

What future for small-scale farming?

Inclusive transformation in challenging times

A thought-provoking and inspiring eDialogue July - December 2020

Small-scale farmers are critical to food systems in much of the world. Vast numbers of rural households rely, at least in part, on agriculture for their livelihood. Yet times are tough for small-scale farmers, with many being among the poorest and most food insecure people on the planet, who are furthest away from achieving SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Meanwhile, COVID-19 puts a spotlight on the importance of resilient food systems and the vulnerability of poor rural households.

A profound transformation of small-scale agriculture is needed to create food systems that are equitable, healthy, resilient and sustainable. Breakthroughs are urgently needed so:

- small-scale farmers can earn a living income to afford good food, housing, education and healthcare,
- small-scale farmers can help produce the right balance of food for healthy and sustainable diets for themselves and consumers,
- farm families caught in a poverty trap can transition into opportunities beyond agriculture,

These breakthroughs are more vital and urgent than ever given the emerging impacts of climate change and COVID-19.

To develop transition strategies and avoid future crises and suffering, perspectives on the future - 5, 10 and 20+ years - are needed. It is crucial to better understand how changing demographics, economies, food systems, natural resources and climates will impact on small-scale farmers. This eDialogue will bring foresight and scenario thinking to the challenging questions around how small-scale agriculture can contribute to a future where the world eats more healthily, sustainably and responsibly.

Join this eDialogue with a difference to hear the latest thinking of those working on the front-line to support small-scale agriculture; to explore the bigger picture trends; and to pose your own questions and solutions.

The outcomes of this eDialogue will be made available for preparation of the Food Systems Summit and will contribute to the IFAD 2021 Rural Development Report on Food Systems, being prepared by Wageningen University and Research in collaboration with a global network of researchers.

The Format

This will be an eDialogue with a difference, offering space for participant engagement and flexibility for an evolving discussion, network and side-vents. Between July and December a series of on-line discussions, interviews and virtual workshops will be held, these will be backed up by blogs, vlogs and an e-discussion group. A virtual wrap-up workshop will be held at the end of November.

We get it - many of us are overwhelmed with virtual meetings. We are planning for a flexible and engaging virtual process. Sessions will be summarised and available on-line so you can join in or catch-up later and feed ideas into the e-discussion group. Vlogs will be used to bring people and local realities to life in the virtual realm.

Contributors

We look forward to a regionally diverse and gender balanced group of contributors and participants that will integrate inputs from established experts with upcoming thought leaders, farmers and local perspectives. It will be an open space allowing for additional contributors as the dialogue proceeds.

Sessions and Online Support

Interactive Anchor Sessions

Five virtual anchor sessions will be held through to December 2020. These will be recorded and made available for later viewing.

Setting the Scene (Jul 16): emerging trends, challenges and opportunities for small-scale farming in the context of changing food systems - round-table discussion and question and answer session.

Local Perspectives (Aug 27): grounding the dialogue in local experiences with Vlogs from farmers and young professionals - short visual stories, panel discussion and audience questions.

Regional Realities (Sept 24): - exploring and comparing the dynamics of small-scale agriculture and food system change across Asia, Latin America, Africa and OECD country - parallel regional round tables with a synthesis panel.

Transition pathways and strategies (Oct 22): assessing the options and scenarios for an inclusive transformation of small-scale agriculture with a focus on the specific challenges for different groups of farmers given their scale, gender, assets or geographic and market context - propositions presented by panellists, panel discussion and audience reactions.

Wrap-up and Policy Implications (Nov 26): drawing out the key messages and insights and assessing the implications for national policy and development investments - synthesis presentation, round table discussion on policy implications, and closing reflections from participants.

Preparatory resources

The Foresight4Food resource portal will host a set of supporting materials and documents on small-scale agriculture to which speakers and participants can contribute.

Interviews

The interactive anchor sessions will be complemented by a series of short video interviews with farmer representatives, policy makers, researchers, business representatives and development agencies.

Supporting Blogs

The interactive sessions and interview will be backed up by brief summary blogs and complemented by blogs from participants and speakers who would like to contribute.

Vlog Perspectives

A series of short video inputs will provide visual stories particularly focused on the local realities for farmers.

Side Events

We will offer opportunities for participants to set up “side events” to explore issues in more depth and present their own work and perspectives.

e-Discussion

A facilitated on-line discussion group will provide space for written comments, questions and a space for participants to share resources and ideas.