CFS 46 Side Event Reporting Template

Side Event #:
SE094
Side Event Title:
Strengthening Agricultural Innovation Systems for Family Farming: Multi-stakeholder processes to develop capacities to innovate for food and nutrition security
Key speakers/presenters:
• Selvaraju Ramasamy, Head, Research and Extension Unit, FAO *Overview of FAO's role in strengthening agricultural innovation systems for family farmers* • Theo De Jager, President, World Farmers' Organization *Farmers in the global political processes on climate change and agriculture: The Climakers Initiative* • Judith Francis, Chair of the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) *The TAP Common Framework on Capacity Development for Agriculture Innovation System* • Willem Olthof, Deputy Head of the Unit 'Rural Development, Food Security and Nutrition', DG DEVCO, European Commission *EU approach in support to innovation and research for agricultural and rural transformation: Research and innovation for agricultural and food systems transformation in developing countries* • Teresa Pinto-Correia, Coordinator, Horizon 2020 SALSA project, University of Évora *Understanding the role of small farms in Europe and Africa: the transdisciplinary research approach of the SALSA project* • Hlamalani Ngwenya, Lecturer, Center for Sustainable Development, University of Free State, South Africa - Moderator
Main themes/issues discussed
Innovation is a complex process involving many stakeholders who fulfil different and complementary roles, interact and learn together. Governments and other key stakeholders, including farmer organizations, research institutes, rural advisory service providers, higher education institutions, civil society organizations and private sector bodies, are all part of the agricultural innovation system and contribute to creating the environment that enables farmers to produce food in smart new ways and compete in local and global markets. The event was organized by FAO, WFO, TAP, DG DEVCO and the SALSA project. In the first half of the event, panellists described their ongoing work and a number of specific initiatives aiming to strengthen agricultural innovation systems. In the second half, the moderator opened the floor to the audience, asking them firstly for clarifying questions to the panelists and secondly to share their experiences regarding multi-stakeholder processes that have facilitated innovation and to indicate key ingredients for their success.

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Main themes arising in discussions included the central role of farmers in agricultural innovation systems; the goal of innovation (from production to market i.e. the entire value chain, bridging the last mile); mitigating the risk to farmers; demand-driven research and incentives for researchers (publications vs. impact in the field); farmer-to-farmer learning; farmer-driven approaches to agroecology, mitigating/adapting to climate change, financing and capacity building for innovation.

Summary of key points

- Agricultural innovation is essential to meet the global food and nutrition security challenges, including climate change.
- Family farmers are central to agricultural innovation (related to this, the TAP Chair called on WFO to join TAP).
- Innovation throughout the entire agri-food system is needed (not only on the production side but along value chains). Holistic, system-based approaches are needed to address agroecology, climate change and food waste.
- Farmers need help to mitigate the risks associated with innovation. Incentives can play a key role here.
- There needs to be a paradigm shift in agricultural education and research. Researchers should be rewarded for their impact in the field (rather than only for their publication record).
- Farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange is an important mechanism for knowledge co-creation, joint learning and continuous innovation. The principles of farmer field schools should be refocused to ensure universal adherence.

Key take away messages

- Farmer-driven agri-food systems: Innovation is not only at the production level, but along the multiple value chains; the whole food system. Incremental innovation at multiple levels is key. The first level embraces agroecology with emphasis on increasing the efficiency in use of resources as well as indigenous varieties and breeds for mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- Platforms: There are many existing national and international platforms, where collaboration among the different actors is ongoing. But are they really considering what farmers need? The key issue is how these platforms, including TAP, benefit farmers and increase their innovation capacity and potential as well as that of the other stakeholders.

- Capacity development: All the actors in the agricultural innovation system, including farmers, can influence the innovation process. Often they lack the much needed soft skills, related to collaboration, facilitation, negotiation and engagement to bring about necessary changes. Support is needed to develop these functional capacities.

- Governance: Innovation is not only tecnological and other forms, including organizational, market and social innovation, may be as important. A paradigm shift is needed on risk mitigation, participatory decision-making, research incentives, education and training and investments to increase the uptake and impact of innovation. Research on innovation processes and the enabling environment in support of agricultural innovation need to be reinforced.