (May 2019), the Ag2Nut Community includes nearly 6,500 members from 126 countries. It includes members of national and international NGOs, UN organizations, governments, universities, independent professionals, bilateral institutions and donor organizations. The main activities are:

- (1) Thematic webinars with a topic proposed by any CoP member (monthly/bi-monthly); you can access recordings, minutes, and
- (2) An email list for sharing announcement.

The group's primary aim is to facilitate communication and discussion across institutions, connecting practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, to promote common understanding and practice regarding the linkages between agriculture and nutrition.

The outcomes of the group evolve with the needs of the members. Our first output in 2011-2013, that arose from the effort to communicate our common understanding of the linkages between agriculture and nutrition, resulted in the *Key Recommendations for Improving Nutrition through Agriculture and Food Systems*, adopted by FAO and used by several other institutions for training staff and/or reviewing project proposals.¹

Another output is effective knowledge-sharing among community members. This happens via our webinars (historically called "Ag2Nut calls", because when the group started they were conference calls using phone lines) and our listserv. Any member can propose and prepare a topic for sharing and discussion as a call/webinar. We aim for the email list to be a useful place for sharing resources relevant to the linkages between agriculture and nutrition. This includes events, research findings, job postings, and focused questions for feedback. In order to reduce email traffic, the Ag2Nut Global email list is not a discussion forum; our discussions largely

¹ Available in English, French, and Spanish here: <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/policies-programmes/toolkit/en/>
For more information about the process of developing the document, see: Herforth and Dufour, 2013, UN SCN News No. 40, p33-38, available at: <https://www.cabdirect.org/cabdirect/abstract/20143155270>

occur via our webinars, and sometimes by follow up through other relevant online platforms/forums (such as LinkedIn conversations).

A more recent output, responding to the needs of the members, is support for the formation of country Ag2Nut subgroups.

Currently there are three volunteer coordinators for the Ag2Nut Global Community: Emily Levitt Ruppert, Anna Herforth, and Cecilia Gonzalez. The coordinators moderate the listserv; manage, approve, and invite membership; organize calls/webinars; disseminate and archive follow-up materials from the webinars; liaise with other communities (e.g. UN SCN, SPRING, ANH Academy) to coordinate and carry out activities; and facilitate the formation of Ag2Nut subgroups.

Ag2Nut Subgroups

Subgroups are formed by members of Ag2Nut Global Community who have a common interest. So far, subgroups have formed based on geography. Other topic-specific subgroups could be considered (e.g. Ag2Nut-Fish) in the future.

The reason for forming a geographic subgroup is to focus and connect more effectively on agriculture-nutrition issues specific to the country or region.

Examples of what subgroups can do include:

- Curriculum development within and across universities, that improves inter-sectoral training on agriculture-nutrition linkages, so that students trained in agriculture have an understanding of how their work relates to nutrition and health, and vice versa.
- Sharing fellowship and job announcements of relevance to students and professionals with skills in agriculture-nutrition linkages.
- Sharing events related to agriculture-nutrition (webinars, meetings, symposia).
- Sharing news and publications related to agriculture-nutrition linkages (for example, relevant research papers; release of new biofortified variety in the country; a national/state policy change in agriculture that could affect nutrition; etc).
- Producing a statement, brief, or document that can be used for advocacy within the government, or across institutions.
- Face to face meetings (*easier within countries, where many members work in the same areas geographically, than at the global level*).

History of New Ag2Nut Subgroups to date

During the Agriculture, Nutrition and Health (ANH) Academy held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2016, and in Accra, Ghana in June 2018, ANH Academy opened space for an Ag2Nut side event where one of the Ag2Nut Global coordinators, Anna Herforth, led a meeting for interested colleagues working in those countries and regions. In 2016, this meeting led to the formation of Ag2Nut-Ethiopia. In 2018, this meeting led to the formation of two new subgroups: Ag2Nut Ghana and Ag2Nut Nigeria.

Ag2Nut Subgroup Guidelines:

- Ag2Nut Global can facilitate the creation of the group and host it under the Knowledge Gateway Platform under which we are currently hosted.
- Subgroups are run independently of the global group. People interested in starting a subgroup select leaders/coordinators/facilitators to run the group. Leadership is voluntary.
- Ag2Nut groups are run by people, not institutions. Even if the coordinator(s) sit at an institution, that is not the lead organization of the group. This is very important: independence of the CoP is essential for uncensored, egalitarian sharing of resources so that people across all institutions can connect and have an equal voice. The strength and credibility of a unified voice from the CoP rests on independence, untethered to any one institution's particular agenda. The spirit of Ag2Nut is a table for all to sit at, to exchange ideas and work together across institutions.
- The starting point of a subgroup is an email list that facilitates connection of people interested in agriculture-nutrition linkages in the subgroup country.
 - Country subgroups are open to all those who are interested or work in the country; members do not have to reside in the country.
- A dedicated volunteer leader(s) needs to be named in order to create a subgroup. Essential tasks include adding and approving members, screening emails sent to the list, and responding to emails as needed.
 - Other optional duties for subgroup leaders include organizing meetings (online or in person, as desired), or facilitating activities such as curriculum development, discussions, co-written statements, communication/advocacy/leveraging of the community's unified views, etc.

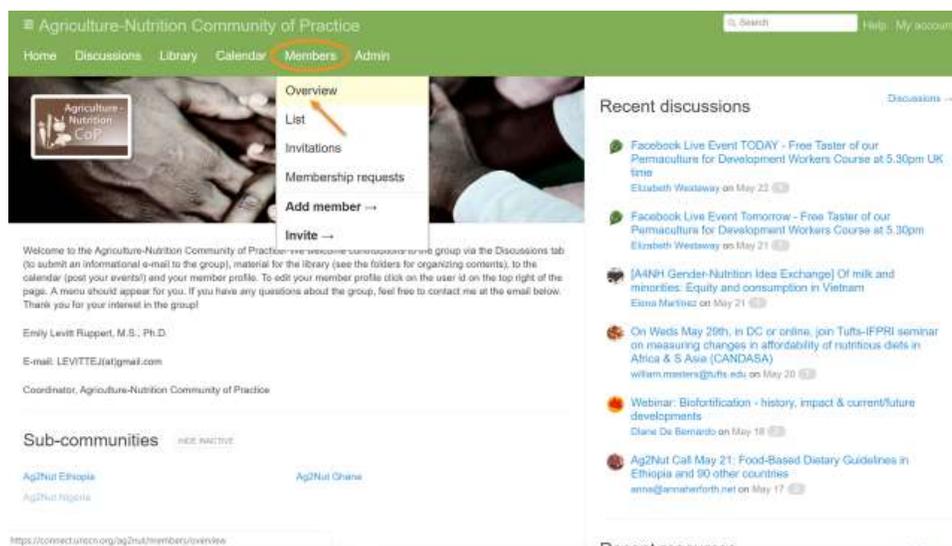
Steps to create an Ag2Nut Subgroup:

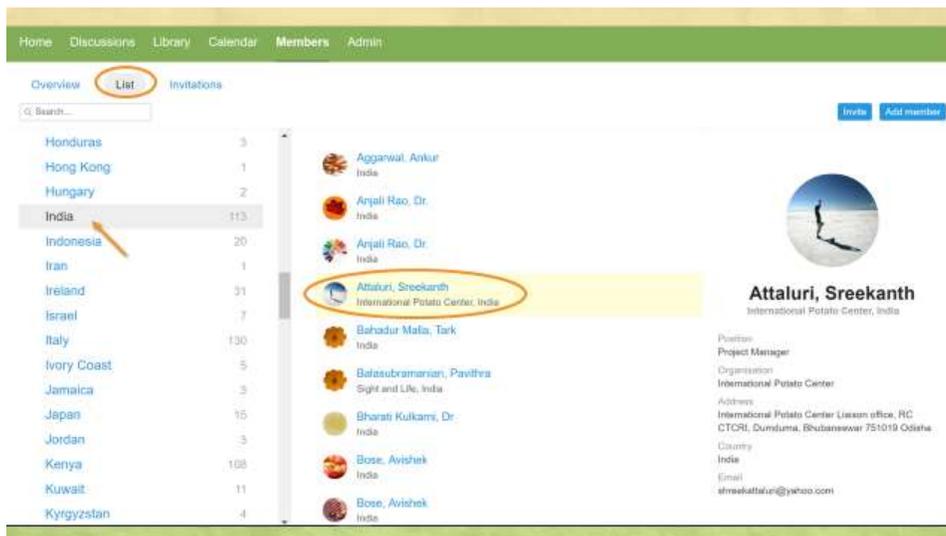
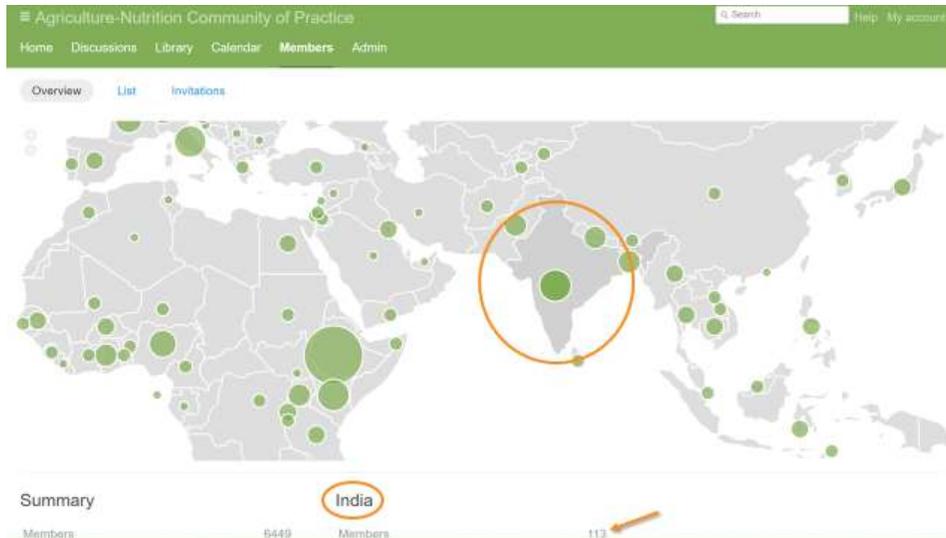
If a group of people wish to create a subgroup, a small group of founding members and leadership is all that is required. Once the decision has been made to create a subgroup, and the volunteer coordinator(s) have been established, these are the steps for the creation of a subgroup:

- 1) Provide the contact information of the Ag2Nut subgroup leader(s) to the Ag2Nut global coordinators.
- 2) Write a brief group description that includes the subgroup's purpose and aims, and how members are encouraged to use the subgroup platform (e.g. announcements only, discussion forum, cross-institutional co-branded outputs, etc.).
- 3) Provide to the Ag2Nut Global coordinators a list of all founding members with their email addresses, preferably in an Excel or Google Sheets file.

- 4) Once these first three steps have been completed, the Ag2Nut Global coordinators will be able to create the Ag2Nut subgroup, add the founding members to the subgroup list serve, and give administrator rights to the leader(s). The Global coordinators can have an initial orientation call with subgroup leaders to explain how to use the web platform for list management.
- 5) The group leader/moderator can then send a welcome email to the members of the list with information on how sign in and update their profile.
- 6) Start using and moderating the list/platform according to its stated purpose and aims.

The leader(s) may wish to actively invite new members; one place to start is by identifying and contacting Ag2Nut members who are in the country. This can easily be done as shown in the figures below.

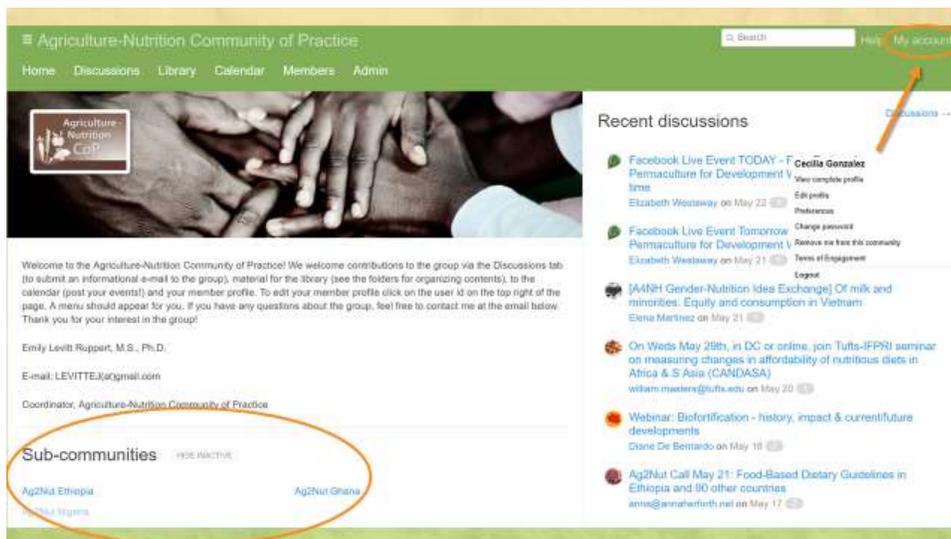




Recommendations for Managing Your Ag2Nut Subgroup:

- A recommendation is to limit email traffic to no more than 2-3 emails/day, and if more submissions come, save them for the next day to approve. Too much email can lead people to ignore the emails and cause them to unsubscribe.
- Work with the Ag2Nut Global team to set up the subgroup settings so that replies to emails on the list go to the intended recipient, and not to the entire group.
- At the global level, we seek to ensure that the list remains focused on agriculture-nutrition linkages. That is, messages and events having to do with *only* agriculture, or *only* nutrition, are not approved. If we receive messages focused only on agriculture or only on nutrition, we request the sender to please clarify the linkage between agriculture-nutrition. If there is no clear linkage, we suggest the sender disseminate the information via another channel rather than Ag2Nut.

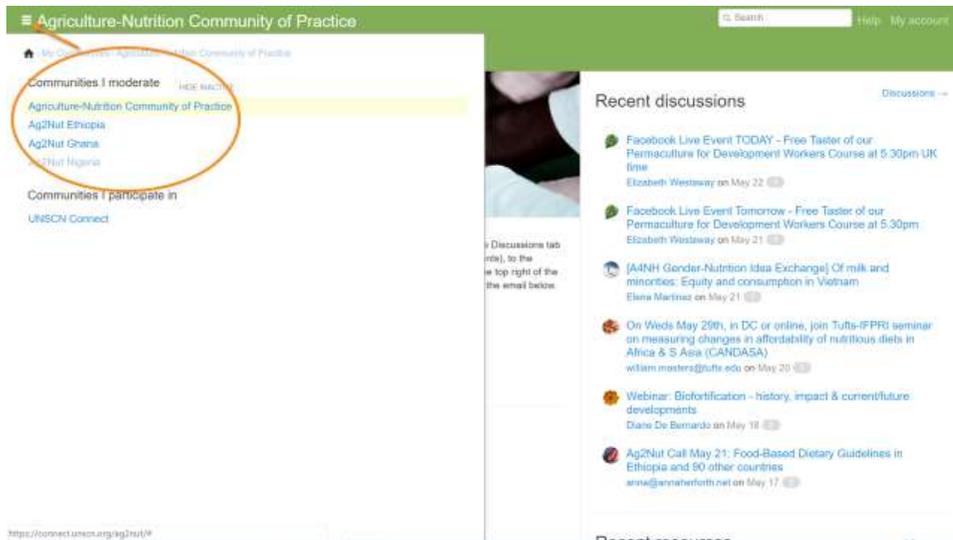
- If the subgroup decides to use the email list as a discussion forum, we suggest that the leaders set ground rules for communication: professional tone, informational content, clear questions raised. Differences of opinion are of course welcomed, as long as the tone remains professional. List moderators can reject a message that does not follow the ground rules, with explanation to the sender, and ask them to reword and resend in order to maintain professional and enjoyable positivity of communication within the group. We recommend rejecting messages sent to the group such as “thank you for the information” in order to limit email unnecessary email traffic (see the first and second points above).
- It is helpful to have more than one leader/facilitator, so that when one leader is on leave or unavailable, the CoP continues to function.
- It may be helpful to divide the labor so that it does not take too much time from any one person. One way to divide responsibilities is for one person to approve memberships, one person to approve emails (including decisions on which messages are appropriate, and requesting clarifications from the sender for any in question), one person to organize online webinars/discussions, helpers to coordinate face to face meetings, etc. At the global level, we operate this way, although often decisions are shared and we work as a team.
- Encourage members to bookmark the Ag2Nut-[subgroup] website, and to save their password or auto-login, so that they are able to use the features of the community website (finding other members’ contact information, looking up archived discussions and resources, etc.). See figures below for how members can update their information on the website.





Current subgroups

Current subgroup pages are listed and accessible at the Ag2Nut home page:



Ag2Nut-Ethiopia

Access and join Ag2Nut-Ethiopia at: <https://connect.unscn.org/ag2nut/ag2nut-ethiopia>

The Ag2Nut-Ethiopia Subgroup was the first subgroup, formed in June 2016 at ANH Academy Week in Addis Ababa. Ethiopia-based Ag2Nut members met in Addis and wanted to form a subgroup, because there is a growing number of people in Ethiopia working on or interested in agriculture-nutrition linkages. Ethiopia-based members perceived a need for a group where it was easier and more appropriate to share agriculture-nutrition events, topics and issues specifically relevant to people working in Ethiopia, that did not need to be shared to all members of the Ag2Nut Global Community. In addition, the founding members felt that since

nutrition-related topics are a recent development in Ethiopia, and nutrition is cross-cutting issue, a network of professionals from different backgrounds was needed for faster impact and reduction of malnutrition in the country.

Ag2Nut-Ethiopia is comprised of professionals, Ethiopians and non-Ethiopians, who are interested in agriculture and nutrition-linked issues in Ethiopia. Currently, there are almost 2,500 members, most from Ethiopia, and from 31 other countries.

The group's primary aim is to bring people together and facilitate discussion for joint agriculture-nutrition promotion initiatives, such as training front line workers and community groups, supporting agriculture/nutrition training and research institutions, facilitating linkages with formal professional associations in Ethiopia, and forming a bigger inter-disciplinary association. In addition, the group is also aiming to find ways to work with national policy makers for employment of graduates, initiate new training programs, share experiences for better impact on reduction of malnutrition, and secure sustainable development in Ethiopia. The Ethiopia sub-group has connected people across institutions and disciplines to have a stronger voice, together, on agriculture-nutrition linkages within educational curricula and policy dialogue in Ethiopia.

Members are encouraged to propose ideas and comments, invite new members to join the group, share news and other experiences through the group, and contribute their knowledge, time and resources.

Currently the group is led by Fikadu Reta, who is the founder and volunteer coordinator and moderator of the group.

Ag2Nut-Ghana

Access and join Ag2Nut-Ghana at: <https://connect.unscn.org/ag2nut/ag2nut-ghana>

The Ag2Nut-Ghana Subgroup formed in July 2018 after the ANH Academy Week. Nutrition in Ghana is multifaceted, hence, a network of professionals from different backgrounds who are interested in agriculture and nutrition-linked issues are needed for faster impact and reduction of malnutrition in the country.

The group's primary aim is to bring professionals together and facilitate discussion for joint agriculture-nutrition promotion initiatives, such as training front line workers and community groups, supporting agriculture/nutrition training and research institutions, facilitating linkages with formal professional associations in Ghana. In addition, the group is also aiming to find ways to work with national policy makers for employment of graduates, initiate new training programs, share experiences for better impact on reduction of post-harvest losses and malnutrition, and secure sustainable development in Ghana. We aim at connecting people across institutions and disciplines to have a stronger voice, together, on agriculture-nutrition linkages within educational curricula and policy dialogue in Ghana.

Members are encouraged to propose ideas and comments, invite new members to join the group, share news and other experiences through the group, and contribute their knowledge, time and resources. Members are encouraged to use the subgroup platform for announcements related to Ag2Nut cross-linked issues and job opportunities only. There will be regular face to face and online webinars for discussion forum, cross-institutional co-branded outputs, etc.

Ag2Nut-Ghana is comprised of professionals, Ghanaian's and non-Ghanaians, who are interested in agriculture and nutrition-linked issues in Ghana. Currently, there are 55 members from 13 countries. The group is led and moderated by volunteers, Crosby Osei Tutu Jr and Francis Kweku Amagloh.

Ag2Nut-Nigeria

Access and join Ag2Nut-Nigeria at: <https://connect.unscn.org/ag2nut/ag2nut-nigeria/>

The Ag2Nut-Nigeria Subgroup formed in September 2018, as a result of a meeting with Ag2Nut Global leader Anna Herforth, at the ANH Academy Week in Ghana. This Subgroup is intended to facilitate communication and discussion among members so that people working at the intersection of agriculture and nutrition in Nigeria can communicate with a common set of responses, to the greatest degree possible, and with the broader community. Like the Global Ag2NutCoP, the Subgroup is informal with voluntary membership.

The Subgroup is intended to break down the silos that separate agriculture from nutrition, create opportunities for cross-sectoral dialogue on issues of mutual interest, facilitate face-to-face meetings, thematic discussions by conference call, as well as dissemination of research findings, tools, and guidance materials.

The specific objectives of Ag2Nut Nigeria are to: 1. Provide a platform for sharing knowledge, learning experiences, and best practices for nutrition-sensitive agriculture in the Nigerian context. 2. Promote research and programmatic collaboration across institutions and expertise. 3. Encourage agricultural research that will proffer solutions to inadequate nutrition in Nigeria. 4. Create awareness among agricultural stakeholders and the society at large on the need to incorporate nutrition in agriculture in Nigeria. 5. Facilitate the development and use of standard methods, tools and materials for integrating nutrition into agriculture in Nigeria. 6. Ease the dissemination of announcements, news and publications related to nutrition-sensitive agriculture, including job and training information. 7. Ensure the harmonization of language and messages used in nutrition-sensitive agriculture advocacy. 8. Promote collective action for lobbying for policies, bills and budget that will advance Agriculture-Nutrition in Nigeria.

Ag2Nut-Nigeria is comprised of professionals, Nigerians and non-Nigerians, who are interested in agriculture and nutrition-linked issues in Nigeria. Currently, there are 70 members from 13 countries. The group is led and moderated by volunteers, Usman Ibrahim, Rachel Nkeonyere Nwakwasi and Olyutayo Adeyemi.