Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition • FSN Forum

TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Call for submissions No. 197 • 08.02.2024 – 01.04.2024


CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

How can FAO better support countries in addressing governance of agrifood systems transformation to make them more sustainable, inclusive and resilient?

Template for submissions

This online call for submissions is being organized jointly by the Office of SDGs, the Food Systems and Food Safety Division, the Governance and Policy Support Unit, and the Development Law Service, to engage various stakeholders and gather examples of governance-related measures and interventions with transformative impact for agrifood systems.

The results emerging from the received submissions will contribute to informing FAO's work at country level related to policy, law, and governance for more inclusive, resilient, equitable and sustainable agrifood systems.

To take part in this Call for submissions, please register to the FSN Forum, if you are not yet a member, or “sign in” to your account. Please download the submission template in any of six UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese) and upload the completed form (in Word document format) in the box “Post your contribution” on the call webpage. Please keep the length of submissions limited to 2,000 words and feel also free to attach relevant supporting materials.

For any technical questions or assistance please contact fsn-moderator@fao.org.

The Call for Submissions is open until 1 April 2024.
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

Template for submissions

Please note that “transformative impact” refers to innovative, pro-active changes away from “business as usual”

1. Proponent (name/institution/unit)

Blesilda Calub (recently retired)/ University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)/Agricultural Systems Institute (ASI), Organic Agriculture Program and Interdisciplinary Studies Center on Organic Agriculture

2. Title of the example presented and the type of governance-related transformative intervention/measure (policy, legal, institutional, financial...)

The Organic Agriculture Goes to Schools Program aims to contribute to the implementation of the Philippine law, the Organic Agriculture Act (Republic Act (RA) 10068 and amended through RA 11511) with a provision to promote organic agriculture in schools. Organic agriculture is one of the more sustainable farming systems that promotes biodiverse ecological systems, soil health, fairness and social justice, care and precautionary use of synthetic inputs. Organic agriculture contributes to local food security and nutrition especially in rural communities.

- For the elementary to junior high school, this involves multi-sectoral collaborative engagement of regional, provincial and local school heads and teachers, parents, local government units (LGU), non-government organizations (NGO), some private sector and the academe to address stunting and wasting among school children due to undernutrition resulting to low academic performance at the elementary up to junior high school through an improved implementation of the government’s school gardening and school-based feeding, and parent’s home gardening.
- For senior high school, the focus is on training teachers on organic agriculture so they can pass a Technical Vocational Test and get a National Certificate (NC II) to qualify them to teach and integrate organic agriculture in their classes. Students develop a positive perception of sustainable agriculture and gain interest in agri-entrepreneurship.
- At the college level, UPLB offers two organic agriculture courses (blended online and in-person practicum) under the BS Agriculture curriculum. An NGO provided funds for thesis grant for students conducting their thesis on any aspect of organic agriculture. This program contributes to capacity development of the next generation professionals, scientists and policy decision makers.
- For continuing education, a certificate course is being offered by the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) to promote science-based information to practitioners, advocates, and program implementers of organic agriculture.

3. Location of the transformative intervention/measure (global/regional/national/sub-national; urban/rural)

National, Province, District, Municipalities and Cities / peri-urban and rural areas

4. Which aspect, problem or challenge of the agrifood system was the transformative intervention/measure aiming to address?

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Lack of access to adequate safe and nutritious food especially by the poor families that normally live on a day-to-day subsistence. The poor are the most vulnerable to price increases of basic food commodities which lately in the Philippines are mostly being imported to meet local demand. However, some imports arrive during the local harvest season thus causing price gluts, low farmers’ income and further indebtedness. This program also addresses the problem of garbage and plastic waste pollution through waste segregation and composting of the bio-degradable wastes.

5. What transformational impact was the intervention/measure aiming to achieve (including in terms of the three pillars of sustainability)?

We aimed at improving the governments existing national vegetable gardening program and the school-based feeding program from merely “doing for compliance” to a multi-sectoral participatory process with better coordination within the school, the bigger external community and among the parents. The participatory process of joint situation analysis, planning options to address problems, implementation, monitoring and evaluation was clarified and better appreciated by all participants. Each actor knows what he/she promised to contribute in terms of time, effort and resources. Better sharing of responsibilities and benefits was achieved among actors.

We promoted care for the environment, sustainable organic agriculture, planting of traditional crops and varieties in school and home/family gardens as well as waste segregation where biodegradable wastes are composted and recycled in the gardens. We train elementary school teachers of Agriculture and Fishery Arts and secondary school teachers of Technology and Livelihood Education so they can integrate organic agriculture in their lesson plans and make use of the school gardens as learning gardens in addition to food production to complement the school-based feeding program. Parents/families appreciated home gardens to supplement the family’s food needs, save on the food budget, and earn some income from excess harvests. At times of abundant harvests, the schools share the vegetables for their students to bring home. Some parents bring their extra vegetables to the school-based feeding program to feed more students.

6. What was the impact achieved in practice?

From the initial 6 pilot public elementary and high schools, there are now more than 100 public schools adopting the project using their own school funds with additional funding support from the local government, civic groups and the private sector. More children have achieved normal health status (from wasted status), more parents have become aware of their important responsibilities in the nutrition of their children by engaging in home gardening, more local government officials allotted regular funds for this project. Several state universities have requested training about the program and have started implementing it in the nearby elementary or high schools in their province.

The trained teachers are now integrating organic agriculture topics in their lesson plans. One of the trained teachers organized her students into an organic agriculture society of senior students. Their first major activity is to develop an organic garden in their school. The vegetable harvesting time was the most enjoyable activity for the students. More students are interested to take up agriculture courses.
An international organization has collaborated with the project team to bring this project to their partners in Cambodia with specific addition of topics in biodiversity conservation and entrepreneurship. At the College level, more students are taking up the organic agriculture courses and are undertaking thesis on organic agriculture.

7. **How was the transformative change obtained by the intervention/measure? (a) data and evidence collected, b) concrete ways to measure, c) actors involved**

Initially an action research, regular data collection was conducted by the project staff in coordination with the school heads during the project period of 18 months. After the project ended, the Department of Education (DepEd) regional, provincial and district supervisors have included this project in their regular monitoring and evaluation activities. The teachers encouraged the parents (especially of the malnourished children) to learn proper food preparation and to monitor the food intake and health status of their children. Teachers were able to integrate in their lesson plans, the concepts of sustainable organic agriculture, soil health management, edible landscaping, waste management through composting of biodegradable wastes and climate resilience. At UPLB and UPOU, continuing organic agriculture course enrollment, and organic agriculture thesis topics approved and completed are documented.

8. **What were the key challenges and trade-offs identified and how did a measure/intervention succeed in producing co-benefits and synergies [delivering on economic, environmental and social (including gender equality) sustainability] rather than favoring one option over the other?**

Limited funding, limitations on available land and facilities for gardening, some daily wage-earning parents do not have time for gardening, some parents and teachers lack the technologies and know-how in gardening.

The transparent participatory process of assessing problems, joint discussions and decision making encouraged a strong commitment for members to help each other for the program to reach the goals. The training on integrated organic agriculture principles as applied in the schools and home gardens gave the teachers and parents more confidence in creating their gardens.

In addition to economic, environmental, and social dimensions, it would also be good to include technological and policy-institutional dimensions and their interactions as factors that also influence the success of the program.

9. **Who were the key actors and stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the intervention/measures in question, and what were their respective roles and capacities to exert power and influence?**

The Lead Implementing Agency, overseer and fund source was SEARCA (Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture). The ASI-UPLB led the on-the-ground project implementation using holistic systems approach and participatory methods in community development work. The Department of Education (DepEd) Laguna Provincial officers and staff coordinated all the activities with the initial pilot and later adopted schools through proper channels and protocols in the DepEd. School heads and teachers, parents and local government...
officers and staff actively participated in the multi-sectoral participatory process. Some of the roles and responsibilities of the actors were defined, agreed upon and implemented jointly.

10. Did any of these key actors and stakeholders oppose or resist the envisioned transformative intervention, and if so, what were their main motivations and interests, and how was this resistance addressed?

Initially, the pilot schoolteachers thought about this project as added work to their already tight workload. The participatory process, constant dialogue and communication, clear shared goals, roles, responsibilities and benefits, and the support of the various stakeholders motivated the actors to work together.

11. To what extent is this measure transformative in improving the livelihoods of the most disadvantaged, and how does it contribute to a more inclusive food system?

In addition to children’s improvements in their nutritional status, the school and home gardens were regarded as a ready food resource for the families. It also gave parents a sense of achievement to eat the “fruits of their labor”, a sense of dignity through their labor, and a high sense of hope. Parents said the home gardens gave them peace of mind by just looking at the harvestable crops in their gardens and knowing where their next meal will come from. Parents appreciated the school and home gardens, most especially during the Covid 19 lockdowns. Families with no home gardens became largely dependent on charity food supplied by the government. During this period some school gardens became a community exchange center of harvests from the school and home gardens which they shared with the rest of the community.

12. What means were used to demonstrate positive changes in the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, and what monitoring and accountability mechanisms were put in place to ensure proper implementation?

Please refer to the answers to Questions 9, 10 & 11 and in the attached video link and other resources.

13. Key lessons that can be learned from your case (both positive and negative) and whether these could be applicable in other contexts with similar characteristics.

Integrated systems approach, multi-sectoral engagement, community participation to develop shared goals, responsibilities, and benefits. Focus training both on the know-how and know why. Readiness of the project team to be flexible in building people’s capacities to reach the higher state of being enabled to manage the project by themselves. We have continually developed these strategies based on lessons learned and experiences we gained in our past community development programs. Through time, we get more and more confident and at the same time more open to many possibilities for further improvements for the next.

14. Based on your experience, what gaps/areas of improvement still remain that need further action?
It would be good to conduct a tracer study of the participants, schools, teachers, students and parents document and assess the outcomes and impacts of this project. More investments in providing continuing education and training for teachers for the schools adopted by the original pilot schools. A multi-sectoral joint planning for nationwide scaling up should be developed.

**15. What are your key messages/takeaways from this intervention/measure?**

Transforming the implementation of the government’s program on school gardens in tandem with school-based feeding and parents’ home gardens helped improve the nutritional status of undernourished school children and improved their academic performance. The engagement of parents in their children’s nutrition and the support of local government units and other stakeholders by co-shared funds and enabling policies contributed to higher vegetable consumption among families that helped ensure local food security and nutrition.

School gardens in tandem with school-based feeding and parents’ home gardens is a good starting point to promote community-based local food security and nutrition while also improving diet choices and children's vegetable consumption. Programs to engage parents in the nutrition of their children and the support of local government units in terms of funds and enabling policies that contribute to ensuring local food security.

School gardens are also excellent venues for teaching organic agriculture and related topics on sustainable regenerative farming, agrobiodiversity conservation, soil nutrient management, proper biodegradable waste management through composting and climate resilience.

For more long-term sustainable food security and nutrition of future generations, it is important to invest in human resource capacity development at the elementary, secondary and tertiary levels for both students and teachers. It is also important to have continuing discussions and learning opportunities among the multi-sectoral stakeholders.

In the transformation process, we need not overhaul the existing system. Instead, we built upon the strengths while identifying the gaps and cracks. For these, we started with doable and manageable interventions on the ground and with a foresight to scale up through collaboration, participatory development approaches and systems thinking.

**16. Please feel free to share relevant links to resources and documentation regarding your intervention.**

SEARCA-UPLB-DepEd School Plus Home Gardens Project
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9934BdzCNGQ

Participatory Action Research on School- and Community-Based Food and Nutrition Program for Literacy, Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development
https://www.searca.org/projects/research/school-plus-home-gardens

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