

FOOD SYSTEMS SOLUTIONS DIALOGUES

LEARNING for food systems transformation: Gender Mainstreaming

Wednesday 21 June 2023

Summary Report

On 21 June 2023, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and the Coalition of Action Making Food Systems Work for Women and Girls hosted the “**Learning for food systems transformation: Gender mainstreaming**” session as part of the UN Food Systems Solutions Dialogues. The following represents a summary of the two meeting sessions held in the morning and afternoon to accommodate different time zones.

Introduction

Ms. Nicole De Paula, Senior SDGs Expert of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (Hub), welcomed participants, highlighting that the objectives of the sessions were to learn about the actions that have been taken since the Food Systems Summit in 2021 and highlight the opportunity for National Convenors to engage with the Coalition of Action Making Food Systems Work for Women and Girls.

In a keynote, Ms. Maria Helena Semedo, Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN, underscored the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) to accelerate progress on all 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. She stressed the crucial role of women and girls in the transition towards productive, healthy, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agrifood systems and how they are fundamental for social justice and the realization of the right to food for all.

The dialogue focused on the linkages between GEWE and food system transformations for achieving poverty reduction, food security, and nutrition goals. It also provided a platform for exchange among National Convenors and critical stakeholders to better understand the progress made on GEWE. Finally, the event fostered peer-to-peer learning, identifying concrete opportunities to scale up policy action and improve multistakeholder collaboration for sustainable and gender-transformative solutions.

Interactive discussion

The Impact Panel on global and country-level policy action featured esteemed speakers and was divided into two sessions. The morning session, moderated by Ms Brenda Behan, Director of the Gender Office at WFP, included Ms Paulina Addy from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Ghana, Ms Meredith Soule from USAID, and Mr Billy Molosoni from CARE Malawi. In the afternoon session, moderated by Ms Clara Mi Young Park, Senior Gender Officer at FAO, the panel included Ms Paula Florit from the Ministry of Agriculture in Uruguay, Ms Jane Baldwin from MasterCard, and Ms Christiana Adokiye George from Africa Risk Capacity (ARCs).

In preparing their participation, National Convenors were invited to consider the following questions:

1. What actions have you taken to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment?
2. How are you coordinating with governments and non-state actors? What kind of support does your country/organization need?

During the sessions, guest speakers and National Convenors shared their efforts in advancing GEWE across their national food systems by strengthening institutional capacity for gender-responsive policies, programmes and budgets in order to enhance equitable delivery of agricultural services and access to land, information on land rights and land tenure security. Other efforts that were shared focus on developing and disseminating gender-sensitive technologies along the agricultural value chain including the reinforcement of climate-smart practices.

Representation and equal participation of men and women at all levels was also emphasized to strengthen coordination among key ministries, civil society, the private sector and development partners.

Overall, countries are recognizing the contribution of women in agriculture and that drives the advancement in reaching out to women and girls through supportive policies. They showed strong political commitment and determination to see a change.

The way forward

As it was acknowledged during the gender experts' wrap-up, which took place in the morning session led by Ms Megha Desai from SEWA, and the afternoon session led by Ms Marta G. Rivera Ferre from the Spanish National Research Council, women play a fundamental role in food systems. However, more data and indicators are needed that are not so market-focused and better reflect family and community farming, as well as global food security and the existing gender gaps in public policies. Women often work in agroecology and small-scale models; in this sense, agroecology, for example, should be used as a practical tool to empower women. Another crucial element in the collection of scientific evidence is the introduction of other economic fields, such as feminist ecology that allows research to give value to all the unpaid work women assume. This opens the way to cultural change: we must give unpaid duties visibility so that we can transition to a co-responsibility model between men and women.

Access came across as a vital word for GEWE. Granting women and girls access to education, technology, skills, resources, finance, and markets, among many others. The existing cultural norms and structural barriers prevent women from accessing all these aspects and truly achieving economic empowerment. The experts also emphasized the power of organization as a key to strengthening the voices of smallholder women farmers and giving visibility to their actions to bring policy and systemic changes.

Finally, although policy efforts usually focus on productive aspects of food systems, significant more attention is needed to address discriminatory social norms and rules affecting women and girls that represent the center of gender inequality and are the main reason for slow change.

Background

The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub is hosted by FAO on behalf of the UN system. It is supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO). The Hub's mission is to support the follow-up to the 2021 Food Systems Summit and stimulate and support action for SDGs-based food systems transformations towards accelerating the 2030 Agenda.