

A Roadmap to Double Global Bean Consumption

The Beans is How Theory of Change:
Executive Summary





Beans is How is an ambitious campaign mobilised by the SDG2 Advocacy Hub to double the global consumption of beans (as well as peas, lentils and other pulses) by 2028. To reach this ambitious goal, the campaign seeks to amplify and make visible the importance of beans as a simple, affordable solution to our global financial, health and environmental challenges while uplifting policy and academic research and galvanising significant stakeholder action.

Why Beans?

Beans Are Nutritious!

Beans are nutrient-dense, rich in protein and dietary fibre, which is great for gut health. They have no cholesterol, are low in fat and rich in micronutrients including iron, potassium, and B vitamins like folate.

Beans Are Good For The Planet!

Incorporating beans into agricultural practices can improve soil and water quality. Beans reduce the need for synthetic fertilisers by converting atmospheric nitrogen into a plant usable form. They use less water than many other crops, helping to conserve water.

Beans are Affordable, Versatile & Delicious!

Beans have been part of many global cuisines for millennia and are one of the most widely consumed food types in many low-income settings. You can purchase them dry, canned or jarred and they are shelf-stable and store for long periods of time. They are versatile and can be prepared and incorporated into a variety of foods, including meals, desserts, snacks, sauces, spreads and even beverages.

Learn more:

www.beansishow.org

@beansishow #beansonthemenu

Executive Summary

Beans and other pulse crops are a cornerstone of the transition towards a more sustainable agri-food system with the potential to address the climate-biodiversity-nutrition nexus whilst increasing the resilience of local and global food systems. Beans offer a simple, affordable solution to our global financial, health, climate and environmental challenges.

Beans are nutrient-dense; on average, 100 calories of beans packs about 7g of protein and 7g of dietary fibre, which is beneficial for gut health. They have no cholesterol, are low in fat and are rich in micronutrients including iron, potassium and B vitamins like folate. Moreover, beans are an environmentally-friendly crop with multiple benefits for the planet.” Incorporating beans into agricultural practices can improve soil and water quality. Beans reduce the need for synthetic fertilisers by converting atmospheric nitrogen into a plant usable form. They use less water than many other crops, helping to conserve water. In addition, beans are delicious, versatile, culturally-responsive, and can improve livelihoods. They have been part of many global cuisines for millennia, and can boost incomes for small-scale farmers, many of whom are likely to experience poverty and hunger. There are hundreds of varieties of beans and their versatility means they can be prepared or incorporated into a variety of foods for breakfast, lunch, dinner, desserts, snacks and even beverages. You can purchase them in numerous forms - such as dry, canned or jarred - and they are shelf-stable and store for long periods of time.

However, overall global bean intake is low at about 21 grams/day/capita globally in 2016, (although intake is higher in some countries, such as Burundi in sub-Saharan Africa at about 80 grams/day/capita of pulses). Beans is How was created with the mission of doubling global bean consumption, reversing declines in consumption and production and advancing sustainability through the lenses of people, planet, and prosperity.

Downturns in consumption and production have been driven by a myriad of factors, including an overreliance on animal protein and a few food crops - like wheat, corn and rice -- as well as much lower public and private research investments in beans compared to cereal grains. This has constrained productivity of beans and other pulse crops, resulting in them being “locked out” of food and farming, with beans only cultivated on a small percentage of arable land. Whilst the need to move towards sustainable food systems is drawing attention towards the need to enable further bean consumption and production, the transition has been slow and hampered by many cultural, societal, political and economic impediments.

To create long-term behaviour change, a multi-pronged effort must ensue to make beans visible, desirable and available. This can be achieved through sustained collaboration with retail, restaurants, catering, public institutions - including schools, hospitals and other government funded institutions -- and other partners to achieve a successful reappraisal of beans whilst making easy, delicious bean options available in the form of whole beans and in innovative, healthful foods. Stakeholders can encourage intake of beans as part of a healthy and environmentally-friendly diet, generating interest in both common and heirloom bean varieties and investment in a multitude of novel bean-based products (e.g., drinks, meat replacement, snacks). Marketing and outreach efforts that showcase the numerous benefits of beans will be key in gaining consumer interest, in conjunction with how to cook and incorporate beans into delicious everyday foods and diet. Food champions, including chefs and

other influencers can highlight the versatility and desirability of beans. This can help create long-lasting shifts in consumer behaviour and attitudes, such as increased awareness about and concern around the impacts of food, along with prioritisation of foods that can simultaneously promote the well-being of people and planet.

It is also imperative that both consumption and production are addressed equally to create long-term, viable opportunities for beans. Coordinated efforts through systemic interventions across the full value chain (e.g., production, post-harvest processing, consumption) will be required to break out of the agricultural and food system status quo. Whether farmers choose to grow more beans depends on numerous factors, including market opportunities, the development of supply chains, policy support including subsidies and livelihood security. Decisions are also impacted by technical improvements in bean production, such as breeding new varieties with high, consistent yields that are also tolerant to conditions seen with climate change.

Importantly, a transdisciplinary approach with collaboration across sectors - including the food sector, researchers, government, civil society, the healthcare community and consumers - must be adopted. Governments must provide more production support and incentives for producers, for instance through subsidies and new regulations and trade incentives. Governments can also help increase demand for a wide variety of local, diverse bean varieties by incorporating beans into their dietary guidelines and positive public procurement policies, ensuring beans are served in meal programs, such as government canteens, social protection programs, school meals, health systems and hospitals and in humanitarian responses.

The Beans is How Theory of Change approach begins with shifting consumer attitudes toward beans as a desirable food, ingredient, and alternative protein source through innovative communications, champion work, and the convening of diverse stakeholders. This will be supplemented by coordinated advocacy for strong policy that increases access and affordability while enabling production, providing equitable support for growers, and ensuring an abundance of biodiverse varieties. Actively engaging diverse stakeholders in the co-development and ownership of impact pathways will be necessary to successfully work together to create accountability and sustained change. It will also be important to enable new research around consumption habits, and behaviour change to inform our efforts across a variety of markets. Through this coordinated approach, we believe we will help create a successful model for how food behaviour shifts can improve the health and livelihoods of people, food systems, and the planet.



Theory of Change Diagram



Identified Gaps and Key Opportunities

While conducting our extensive literature review and building our Theory of Change, a number of gaps have emerged, along with key opportunities to advance our efforts.

1

We must rally the global community around big communications initiatives to shift the perception of beans, raising their profile in public discourse, increasing affordability, accessibility and visibility in the food architecture, and thereby shifting the demand and interest in consuming beans.

- **Solution:** Collaborate with global and regional celebrities that allow messaging to cut through, inspiring conversation and interest in beans, promoting their inherent benefits, and fighting against myths and preconceived notions that may cause barriers to intake.
- **Solution:** Scale the Bean Menu Challenge to top influencers
- **Solution:** Increase quality and quantity of digital campaign materials, such as TikTok videos, educational and awareness materials, coordinated social media marketing with the Bean Coalition
- **Solution:** Coordinate out-of-home marketing campaigns in strategic metro locations, such as London, New York, Nairobi and New Delhi to brand billboards, metro stations, etc.

2

We must continue to build critical partnerships that can accelerate our progress and goals while identifying pathway champions. Being partner-led acknowledges the diversity of situations and capitalises on local knowledge while also allowing for more sustainable, longer term change through reinforcing local advocates and the integration of beans into programs that address targeted audience needs.

- **Solution:** Conduct extensive stakeholder mapping to identify critical gaps in representation on the Bean Coalition. Cultivate new relationships and explore opportunities to align on common agendas. Examples of those identified include the School Meal Coalition, Healthy Cities Initiatives, Eat Lancet (v2), Ikea Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and the FAIRR initiative.
- **Solution:** Convene and rally partners around key issues while providing innovative marketing and communications tools and campaigns that can be jointly leveraged. This includes toolkits for adoption by industry leaders, governments and the public sector.
- **Solution:** Increase outreach to partners in the Global South, including in Central and South America. Individuals in these countries may face a different set of barriers to bean consumption, and it is important to arrest declines in consumption. Many of these countries traditionally had higher levels of consumption, but now there is a negative perception that beans are food for the poor, and as people earn more money, they transition to a more Western diet, relying more heavily on animal protein.

3

We require better data and research to understand global pulse consumption levels, while projecting and predicting the impact of our campaign on multilateral efforts to achieve the SDGs. This includes consensus on the methodology and indicators for measuring consumption data, while securing subsequent resources both human and financial to monitor at the agreed frequency. More reliable data on intake that is regularly updated is necessary to more accurately assess changes to consumption in studies over time.

- **Solution:** Explore opportunities to co-convene a working group and/or academic forum creating a high-impact research coalition to explore partnerships, address research gaps and develop co-funding opportunities.
- **Solution:** Work with the [Global Diet Quality Project](#) and other data platforms to begin to collect more granular data and use collected data (e.g., from 24-hour recalls) to have a better understanding of consumption on multiple levels: global, country, and regions and audiences within countries. Explore opportunities to co-design tools and strategies to gather, compile, and evaluate this data requires funding.
- **Solution:** In order to build out the evidence base supporting our Theory of Change, an exercise to model the impacts of increased bean consumption and production would clearly demonstrate the positive impact to governments, policymakers, investors, partners, etc.
- **Solution:** Investigate potential proxy indicators that can serve to fill in research gaps, such as production, inventory, sales, product innovation and other retail data, while combining with qualitative case studies in an annual report.

4

We require targeted behaviour change research and analysis of food trends, barriers, and the influence of socio-cultural norms and perceptions to gain key insights and uncover opportunities. Insights will differ across geographies and population groups, so it is important to be context specific and to conduct research in a variety of locations. This research will inform our communications and advocacy approach in each region, allowing us to effectively partner with organisations to reach target audiences with culturally sensitive and effective messaging.

- **Solution:** Inclusion of a pilot study to evaluate the impact on behaviour change on a test consumer group across priority markets for both consumption and production. (This could, for example, be an analysis of the behavioural & attitudinal changes resulting from a cohort of 500,000 people learning how to grow beans including related food empathy outcomes).
- **Solution:** Collaborate with Bean Stakeholders to share and analyse consumer marketing insights and trends.

5

We must create an enabling environment through policy and advocacy to effectively support the scale and localization of our global approach, emphasising the five key asks: subsidies, research, data, dietary guidelines, and positive procurement.

- **Solution:** Convene stakeholder summits, curate expert panels, map partners, and define key policy engagement opportunities and asks to create an action framework for priority countries.
- **Solution:** Build and assemble a policy toolkit that can be deployed at key advocacy moments, with a consistent clarion call and specific asks for all Governments. Such an effort would help incorporate the bean agenda into key global platforms projects/ campaigns/ efforts and can unlock further partnerships and funding. All Science and Innovation Council Members, as well as other Coalition Members would be equipped with this toolkit and key messaging to ensure consistent call to action.
- **Solution:** Advocate for an increase in the recommended daily intake of pulses in country dietary guidelines. Notably, doubling bean consumption aligns well with the EAT-Lancet Commission's universal healthy reference diet, which promotes human and environmental well-being. This diet suggests 100 grams of legumes per day, with 50 grams of pulses (Note: this is grams of DRY, raw beans and lentils, so it would be more than 50 g when cooked), 25 g of soy, and 25 g of peanuts ([Lancet](#)). Another ongoing initiative is the Coalition for the Advancement of Pulses (CAP) in the US.
- **Solution:** Convene conversation with government and policy leaders to analyse the necessary policy shifts that may enable further support to production, particularly smallholder farmers, women and youth. This includes seed sharing, capacity building and training, favourable subsidies, and connection to market opportunities.



Building a Model to Scale

Beans is How was first announced by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda in Kigali at the AGRF Summit in September 2022 at a Gala event attended by past and present African Heads of State. Subsequently, the official campaign brand, founding Coalition members, and Science and Innovation Advisory Council were officially launched at COP27 in Egypt.

Following an initial year of fundraising, brand awareness, coalition building, and research to validate our methodology and approach, Beans is How is pleased to present this Theory of Change.

In the next year, we will pilot test and hone our demand-creation initiatives in an initial set of priority countries, learning rapidly and testing our model while further building out our coalition network. We will incorporate these lessons and apply these methodologies to rapidly scale into other markets through significant stakeholder action.

This model will enable a shift in bean visibility, availability and desirability while ensuring equitable and sustainable production and supply. This long-term perception and behaviour changes will include mass adoption of healthier eating habits that will sustain improved lifestyles, (health, diet, performance), increased production and supply of a diverse range of pulses, and improved food systems for the planet.

