Passe-Partout Club

Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition FAO

Answer to the consultation about:

What are the barriers and opportunities for scientists and other knowledge holders to contribute to informing policy for more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems?

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Presentation

This answer has been prepared by Marlen León Guzmán and Hugo Muñoz Ureña, co-founders of the *Passe-Partout* entrepreneurship. It describes different experiences in food systems policy guidance. Specifically, we have selected three guiding questions to facilitate the exposition, which are covered in each of the two parts in which the document is organized.

- The first part **identifies the problem** - the "barriers" -. The following guiding questions have been used to develop this part:

  Section 1. Analysis of the complexities and practical problems associated with science-policy interfaces.

  Section 3. Knowledge translation for policy-making.

- In the second part, we **describe our current experience** in translating specific knowledge on policies and regulations affecting food systems, supported by digital technologies.

Part 1. Problem identification

Guiding questions. Section 1. Analysis of the complexities and practical problems associated with science-policy interfaces.

Q: What opportunities and challenges have you faced for drawing from sustainability science, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity to inform policy?

A: Main challenge: the dissociation between knowledge generators and decision makers (public policy generators).

We have been working on agrifood systems for more than 20 years. During that time we have been involved both in the generation of knowledge (scientific-academic) from the academia, and in the generation of public policies (advice in decision making; drafting of bills and regulations). We have even participated and led interdisciplinary and intersectorial working groups, with academics and non-academics, for the elaboration of food legislation. For example:

- Identification of local food systems (León, M; Résolis, 2016) (https://bit.ly/3QH8kDK)

- Good practices for the implementation of the right to adequate food (Muñoz, H; FAO, 2018, 221-37) (https://bit.ly/3w7C0QW); or

- Guidance of parliamentarians developing food policies (Muñoz, H: FAO, 2022). (https://bit.ly/3GDtcqW)

From this inter/transdisciplinary experience, we have found that the people who generate knowledge and those who make policies, do not usually relate to each other, mainly because they cannot communicate effectively.

On the one hand, in most cases the results of scientific research are published in specialized media that policy makers do not consult, much less use. And even if they do consult them, the articles have a structure that is difficult to understand and the information is "codified" in technical and ultra-specialized language, which for practical

purposes creates a "barrier" that makes it difficult to understand the *usefulness* of what is said therein, for the public policy proposal being developed.

On the other hand, policy makers tend to rely mainly on their staff (close collaborators), who, although they may have valuable accumulated experience, are generally not true generators of knowledge. Their main function is to be "receivers of information" and in the best of cases, they manage to organize it. For this reason, scientific data or technical knowledge is not necessarily included in policies, and when it is included it is generally in a superficial way, citing for example some concrete data that serves to justify (with just “some technical appearance") what the political decision-maker wants. This procedure ignores the true usefulness of technical and scientific knowledge and, in a way, questions its validity from the outset.

In addition, we have found that knowledge generators do not usually follow up on the work of policy makers or viceversa. Thus, "meeting points" between the two are scarce.

Finally, it can be said that there is even "indifference" or even "contempt" for the work of one or the other. Ego or opportunity? What is certain is that the objectives of the results pursued by one and the other are different: for some the indexed publication of their work is the maximum contribution; while for others it is the "good headline with the photograph in the newspaper" that matters. We could conclude that both policy makers and knowledge makers speak "different languages" and "walk different paths".

Notwithstanding the above, the opportunity we have identified to take advantage of scientific knowledge in the substantiation of policies lies in establishing mediation mechanisms between the actors - and not only policy makers or knowledge makers (in the scientific sense) - but also all the other social actors that may intervene. See, for example, the experience presented to the Right to Food Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean (ODA-LAC), on the participatory process of elaboration and drafting of a bill of law on Food Security in Costa Rica, conducted by Dr. Hugo Muñoz Ureña (2018, 50-52) (https://bit.ly/3ZyeQAZ).

Guiding questions. Section 3. Knowledge translation for policy development.

> Q. How does it create/maintain institutional linkages between producers and users of research? Describe any dedicated resources for knowledge translation that are in place.
>
> Q. Do you or your organization / university contribute to efforts to ensure that evidence is provided for policy making which is grounded in an understanding of a national (or sub-national) contexts (including time constraints), demand-driven, and focused on contextualizing the evidence for a given decision in an equitable way? If so, please tell us more.
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> A. The resources dedicated to knowledge translation that we have used are based on the development of dialogue and mediation between knowledges and disciplines.

In the course of researching food systems in different countries, we have sought to build "bridges" between legal, technical, scientific and intra/inter-disciplinary aspects. The basis of this work has been developed from three fundamental aspects:

1) language,

2) dialogue, and

3) mediation between knowledges and disciplines.

Language is the basis. Each discipline has its specific technical language. The language of an area of knowledge must be "translated" so that "non-expert" interlocutors understand it. This leads to the second aspect: *dialogue*. When people can "understand" that each one has different ways of calling a particular phenomenon or objective, a basic agreement is reached, so that an exchange of information can be established. This last exchange is the *mediation* of data, information or knowledge.

Although each area of knowledge has its level of complexity, the fact is that there are basic concepts that can be explained with simple words, which are within the reach of all people (everyday, common, non-technical language). Hence, every scientist or

politician; policy maker, generator or holder of knowledge can put his ideas in a simple way, if what he really wants is to facilitate understanding among the different disciplines and knowledge.

As indicated, the process must go through the understanding of the essential concepts used by the actors; dialogue and finally, mediation, in order to reach working agreements that become public policies integrated by legal norms, action projects, public or private development programs.

Part 2. Description of our current experience in the translation of scientific-policy knowledge

We would like to share the experience of our current entrepreneurship. It is called *Passe-partout* and is an "EdTech". One of the main components of the entrepreneurship is a "podcast", which allows the **translation of technical knowledge** on food regulation, through audio programs (in the image of the episodes of a radio program).

In the field of food law, food legislation in developed countries, particularly in the European Union (EU) and the United States (USA) are usually the most developed in the world and, as a social construct, it must be understood that they represent, therefore, the state of the art (although not necessarily the state of knowledge). From there, we have taken on the task of sharing the new regulations being discussed in those regions. This work requires specialized technical knowledge, as we reflect on the changes implied by these legislative reforms, the reasons that motivate them in both the national and regional contexts and that justify their adoption.

But what is innovative about this experience? The innovative nature of this experience does not arise from the simple fact of communicate or share the food legislation reforms. The innovative character for the scientific-policy interface arises from the way in which this is done. On the one hand, **a language accessible** to everyone is used (remember that accessible language is the prelude to dialogue and

mediation between knowledges and disciplines). On the other hand, it uses **a format that is also accessible**.

On this last aspect, it should be noted that the format used meets at least 9 objectives of accessibility, efficiency, inclusion, resilience and sustainability:

1) it's accessible to illiterate or visually impaired people, since it works through the auditory capacity.
2) it's broadcast in Spanish, a language that in many Latin American countries is understood by individuals and populations, but not necessarily taught in a formal way, either because it is a second language alongside the native languages, or because of lack of access to formal education.
3) the audio format stimulates different sectors of the brain than those used in the case of videos or documents (vision), so it is a learning process that promotes imagination. In other words, one goes from being a passive actor to an active one.
4) podcasting can be listened to on smartphones, which are more widely used than computers (which tend to be more expensive). In addition, there are significant sectors of the population that have not overcome the "digital illiteracy" inherent to constant computer advances, but are able to use the intuitive interfaces of cell phones; or that do not have access to fixed Internet, but do have access to the Internet via mobile telephony.
5) it's compatible with the daily work routine, as each program is less than 20 minutes long, so it can be listened to at any time of the day. Since it is available on demand, it can be consulted whenever people need it or have the time.
6) it's accessible *free of charge.*
7) It's available permanently and worldwide, thanks to the Internet.

8) the information is the same for all the interlocutors, so there are no differences in content or discrimination in this respect.

9) the evaluation of the contents is constant, direct and in real time through monitoring on the distribution platforms (Google, Amazon, Spotify) and also through the listeners' comments and responses, which make it possible to clarify and adjust the topics and contents of future episodes to the needs that arise.

A *free summary document* is attached to each of the episodes of this podcast, which includes a 2 or 3 page summary of the main ideas and also contains the bibliographic references to the original sources (including hyperlinks).

Equitable information is provided, being the same for all people, regardless of their country, profession, job or culture. It is done in a common or everyday language, with a pleasant and entertaining dialogue. Thus, if you have access to the Internet, you can also have free access to information selected by experts in the field of food law.

These programs are currently broadcast for *free* on the Spotify, Google Podcast and Amazon Music platforms. The programs follow the traditional "radio" format and consist of a dialogue between two people who converse in a pleasant and casual way to explain, in a simple and entertaining way, the recent and far-reaching changes in food law in various countries.

The topics that are developed are selected on the basis of:

- the permanent research we carry out,

- our professional experience,

- the solid academic knowledge in Food Law, and

- the consultations we receive from the actors in the sector.

The main objective of each program is to explain the context of the regulatory change, its objective, as well as the possible consequences for individuals, whether they are

industry professionals, government authorities or consumers. Secondarily, the timeline for implementation is indicated and comparisons are made with other cultural or legal realities (comparative law) and with other possible regulatory approaches (public policy alternatives). In addition, it is reiterated that a simple document is attached *free of charge*, containing a guide with a synthesis of what was discussed during the program and the study references, which allows those interested to go deeper into the topics.

This initiative is of a private nature and has not received - until January 2023 - any type of subsidy or economic support from governments, companies or international organizations.

Contribution of our organization (*Passe-partout* entrepreneurship) to the science-policy interface

Our entrepreneurship contributes by facilitating the understanding of legal issues on food systems. The relationship between the social context, the reason for regulatory change, the content of laws and the objectives of regulatory reforms are explained in a simple way.

An important but often overlooked aspect of the science-policy interface is its **transnational dimension**. For example, a food sanitary control standard established by the USA or the EU necessarily affects products elaborated in other countries and exported to those destinations. Indeed, because international food trade enhances the extraterritorial effect of laws, the political decisions of a country “embodied” in those laws must be known and respected by foreign authorities and people outside those countries.

Thus, the *Passe-partout* entrepreneurship has great potential in this transnational dimension. Indeed, it creates a gateway that connects the scientific and technical knowledge embedded in the public policies of developed countries (in particular in

food legislation), as well as the technical specialized legal knowledge (specific to the discipline of Law), with people who are not specialists in these fields.

But it goes further, by explaining how these developed country policies affect food production in developing countries, using a truly accessible language and format, *Passe-partout* also creates a specific gateway to developing country political decision-makers (government authorities or elected political representatives).

This is even clearer, when it is considered that the extraterritorial application of developed countries' food laws not only "shapes" food export chains in developing countries. Indeed, food systems are made up of intertwined production "chains", so that in the end, these changes also have an impact, directly or indirectly, on small-scale producers (who do not usually export to the EU or the USA). This transnational dimension becomes evident once again, thanks to the interrelationship between the public food policies of the different countries, which takes place through a policy instrument such as legislation.

Likewise, when the episodes of the podcast comment on the regulatory reforms that are in process, the possibility of participation of interested persons is reinforced. They can participate actively and in advance, taking advantage of the spaces for consultation that are frequently opened by the authorities to civil society, but which unfortunately often go unnoticed. Note that this is another way through which scientists and other knowledge holders, as civil society actors, can also participate and contribute to the formulation of public policies.

Passe-partout constitutes a powerful and innovative communication channel at the science-policy interface (see Annex).

Annex

What is *Passe-Partout*?

It is an entrepreneurship “Ed-Tech” for food law update, for people without a legal background. We communicate food regulation to make it accessible to all people, through information technologies.

Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/36QE4e7s9APSabYGIm6xM5?si=a0256ab2ea8f43ec

Google Podcast: https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3IuZm0vcy9jYWZhZDAxNC9wb2RjYXN0L3Jzcw?sa=X&ved=0CAMQ4aUDahcKEwio-sbk78f8AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQAQ&hl=es-419

Amazon Music: https://music.amazon.com.mx/podcasts/93d1b1af-cff8-4856-b66c-ef71b95b2bcc/passe-partout

Presentation of the program on Spotify: