

Food Systems Stocktaking Moment 2023

Regional Preparatory Meeting in Asia and the Pacific

Thursday, 30 March 2023, Bangkok, Thailand

Executive Summary of Key Messages

Key takeaways

- **The Asia and the Pacific is a diverse region.** There are no “one size fits all” solutions for food systems transformations. Yet, the region is characterized by several common trends, including increasing risks from climate change and other threats especially for vulnerable populations and smallholder farmers/fishers, decreasing contribution of the agricultural sector to national GDP despite a large share of the population working in the agricultural sector, rapid urbanization and rural youth leaving farming.
- **Balancing domestic needs and trade.** Countries aspire to promote local production for local consumption, while simultaneously transitioning from subsistence-led farming to market-led and/or export-oriented agrifood systems to pursue income growth and build resilience. Agriculture needs to be more nutrition-oriented and produce a basket of safe and nutritious foods for healthy diets for domestic consumption and trade.
- **Need for greater community participation, inclusion and social safety nets.** Building upon COVID-19 successful examples of social safety nets, creating opportunities for the youth, women and indigenous peoples will be critical for the inclusion of all across the food systems. Access to the latest technologies such as digitalization needs to be democratized, together with the provision of safe and nutritious foods and increasing livelihood opportunities for all actors of the food value chains.
- **Commitment from the highest level of government** is critical for mobilizing resources and strengthening an enabling environment for food systems transformation.
- The need to **increase accessibility and level of funding** for food systems transformation (including funds for mitigating climate risks and disasters) and to strengthen regional/global partnerships and technical cooperation were highlighted.
- Incentives for **nature-positive and nature-based solutions** (decrease in GHG or not increasing present levels) and policies that explicitly target conservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of natural resources (such as water) need to be prioritized.
- **Local authorities and governments** play an important role in food systems transformation including designing and implementing local incentive-based plans for farmers/fishers and local businesses as well as engaging in monitoring processes.
- **Better data, and comprehensive assessment and management of food systems risks** in connection to different systems (natural, economic, socio-political) is required. For example, risks linked to agrifood systems are closely linked to zoonotic diseases and other environmental and health risks.

Major challenges

- Rising prices of food and raw materials used during production and processing.
- Limited and degrading natural resources including land, water, biodiversity.

- Lack of awareness, capacity and resources for farmers to transition to sustainable agriculture practices (ex. agroecology, climate-smart farming).
- Lack of clear metrics for measuring agrifood impacts.
- Lack of capacity of farmers/farmers organizations to access finance, including climate finance.
- Aging farmers and lack of engagement of youth in agriculture including due to stigma and unattractive opportunities.
- Simultaneous rise of undernourishment (400 million undernourished population in Asia and the Pacific) and dietary-related diseases such as obesity and diabetes, including among the poorest populations.
- Increasing risks in urban food systems where urban food environments contribute to poor health, urban consumption contributes to climate change, and cities lack resilience to shocks.

Priorities and good practices to transform the region's food systems

Food value chain

- **Promoting sustainable and healthy diets**, including through social and behavior change communication (SBCC), capacity building, media and initiatives such as nutrition labelling, home grown feeding programmes in various settings including schools and hospitals.
- **Promoting overall food systems literacy**, nutritional literacy, and consumer education.
- **Promoting agroecology and other climate-smart, nature-positive production** including by integrating agroecology in national agricultural/development strategies; protecting traditional farming systems that adopt agroecology and organic farming; ensuring climate-resilient seed production; promoting sustainable fisheries; scaling up conservation agriculture, agrobiodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, watershed management, etc.; and adopting tools such as the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation and Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE).
- **Promoting crop diversification** including by enhancing value add for traditional/indigenous crops.
- **Strengthening food safety and quality standards** for exports and domestic consumption.
- **Strengthening urban-rural connectivity, digitalizing agriculture, enhancing farm facilities, reducing food waste, promoting hydroponic farms for urban centers** to enhance sustainability and resilience.
- **Strengthening food and nutrition related monitoring and information systems.**
- **Strengthening risk assessment and early warning tools** to inform decision making for resilience.

Community-based approaches

- **Leveraging social safety net programs**, promoting sustainable livelihoods and enhancing small-scale farmers/entrepreneurs' access to finance.

- **Transitioning from infrastructure investments to human based capacity building investments**, including by establishing local advisory service centers and training centers for farmers and fishers.
- **Empowering marginalized groups, including women, youth, Indigenous Peoples** along the food value chain.
- **Supporting youth engagement in agriculture**, including by providing loans for youth, promoting access to smart/digital technologies, addressing stigma, promoting youth champions in agriculture, etc.
- **Enhancing buy-in from communities for transformative actions**, including by ensuring an active role of cooperatives in facilitating the links between local communities with commercial opportunities.
- **Ensuring the Right to Food** by acknowledging Indigenous/traditional and local knowledge.

Enabling environment

- **Innovating finance** including by providing incentives in the form of subsidies or tax exemptions for farmers and agricultural businesses that adopt nature-positive production (reducing fertilizer and chemical use); taxation of idle lands; implementing carbon credits, etc.
- **Promoting public-private partnerships and applying True Cost Accounting** to recognize, demonstrate and capture the true contributions of nature and society to our economies.
- **Enhancing research and development** to support agricultural innovation including, for example, pest management in organic farming.
- **Rebalance bargaining power** across the agrifood value chain to achieve fair prices and wages for producers, and healthy food for consumers.
- **Strengthening regulatory framework** for sustainable consumption and production of agrifood products.