Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition • FSN Forum

TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Call for submissions No. 197  •  08.02.2024 – 18.03.2024


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 18 March 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)

Hanson Arthur, PhD

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

Ghana Green Label food certification scheme – a multi-stakeholder governance arrangement for food safety assurance.

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

Ghana; urban and peri-urban

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

Food safety: protection from pesticide abuse, microbial contamination, and environmental degradation

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

Social: protect the health of consumers; promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables for a healthy population through safety assurance

Economic: create access to more lucrative markets for smallholder farmers and thereby increase their incomes. Create business opportunities for agribusiness companies

Environmental: protect land and water bodies from excessive and wrongful use of agro-inputs; protection of biodiversity

6. What was the impact achieved in practice?

The scheme is still ongoing, and gearing up to become a permanent feature of the Ghanaian foodscape. So far however, a) farmers have gained access to high-end markets – as additional farmers get enrolled in the certification scheme periodically.
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

b) Gradual increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables in the country, given the assurance of safety provided by the scheme.

c) Certified farmers largely observe recommended good agricultural practices (GAPs) – protecting the environment in the process.

A critical mass of farmers will however need to enroll to make the needed national impact on all sustainability dimensions.

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

a) The certification scheme has a secretariat that periodically trains and subsequently collects data from both the market and from farmers.

b) While training is facilitated by the secretariat, there are periodic unannounced audits by third party certification bodies before certification decisions are approved. These measures have been implemented to ensure the validity of the evidence of improvements that are reported.

c) This governance arrangement is made up of multi-stakeholders. They include public sector actors, the private sector, development partners, regulatory authorities, consumers, farmers, and research institutions.

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?

a) One key challenge had to do with resolving the question of which actors would lead and drive the scheme. This generated some heated debates. Eventually, the private sector was put into leadership but with a strong presence of public sector actors on the Board. This has allowed for incremental push of certified products by the scheme into the market, while ensuring that the public interest to protect the environment and ensure social inclusion are observed by the managers of the scheme.

b) Other challenges involved financing the scheme for the initial take-off. To address this, the scheme had to align its activities with the goals of the development partners who are part of its Board. Consequently, the scheme has benefited from funding from such development organizations through the shared objective of improving food safety in the country.

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?
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

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?

The public sector was initially not convinced of private sector leadership. The main concern was the general fear of the private sector’s tendency to push their profit-making agenda over public interests - particularly related to environmental concerns and social inclusion priorities. Continuous negotiation and intervention by development partners led to an arrangement which included a strong voice of the public sector on the Board, thereby resolving the disagreement.

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?

The scheme has started creating access to more lucrative markets for smallholders who could otherwise not access such markets. The incomes generated in the process contribute in no small ways, to improving their livelihoods at the local level. This is a good start. As earlier indicated however, the real impact will occur at the point when a critical mass of farmers enroll unto the scheme, and when more consumers choose certified produce over uncertified alternatives.

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?

a) Because the arrangement encompasses various stakeholders with varying interests, it has by design, incorporated inbuilt mechanisms for accountability. For example, the development
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Partners, and public sector actors are able to check for themselves the progress being made by certified farmers on the ground.

b) The scheme’s secretariat also plays a central role in the accountability mechanisms. The scheme has staff responsible for data collection who work with third-party auditors to ensure accountability both on the part of farmers (in actually producing crops according to best practices), and on the part of scheme managers (so they don’t produce self-reported data).

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

a) Agrifood systems are complex and require all actors - the public and private sectors, and third sector actors - to play their role. No actor should be excluded, because the challenge is already beyond the human and financial resources of the public sector alone to address.

b) Forming a multi-stakeholder arrangement such as the one just described, can be challenging. One needs to build trust and address the fears of all actors so enough goodwill can be generated to move a positive agenda forward.

c) Continuous monitoring and evaluation are critical so no actor ‘drops the ball’

14. Based on your experience, what gaps/areas of improvement still remain that need further action?

a) Public education needs to be stepped up at both the production and consumption levels. When consumers demand safe food, farmers will respond. Yet farmers must be capacitated to initiate such positive responses.

b) When farmers adopt best practices that are incentivized with improved market access and therefore improved incomes, the triple benefits of people, profit and planet can be attained.

c) There’s a need for joint action among several actors whose mandates involves food safety assurance. Overlapping goals, and the lack of awareness of other actors’ activities can create unnecessary cost burdens on smallholder farmers and even on the public purse.

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

a) A systems approach is urgently required in addressing the challenges of the agrifood system.

b) A reductionist approach, while useful in breaking down complex problems into manageable and solvable parts, often fails to adequately address the complexities of the agrifood system.

c) Agrifood systems require multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary approaches because its problems affect other sectors, and the solutions to its challenges may lie outside agriculture itself.
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

d) No actor should be excluded from the ‘table’, big or small. In the end even big polluters should be welcomed at the table because the pollution problem won’t get resolved if the big polluters are not on the solutions table (especially in the current environment of a democratic global governance architecture)

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

https://www.ghanagreenlabel.org/