

Overview of Day 3 of the DeSIRA Connect Workshop: Policies, Regional Alliances, and the Path Forward.

Day 3 of the DeSIRA Connect workshop opened with a keynote presentation by Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar, Office of Innovation - FAO, titled "DeSIRA Projects Informing and Influencing Policies." This set the stage for the day's focus on policy innovation and regional alliances.

The first session featured Panel 5: Regional Organisations and Alliances in Support of Impact, Conditions for Scaling Out Innovations, and the Agroecological Transition. Panelists included Pat Sovann (GRET Cambodia - ALISEA) on multi-actor networks in Southeast Asia, Aggrey Agumya (FARA) on Africa's strategy for agroecological transition, Lloyd Day (IICA) on the Latin American and Caribbean strategy, and Katja Vuori (Agricord) on regional and international networks for farmer-led innovation. A lively discussion followed, exploring cross-regional collaboration and scaling strategies.

Panel 6: Innovation Policies and Policy Innovation delved into the challenges of creating and implementing agricultural innovation policies. Presenters included Thatheva Saphangtong (LICA) on the ASEAN agroecological agenda, Dr. Chan Saruth (CASIC) on bottom-up policy processes in Cambodia, Lany Rebagay and Irish Baguilat (AFA) on regional farmer organizations and advocacy, Fergus Sinclair (TPP) on metrics for agroecological transition, and Hitomi Rankine (ESCAP) on policy advocacy for green growth. The session concluded with an engaging discussion on enabling environments for innovation.

The workshop concluded with a Closing Session, summarizing key takeaways. CIRAD or AFA/Asia DHRRA reflected on research and innovation insights, and Marion Michaud (INTPA) provided perspectives on agroecological transitions and the Global Gateway. The event concluded with closing remarks by Dr. Dao The Anh (VAAS).

In the afternoon, a Separate Session on Building the Way Forward convened to chart the strategic focus and operationalization of follow-up projects to DeSIRA. Key contributions came from Marion Michaud (EU-DG INTPA), Marco Camagni (IFAD), and Katja Vuori (Agricord), alongside insights from APAARI, PIFON, and AFA. Participants engaged in collaborative discussions to shape future interventions.

DESIRA CONNECT DAYS

ASIA & THE PACIFIC

HANOI, VIETNAM

14-15-16 JANUARY, 2025



Keynote Summary: DeSIRA Projects Informing and Influencing Policies – Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar, Office of Innovation, FAO

Delgermaa Chuluunbaatar's keynote presentation emphasized the critical role of innovation and policy dialogue in achieving the FAO's mission of a world free from hunger and poverty. She outlined FAO's approach to innovation and shared insights from the Tropical Agriculture Platform Agricultural Innovation Systems (TAP AIS) project, highlighting the processes and outcomes of influencing policy through multistakeholder dialogue.

The Role of Innovation in Policy and Development

Chuluunbaatar began by framing innovation as a cornerstone for addressing global challenges in agriculture and food systems. While innovation holds great potential, she noted disparities among countries in their digital and innovation capacities, underlined by significant gaps in R&D investment. Despite these gaps, private sector investment in R&D remains underutilized.

A paradox exists within current digital ecosystems: there is an overwhelming amount of information available, yet critical information to guide policy and innovation processes is often inaccessible or underutilized. Chuluunbaatar highlighted the need to bridge the gap between research investment and impact, with studies showing that while R&D offers a strong return on investment (~25%), the benefits often take 10 to 50 years to materialize due to the complexities of scaling innovations.

Conditions for Systemic Change and Innovation Bundles

Chuluunbaatar discussed three levels of systemic change necessary for fostering innovation:

1. Structural Change – Building institutional frameworks and infrastructure.
2. Relational Change – Developing equitable partnerships and addressing power dynamics.
3. Transformative Change – Deep, systemic changes that are less visible but critical for long-term impact.

She stressed that innovation requires capacity bundles, including access to resources such as land and finance, as well as institutional and technical capacities. Scaling innovation, she argued, must be embedded within existing systems and adapted to real-world complexities.

Lessons from the TAP AIS Project

The TAP AIS project exemplifies FAO's approach to strengthening innovation systems. A core focus of the project was enhancing the capacity of stakeholders to engage in policy processes, fostering enabling environments for systemic change. The project employed structured training programs that included:

1. Understanding policy contexts.
2. Policy mapping and issue identification.
3. Problem framing and effective communication.

Through multistakeholder policy dialogues, the project developed roadmaps for policy change in countries such as Cambodia and Malawi. These processes demonstrated that policy dialogues should not be treated as isolated events but as ongoing, iterative processes embedded in existing institutional mechanisms.

Key Lessons Learned

Chuluunbaatar highlighted several critical lessons from the TAP AIS project:

- Policy dialogue must be a continuous process anchored in existing structures.
- Defining clear objectives for roadmaps and outcomes ensures focus and actionable results.
- Facilitators play a vital role in navigating power dynamics and ensuring equitable participation.
- Comprehensive planning and preparation are essential for effective dialogues.
- Dialogue recommendations require follow-up to drive actual policy and systemic change.

Final Call to Action

Chuluunbaatar concluded by urging collective action among researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders. She emphasized the importance of strengthening farmer organizations to engage effectively in policy dialogues and ensuring their voices are represented in shaping policies that support sustainable agricultural innovation.

This keynote highlighted the importance of capacity building, systemic engagement, and strategic facilitation in driving policy change and fostering innovation to meet global food security and sustainability goals.

Panel 5: Regional Organisations and Alliances in Support of Impact, Scaling Innovations, and Agroecological Transition

Key Presentations and Themes

The panel explored how regional organisations across Asia-Pacific, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean are advancing agricultural innovation, fostering agroecological transitions, and scaling solutions. The speakers shared insights from their organisational experiences, discussed challenges, and offered recommendations for future collaboration and scaling efforts.

Multiactor Network Building Knowledge and Operational Approaches in Southeast Asia

Pat Sovann from GRET Cambodia presented the evolution and achievements of ALISEA (Agroecology Learning Alliance in Southeast Asia). Operating for a decade, ALISEA is a co-learning network connecting stakeholders across five Mekong countries. Its key successes include fostering multistakeholder collaboration, promoting agroecology through knowledge sharing, and creating pathways for capacity building, policy dialogue, and market integration. Future priorities involve enhancing local innovation support, engaging journalists, and boosting knowledge dissemination. Challenges include reliance on voluntary participation and limited involvement from farmer organisations and private sector actors.

African Strategy in Research and Innovation for Agroecological Transition

Aggrey Agumya from FARA (Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa) highlighted FARA's role in coordinating agricultural research across Africa's fragmented landscape. While FARA's strategies have increasingly focused on food systems, sustainability, and climate change mitigation, challenges remain in embedding agroecology into policies due to misconceptions. Agumya emphasized the need for private sector engagement, sustainable platform integration, and scaling processes that extend beyond short-term impacts. He also underlined the value of cross-regional collaboration between Africa and Asia-Pacific.

Latin American and Caribbean Strategy in Research and Innovation for Agroecological Transition

Lloyd Day from IICA (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture) shared insights into Latin America's strategies for agricultural innovation. He traced IICA's origins in multistakeholder collaboration and emphasized its focus on addressing global challenges like climate change and food security. Day advocated for significant increases in research and innovation investment and highlighted ongoing collaborations to improve productivity and sustainability.

Regional and International Networks and Alliances for Farmer-Led Innovation

Katja Vuori from Agricorn discussed lessons learned from supporting farmer-led innovation initiatives. Agricorn's global alliance focuses on strengthening farmer organisations (FOs), fostering inclusive collaboration, and mobilizing resources for scaling innovations. Vuori highlighted the importance of addressing power dynamics, promoting short value chains, and leveraging private sector resources.

Key Takeaways from Panelists

1. ALISEA: Scaling agroecology requires fostering collaboration and creating safe spaces for knowledge exchange.
2. FARA: Linking knowledge systems with the private sector and ensuring platform sustainability are critical.
3. IICA: Multistakeholder collaboration and high-quality research investments are essential for addressing food system challenges.
4. Agricorn: Inclusive dialogues and resource mobilization are vital for strengthening farmer organisations.

Discussion Highlights The discussion underscored the importance of leveraging private sector resources, fostering regional collaboration, and prioritizing social science alongside technological innovation. Panelists addressed the need for realistic donor expectations, particularly regarding the commercialization of innovations within short project timelines. Contributions also highlighted initiatives to reduce food waste and enhance seed system quality.

Conclusion Panel 5 showcased the critical role of regional organisations in advancing agricultural innovation and agroecology. It emphasized the need for sustainable platforms, cross-regional collaboration, and inclusive policy engagement. The insights shared reinforce the importance of partnerships, long-term strategies, and collective action in achieving impactful outcomes.

Panel 6: Innovation Policies and Policy Innovation

The final panel of the DeSIRA Connect workshop explored the challenges and opportunities in developing and implementing agricultural innovation policies. The discussions showcased how regional and national initiatives, supported by DeSIRA projects, contribute to creating enabling environments for agroecological transitions and innovations.

Key Presentations and Themes

Informing the ASEAN Agroecological Agenda

Thatheva Saphangtong from the Lao PDR Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry highlighted the Lao Facilitated Initiative on Agroecology (LICA) and its collaboration with ASEAN countries. He emphasized the 2024 Policy Guidelines for Agroecological Transition, which were developed through a slow, bottom-up process that built capacity and created an enabling policy environment. The guidelines aim to increase agroecology (AE) adoption in the region by 2030, providing a roadmap for regional collaboration.

“Bottom-Up” Policy Processes for Agricultural Innovation in Cambodia

Dr. Chan Saruth, Chair of CASIC, illustrated Cambodia’s efforts in linking farming communities with policymakers through bottom-up approaches. CASIC’s platform brings together researchers, private sector actors, farmer organisations (FOs), and NGOs to promote conservation agriculture and address critical issues like rice straw burning. Key factors for success include trust-building, equitable resource sharing, and collaborative advocacy.

Regional Farmers Organisations and Policy Advocacy

Lany Rebagay and Irish Baguilat from the Asian Farmers Association (AFA) explained how AFA builds FO capacity and facilitates policy advocacy across Asia. Representing 4.8 million farmers from 13 countries, AFA capitalizes on a networked structure to disseminate knowledge, engage stakeholders, and advocate for agroecological practices at regional and national levels.

Metrics for Agroecological Transition

Fergus Sinclair from the Transformative Partnership Platform (TPP) emphasized the importance of metrics in guiding agroecological transitions. He highlighted the TPP’s library of metrics and its multi-dimensional approach to assessing agroecological impacts on productivity, income, and the environment. Fergus stressed the need for bottom-up and top-down metrics integration to inform policy effectively.

Policy Advocacy, Research, and Stakeholder Engagement for Green Growth

Hitomi Rankine from ESCAP (online) outlined ESCAP’s efforts to integrate agroecology into ASEAN’s next strategic vision. She discussed the importance of supporting food system transformations, ensuring nutritious food access, and fostering regional collaboration for sustainable development.

Summary from speaker notes

Hitomi Rankine, Chief of the Environment and Development Policy Section at ESCAP, emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation to address environmental and climate challenges. ESCAP’s collaboration with ASSET project partners, including FAO and CIRAD, has focused on integrating economic perspectives into agroecological transitions. ESCAP has also strengthened its capacity in innovation approaches, which align well with the ASSET project’s objectives.

Approach

ESCAP’s interdisciplinary approach has been rooted in human-centered design and close collaboration with partners such as CIRAD, FAO, and AsiaDHRRA. This approach ensures guidelines reflect decisions made by key stakeholders and incorporate farmer perspectives. Connections with the AE Coalition and ALISEA have provided global and regional perspectives, while access to practical examples has grounded the guidelines in local realities.

Current Outcomes

Key achievements include the adoption of agroecology transition guidelines, sustainable agriculture guidelines, and a master plan for rural development. LICA has been strengthened as a recognized reference group within ASEAN, and there is growing interest in agroecology across ASEAN member states. Links have been established between agroecology and rural development, leading to advancements in ASEAN’s policy frameworks.

Key Takeaways

Moving forward, ESCAP emphasizes the need for socialization and implementation of these guidelines, both within ASEAN member states and across ASEAN’s working structures. The next ASEAN Strategic Plan for Food, Agriculture, and Forestry presents an opportunity to embed agroecological principles. ESCAP also highlights the importance of defining agroecological transition, linking it to food system transformation, and fostering interdisciplinary approaches.

Conclusion

To scale these successes, ESCAP recommends fostering an innovation culture, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring flexibility in approaches. Agroecology's interdisciplinary nature and its potential to drive green growth require sustained support, adaptive strategies, and strong collaboration across all levels of governance.

Key Takeaways from the Panelists

1. Incremental Policy Changes: Policy outcomes require a build-up of research evidence, capacity development, and enabling environments to seize "policy windows" for reform.
2. Bottom-Up Approaches: Participatory mechanisms, such as those in Cambodia and Laos, are crucial for aligning community needs with national policy frameworks.
3. Collaboration: Strong partnerships among FOs, governments, and regional networks are vital for scaling agroecological transitions.
4. Metrics: Effective policies rely on robust, multi-dimensional metrics to measure and guide transitions over time.

Discussion Highlights

- Panelists discussed the importance of balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches in policy formulation.
- Questions focused on prioritizing funding, addressing misconceptions about AE, and embedding AE into existing national plans.
- Several speakers emphasized the need for political will, resource allocation, and cultural sensitivity to ensure long-term impact.

Conclusion

Panel 6 reinforced the significance of policy innovation as a catalyst for scaling agroecological transitions. By building partnerships, leveraging metrics, and aligning efforts across multiple stakeholders, DeSIRA projects are shaping enabling environments for sustainable agriculture. The session concluded with a call to action for collaborative efforts to bridge funding gaps and prioritize farmer-centric solutions for a resilient future.

Building the Way Forward

The "Building the Way Forward" workshop session served as the culmination of insights and discussions from the three days of the DeSIRA Connect Days. This session, designed as both an information-sharing and co-design workshop, sought to translate the outcomes of prior discussions into actionable strategies for future initiatives. The focus was on shaping the next generation of follow-up projects for both the Asia-Pacific region and Africa, building on the successes and lessons of the current DeSIRA initiatives.

The session was introduced by presentations from three key panelists. Ms. Marion Michaud from EU-DG INTPA provided context and insights into the European Union's priorities, emphasizing the need for alignment with long-term development goals, such as agroecological value chains and smallholder farmer support.

Mr. Marco Camagni of IFAD offered perspectives on leveraging lessons from existing FO4 programs, particularly in capacity building and integrating farmer organizations into sustainable value chains. Ms. Katja Vuori of Agricord shared actionable recommendations on supporting farmer-led innovations, fostering equitable partnerships, and addressing power dynamics within stakeholder ecosystems.

Together, these opening remarks anchored the workshop's discussions, as participants provide input into the strategic priorities and operational pathways to advance agricultural innovation and sustainability in the years to come.

Ms. Marion Michaud, representing DG INTPA of the European Commission

Ms. Marion Michaud, representing DG INTPA of the European Commission, introduced the new program concept being designed by IFAD to support farmer organizations (FOs) in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. Building on the European Union's long-standing commitment to sustainable development, poverty reduction, and human rights, the program reflects insights from previous global initiatives, including FO4 Asia and other regional projects.

A two-page concept note underpinning this effort emphasizes a strategic shift toward integrating research, innovation, and agroecological (AE) principles into value chain development. Central to the program's design is a focus on smallholder farmers, with FOs and cooperatives identified as critical intermediaries. These organizations play a vital role in organizing farmers, creating market linkages, achieving economies of scale, and negotiating better prices for members. Ms. Michaud stressed that strengthening the capacities of FOs and cooperatives will be key, particularly in delivering business development services and fostering connections with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger companies.

A core feature of the program is its commitment to promoting coordinated relationships along value chains, focusing on those with significant potential to impact rural livelihoods and enhance export opportunities. By aligning these priorities with AE principles, the initiative seeks to balance sustainability with economic growth. Additionally, the program will contribute to the EU's broader Global Gateway initiative, which has the capacity to mobilize up to €300 billion to support global development.

Ms. Michaud highlighted the ongoing design process, with consultations already initiated by IFAD and involving key stakeholders such as PIFON and AFA. These partnerships are expected to inform the program's operational framework and ensure alignment with local needs and priorities.

The session was also intended to gather feedback from participants, particularly on the role of research and extension services in strengthening AE-based value chains. Ms. Michaud invited contributions on experiences, lessons, and sources of inspiration to inform the evolving program, underscoring the collaborative nature of this endeavour. In conclusion, she reaffirmed the EU's commitment to advancing sustainable agriculture through innovation and partnership, ensuring that smallholder farmers remain at the heart of this transformative effort.

Summary from speaker notes.

The EU and IFAD are jointly developing a new programme for Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, building on 15 years of collaboration and the successes of previous initiatives such as FO4Asia and FO4ACP. This programme focuses on strengthening the capacity of farmers' organizations (FOs) to help small-scale farmers access sustainable markets and participate effectively in agricultural value chains. It aligns with the Global Gateway strategy, a €300 billion European initiative to foster smart, clean, and secure development across health, education, and research systems globally.

At its core, the programme seeks to empower FOs to provide their members with technical, economic, and business development services. Mechanisms such as outgrower schemes and contract farming will help farmers connect with local agribusinesses and multinational companies, enabling greater vertical integration and value addition. The value chains will be selected based on their potential for local economic impact, export substitution, and sustainability in line with agroecological principles.

The programme's emphasis on research and innovation ensures that agroecological practices are not only economically viable but also socially equitable and environmentally sustainable. Participatory action research will be a cornerstone, enabling FOs to develop innovative practices while addressing the needs of farmers, processors, and traders across value chains.

Key stakeholders include Agricord, which has experience managing FO programmes, and regional organizations such as PIFON, AFA, APIRAS, and APAARI. These partners will play a vital role in mobilizing resources, promoting agroecological approaches, and fostering knowledge sharing. Stakeholder feedback is actively sought to inform the programme's design, drawing on lessons from DeSIRA and other initiatives. This collaborative approach aims to inspire effective strategies for strengthening value chains and scaling agroecological innovations.

Mr. Marco Camagni's on the New FO4 Program Design

Mr. Marco Camagni of IFAD provided an overview of the evaluation and redesign of the FO4 (Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Asia, and Latin America) program, emphasizing its central role in strengthening farmer organizations (FOs) and delivering critical services to their members. The program, which works for, by, and with farmers, embodies a participatory approach that aligns seamlessly with IFAD's broader objectives, including sovereign loan programs and capacity building for FOs to become effective implementing partners.

Evaluation Insights and Key Findings

The recent evaluation of the FO4 program, spanning nine months of consultation and feedback, concluded in September 2024. Findings highlighted its significant global impact, reaching over 70.2 million farmers. Key accomplishments include leveraging €45 million in financial and technical resources, facilitating €160 million in product marketing, and benefiting over 600,000 farmers with economic services. The program also achieved policy engagement milestones, influencing 535 national policies, documenting 619 good practices, and enhancing FO membership by 51%, with a notable increase in women and youth in leadership roles.

New Design of the FO4 Global Umbrella Program

The reimagined FO4 program is designed to enhance the resilience of rural family farms and position smallholder farmers as pivotal contributors to sustainable food systems. A co-design process, initiated in October 2024, involves collaborations between IFAD, Agricord, the EU, and farmer organizations. The program is expected to be formalized with the EU by Q1 2025 for Africa and September 2025 for Asia-Pacific, supported by €26 million in EU funding for Africa and a proposed €18 million for Asia.

Key Principles and Features

The redesigned program adheres to principles of FO ownership, subsidiarity, and evidence-based institutional strengthening. Its inclusive framework ensures peer learning, knowledge sharing, and systematic progress measurement. New features include IFAD Regional Programme Delivery Teams, an integrated FO assessment and mapping tool, and a reinforced monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system.

Priority Areas and Strategic Components

The program focuses on fostering climate-adapted, agroecological practices; embracing FO-led innovation; enhancing market access; strengthening policy advocacy; and promoting synergies with IFAD operations and EU programs. Structurally, it incorporates three main components: services to members, advocacy and evidence-based policy engagement, and capacity development with data-driven strategic coordination.

Mr. Camagni concluded by emphasizing the program's commitment to inclusivity, collaboration, and long-term sustainability. Through its strengthened design, the FO4 program is well-positioned to advance global agricultural innovation, empower farmer organizations, and drive meaningful, sustainable impacts across regions. More details from the New FO4 Programme presentation by Mr. Camagni below.

Ms. Katja Vuori of Agricord

Ms. Katja Vuori of Agricord provided insightful remarks on the proposed new FO program, highlighting key learnings and challenges in integrating agroecology (AE) with farmer organizations (FOs). She emphasized that while FOs are effective scaling partners for good practices on the production side, promoting diversified production systems requires more advanced skills and collaboration with universities and extension providers.

A central challenge lies in aligning AE practices with market systems. Ms. Vuori noted that where markets are unstructured, production often remains small-scale and limited to local proximity markets. She posed critical questions about the feasibility of integrating AE into larger, structured value chains, such as bananas or cashew nuts, and how these could operate within AE frameworks. This includes addressing the impacts on market structures, finance, insurance, and farmer motivation, particularly in relation to achieving European agroecological goals.

Ms. Vuori also discussed Agricord's "Building Resilience" methodology, which enables FOs to assess and respond to climate challenges, fostering practical approaches for resilience. She concluded by underlining the potential for AE to transform entire systems, while urging a pragmatic and farmer-centric approach to implementation.

Details about the Global Umbrella Programme and New FO4 Program Design

(extracted from Power Point slides)

Mr. Marco Camagni from IFAD

- IFAD Cross-Divisional Task Force
- For design, implementation and to promote concrete synergies and collaboration with IFAD investment projects.
- Pre-Consultations
- Took place in early October 2024 to launch the co-design of the new global umbrella programme supporting FOs.
- Collaborations
- Consultations and collaborations (IFAD - Agricord - FOs - EU) are ongoing to elaborate the design of the new umbrella programme.
- Timeline
- The signature with EU is tentatively planned for Q1 2025 (Africa) and September 2025 (Asia and Pacific).
- EU Funding
- EU confirmed EUR 26 million for Africa; an additional contribution (EUR 18 million to be confirmed) is expected for Asia in 2025.
- Proposal for IFAD Grant
- RI desk will present a proposal for IFAD grant to not leave any region behind (NEN and LAC).

Global Results and Impacts of FO4 Program

The FO4 program has demonstrated significant success in fostering policy engagement, strengthening farmer organizations, and enhancing economic services, contributing to sustainable agricultural development and farmer empowerment globally.

Reaching Farmers and Leveraging Resources

The FO4 program has significantly impacted 70.2 million farmers globally, providing direct services to 16-million-member farmers. It successfully leveraged EUR 45 million from financial and technical partners and facilitated the marketing of EUR 160 million worth of products. Over 600,000 farmers benefited from economic services through collaboration with 167 National Farmer Organizations (NFOs) and 4,000 Local Farmer Organizations (LFOs).

Policy Engagement and Knowledge Management

The program influenced 535 national sector policies and developed 982 position papers on value chains. It documented 619 good practices and facilitated 5,570 public references, including press releases and articles. Additionally, 599 learning exchanges were conducted across national, regional, and sub-regional levels.

Strengthening Farmer Organizations

Farmer Organizations (FOs) experienced a 51% increase in membership, with six times more women and youth in leadership roles. The program supported 695 regular audits of FOs and produced 1,065 tools and manuals to enhance organizational capacity and effectiveness.

Economic Growth and Business Development

The program approved 559 business plans across participating countries, achieving a threefold increase in the volume of marketed products. Sales rose by 246%, mobilizing EUR 52 million in investments, showcasing the program's ability to drive economic growth and sustainability.

Key Success Factors and Areas for Improvement

The success of the program is rooted in participatory approaches, inclusiveness, and strong management frameworks. Key improvements focus on enhancing M&E systems, strengthening collaborations, and refining assessment tools for better scalability and effectiveness.

Key Success Factors

1. Adherence to Principles and Inclusiveness
 - Followed FAFO principles of participatory approaches.
 - Ensured inclusiveness aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDF), and EU strategies.
2. Direct Support and Accountability
 - Provided direct support to Regional Farmer Organizations (RFOs) and National Farmer Organizations (NFOs).
 - Emphasized ownership, accountability, and sustainability.
3. Streamlined Framework
 - Implemented a unified logical framework to streamline objectives and activities, ensuring coordination of efforts.
4. Efficient Management
 - Established robust and efficient management and fiduciary setups.
5. Effective Coordination
 - Ensured day-to-day coordination through regular supervision, field missions, and a strong reporting system.

Areas for Improvement

1. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)
 - Enhance M&E and data management systems for improved oversight.
2. Collaborations with IFAD Country Operations
 - Strengthen and reinforce collaborations for better alignment and efficiency.
3. Tools for Assessment and Mapping
 - Develop and regularly apply improved tools for mapping and assessing Farmer Organizations (FOs).

New Design of the FO4 Global Umbrella Programme

"The programme is designed to strengthen the resilience of rural family farms, enabling smallholder farmers and their organizations to cope with complex challenges and thrive as pivotal contributors to sustainable food systems."

Background

- IFAD Cross-Divisional Task Force
- For design, implementation and to promote concrete synergies and collaboration with IFAD investment projects.
- Pre-Consultations:
- Took place in early October 2024 to launch the co-design of the new global umbrella programme supporting FOs.
- Collaborations:
- Consultations and collaborations (IFAD - Agricord - FOs - EU) are ongoing to elaborate the design of the new umbrella programme.
- Timeline:
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- EU Funding:
- EU confirmed EUR 26 million for Africa; an additional contribution (EUR 18 million to be confirmed) is expected for Asia in 2025.
- Proposal for IFAD Grant:
- RI desk will present a proposal for IFAD grant to not leave any region behind (NEN and LAC).

Key Principles

Key principles of the new FO4 programme include:

1. FOs Ownership:
 - All programmed activities, systems or strategies that will benefit from programme resources will be based on FOs strategic plans.
2. Subsidiarity:
 - Will determine the attribution of responsibilities for activities to maximize synergies and complementarities between the different levels of intervention (global-continental-regional-national-local).
3. Building for the Future:
 - The programme will strengthen FOs to increase their effectiveness and sustainability and leverage further mobilization of resources.
4. FOs Evidence-Based Institutional Strengthening:
 - FOs will systematically measure their progress with the aim of graduating towards higher levels of management and organizational capacity.
5. Knowledge, Peer Learning, and Inclusiveness:
 - Peer-to-peer support and knowledge-sharing across regions are key for FOs' institutional development.

Key Priority Areas

The key priority areas identified for the new FO4 programme are:

1. Fostering resilient production through climate-adapted practices and focus on agro-ecology.
2. Embracing FOs-led innovation, supporting co-research efforts, and fostering collaboration.
3. Enhancing market access through inclusion in relevant value chains and private sector partnerships.
4. Strengthening FOs' advocacy for policy dialogue and institutional strengthening for more effective service provision and progress' M&E.
5. Promoting synergies and collaboration with IFAD operations and EU programmes (LVC agro-ecology, DeSIRA, GP-SAEP, ASAP+, FORI).

Structure and Components

Component 1: Services to Members

- Subcomponent 1.1: Technical and economic services and strategic value chains support.
- Subcomponent 1.2: Access to finance (incentives and investments).
- Subcomponent 1.3: Resilient farming system through agroecological transition (participatory research and co-innovation).

Component 2: Advocacy and Evidence-Based Policy Engagement

- Subcomponent 2.1: Developing and implementing policy analysis and advocacy tools.
- Subcomponent 2.2: Strengthening FOs' representation and advocacy at various levels.

Component 3: Capacity Development and Data-Driven Strategic Coordination

- Subcomponent 3.1: Programme management, multilevel coordination and FO alliances.
- Subcomponent 3.2: Governance, accountability and performance within FOs.
- Subcomponent 3.3: Monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems for strategic decision-making.
- Subcomponent 3.4: Communication and visibility of FOs and their initiatives.

New Features

New FO4 programme features include:

- Established IFAD Regional Programme Delivery Teams to foster synergies with IFAD operations.
- Integrated the FOs assessment and mapping tool to implement tailored and results-based capacity building.
- Reinforced M&E system and knowledge management strategy.
- Enhanced technical components in line with the evolving needs and priorities (resilience and agro-ecology, VCs, access to market and finance, synergies...).

Summary of Remarks by Dr. KS Varaprasad, Adviser, APAARI & RySS-IGGAARL

From speaker notes.

Dr. KS Varaprasad discussed the status, challenges, and opportunities in advancing agroecology and sustainable agriculture, emphasizing its growing market potential. The sustainable agriculture market, estimated at \$15.07 billion in 2024, is projected to reach \$21.95 billion by 2028, signalling significant growth opportunities.

Key Challenges

- Environmental and Health Risks: Issues such as land degradation, biodiversity loss, food safety concerns from pesticide residues, and soil and water contamination.
- Policy and Supply Chain Gaps: Limited frameworks to support agroecology and insufficient harmonization of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards.
- Crossing Planetary Boundaries: Modern agricultural practices often neglect traditional wisdom, exacerbating ecological issues.

Global and Regional Engagement

Dr. Varaprasad highlighted APAARI's collaboration with global and regional entities, including FAO, WTO-STDF, UNEP, and the Agroecology Coalition, to foster policy alignment and promote agroecological transitions. APAARI actively engages in projects across Asia-Pacific nations and collaborates with organizations like IGGAARL, CIRAD, and ASSET to support agroecology initiatives in countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Fiji, and Vietnam.

Policy and Market Focus

- Policy Advocacy: APAARI leverages its regional influence to drive locally relevant policies aligned with global markets, ensuring traceability and food safety.
- Market Access: Prioritizing short food supply chains, e-commerce, and value chain integration, APAARI works to bridge government, private sector, and community collaborations.

Conclusion

APAARI is poised to contribute to the agroecological transition through its extensive network, policy expertise, and market integration strategies, ensuring food security and environmental sustainability. Dr. Varaprasad expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share APAARI's vision and collaborative potential.