

Summary of Third Week E-Conference

Innovation systems for food security and nutrition: understanding the capacities needed - invitation to an e-conference

Discussions from 2 to 6 May on questions 5 and 6

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Question #5: Which indicators would be relevant to measure improvement of capacities that support collective learning and adaptation in food security and nutrition-sensitive initiatives?

The discussion highlighted how difficult it has been to find appropriate indicators of capacity development for FSN-AIS. One of the main causes of this difficulty is that indicators serve specific purposes and have meaning within specific conceptual frameworks (in other words, theories of change); therefore, different goals and different theories of change would indicate different indicators for the same process or intervention.

- Some contributions provided ideas of “output” indicators, towards food security and nutrition, and not necessarily capacity development indicators. Some examples are:
 - Need for innovative metrics and indicators moving away from distinct silos of research on individual sustainable development topics towards a more integrated, food system-based approach
 - Concept of "sustainable nutrition security" (SNS) developed by ILSI Research Foundation defines seven food system metrics: (1) food nutrient adequacy; (2) ecosystem stability; (3) food affordability and availability; (4) sociocultural wellbeing; (5) food safety; (6) resilience; and (7) waste and loss reduction
 - Children development, learning abilities, vegetable and fruit consumption; reduction rates for sugar, salt and fat consumption
- Other contributions were in relation to the process of determining the indicators, such as:
 - Indicators should be clear and explicit about the question that is being answered, the theory about that question, and the data that according to the theory need to be collect.
 - Indicators for measuring capacity would really depend then on what level of the AIS is being monitored and from which perspective it is being done: financial, social, physical or human (knowledge, skills and behavior).
 - Unpacking capacity development for AIS in relation to FSN, with realist indicators keeping in mind that not all aspects can be improved at once
 - Participatory and multi-stakeholder processes
 - Determine the level (individual, community, institutions), and dimensions of FNS (availability, access, utilisation, stability); as well as different capacity perspectives (financial, social, human)
- Contributions in relation to possible indicators for capacity development
 - Expenditure on agricultural research and education emphasizing food and nutritional security and the number of agricultural researchers and educators with background on food and nutritional security issues.
 - Evidence of experimentation and behavioural change

- Improved outcomes in terms of farm productivity, food security and nutrition

Question #6: Till recently nutrition problems in low and middle income countries were characterised mainly by undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. An additional form of malnutrition is now present in the same communities: obesity. How can the framework for capacity development for FSN- Agricultural Innovation Systems be adapted to address the more complex nature of food security and nutrition issues?

The following interventions to improve food security and nutrition were mentioned: education, campaigns to raise awareness about nutrition and lifestyles, involvement of nutritionists in agricultural projects and extension, and promoting urban agriculture. Awareness raising for nutrition can be done through for example peer-peer meetings and gatherings, and even more current and yet still poorly exploited, through mobile applications. Participatory rural appraisal has also been used to train different agents in the AIS framework.

Examples of ideas shared during the week:

- Increase awareness of processed unhealthy foods
- Improve knowledge on nutritional aspects of food, changing local habits through training and learning
- Value chain approach to include increase availability, affordability and quality of nutritious foods for the poor
- More systematic education of parents and children the importance of eating healthy, through schools and extension agents
- When discussing technology adoption, take into consideration the calorie and energy consumption necessary and available to perform rural duties
- Look at the impact of technological innovation have on nutrition, such as women-child caring and time burden
- Consider meal decision makers in the home, as it is a cultural issue. Mobile health applications can help disseminate information

During the third week we received some contributions on questions discussed in previous weeks, mainly on policies and institutions (Question #1) looking at the varies dimensions of innovation capacity and the concept of 'unsupervised learning' from self-organized farmer groups; sustaining capacities (Question #2) being less 'maintenance' and more focused on improving the ability of players to evolve during the innovation process; and institutions to be strengthened (Question #3) where the importance of financial institutions in AIS should not be overlooked.