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)

Gwynne Foster / Independent / Traceability Facilitator

- I have a background in value chain information systems.
- I am committed to overcome the present reality that South African small-scale farmers, producer communities and SME agri-businesses struggle to access mature food supply chains and profitable markets because they fail to keep records required by laws and standards.
- The additional data from ground-level that will be needed to measure and report on the Sustainability Development Goals, the drive by multi-national companies for transparent supply chains and the increasing use of technology such as blockchain, sensors and drones, open the opportunity for a new agricultural information services industry.
- The focus of my current activities is to use traceability to build a vibrant, reliable, self-sustaining rural e-agriculture information services industry by 2028. I will adopt an advisory, support and facilitation role.
- The responses that follow cover past experiences and future intent.

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

MASP - Market Access Services Programme. Institutional intervention

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

Physically: National / urban / rural (depends on commodity and structure of production entities).

Trade-related data ecosystem:
- Global (platform economy; 4IR technologies; credible education programmes as baseline for local programmes e.g. FAO e-Learning service and Cambridge programme: “Democratizing Education – Global Sustainability Justice”; GS1 Trusted Source global repositories; Smart Trade Networks Australian Indigenous Food programmes as precedent; ...etc...).
- Regional (understand expectations and meet relevant requirements of the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol (Draft 8 February. 2024), and of agreements s.a. AGOA and with EU).
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

- National (adopt ICDL computer training programmes including for Project Management; standardize identification of locations using GS1 Global Location Number (GLN); update commodity-based standards and value chain profiles to include data required to monitor SDG indicators; develop education programmes, implementation templates, data services and support systems).
- Local (rural economies; provide services that are practical, accessible, affordable, and in tune with varying requirements and tech environment; develop local infotech facilitators and practitioners; focus on Youth, respect the role of Elders; respect diverse needs and cultures).

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

**AIM:** Enable smallholder farmers and rural producer groups to access markets. The pattern is progressive development from Survival -> Subsistence -> Semi-commercial -> Commercial.

**CHALLENGES:** Progressive producers hit market access barriers when wishing to move to semi-commercial. Reasons include lack of production records needed for food safety, which prevents entering commercial chains (packhouses, grain silos, wineries etc.), and/or not meeting retail requirements of reliable supply, volumes, consistency, quality etc. A compounding factor is that officials e.g. extension officers are either unaware of market access requirements or incorrectly assume the requirements for records etc. only apply to exports.

Suppliers needing to demonstrate compliance with sustainability expectations are now facing a new dimension of data requirements - measuring SDG indicators, carbon accounting etc. This will affect everyone involved in the agricultural and food sectors!

**MASP:**
- Develop profiling and education programmes, implementation templates and guidelines for community services that can capitalize on the requirements of the Carbon Economy.
- Outcome objective - sustainable local businesses e.g. services co-operatives.
- Expected duration - 5-6 years, in line with Paris Agreement Global Stocktakes.
- Work with qualified partners and rural incubators with strong local leaders.
- Use FAO Digital Village Initiative as precedent model.

This builds on the experiences of and lessons learnt from initiatives during the past 30 years. Sustainability is the fourth wave of change and it will affect everyone.

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

Many communities in South Africa live in rural areas that have not been subjected to intensive agricultural production e.g. using chemicals, GMOs etc. Some indigenous plants are recognized to
have medicinal properties, e.g. rooibos and honeybush, aloes, buchu, moringa and cannabis. Indigenous Knowledge relating to rooibos tea has been acknowledged. Data with evidence of integrity will be key to capitalizing on this opportunity in a way that is “sustainable, resilient, inclusive, and equitable”… This will require:

i) Management of co-operative production e.g. in rural communities.
ii) Accurate recording and allocation of data relating to meeting SDGs, using standardised identification codes (the GS1 GLN for locations).
iii) Meeting food safety and GAP standards.
iv) Taking account of circular economy.
v) Recording of data at source and authentication to assure integrity.
vi) Planning and measuring impact of expanding agricultural development and impact on biodiversity.
vii) Planning and measuring restoration of natural environments.
viii) Assuring supply chain transparency regarding sustainability. Etc.

6. What was the impact achieved in practice?

2024+: MASP – Market Access Services Programme:
- The aim is to develop sustainable businesses that meet requirements of the Carbon Economy.
- The fundamental principle is that people with spare money in their pockets are food-secure.
- MASP builds on past activities and experiences. Examples of activities and outcomes follow.

2023: Cambridge pgm: “Democratising Education for Global Sustainability & Justice”:
- Subsequently appointed as Country Ambassador.

2022: Traceability presentations at Africa and Asia Post Harvest workshops:
- The event was jointly hosted by FAO and University of Pretoria.

2019-2020: Interlinks Traceability Enabler Programme:
- Aim: Continue the work started during Prodev CARA Traceability Programme, i.e. Enable local communities to meet record keeping requirements of standards and record keeping.
- The Enabler programme was accepted in principle as a candidate national programme.
- It ended with the launch of AAMP – Agriculture and Agri-processing Master Plan.
- Some participants are candidate incubators for MASP.

2014-2019: Prodev CARA Traceability Programme:
- Prodev – Professional Development; CARA – Community Agrihubs in Rural Areas.
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- The Prodev CARA Traceability Programme was registered under the Strategic Integrated Programme for Agriculture (SIP 11) in January 2017.

- SIP 11 was managed by the National Agricultural Marketing Council of South Africa (NAMC), reporting to the Presidential Infrastructure Co-ordination Commission (PICC).

- The PICC approved the Prodev CARA programme in February 2017.

- Implementation stalled due to lack of funds, and I resigned as director of Prodev and CARA in 2018, to avoid conflict of interests with Interlinks.

- I retain contact with selected participants.


2014: e-Traceability training assignments for UN ESCAP in Lao PDR and Cambodia.

2012-2013: NDA Biomass Pilots:


- Aims: Establish a QMS for grains and oilseeds for food and biomass.

- The project included international NGOs.

- Case studies assessed the RSB Smallholder standard.

- Phase 1 was research - I developed a handbook.

- Phase 2 of the programme was not implemented.

- Some communities in Eastern Cape use the handbook and are candidates for MASP.

2012-2013: SA-PIP2 Traceability projects:

- PIP – EU Pesticides Initiative Programme.

- Department of Agriculture (DOA) initiative, project managed by Perishable Products Export Control Board (PPECB).

- In Phase 1, my role was to develop a Traceability Handbook for Fruit and Vegetables.

- Phase 2 was to test the results with identified candidates. This was cancelled.

- I was given IP ownership of and the Right to Commercialize related materials. Requirements have changed during the past 10 years. That is a motivation for and objective of MASP.


- GS1 South Africa is a division in CGCSA.

- Strategic projects; activities spanned multiple industries and countries.

- Incorporated the South African Fresh Produce Traceability Project.

- Supported my involvement with EU BrightAnimal project on Precision Livestock Farming.
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

- And approved the Koekedouw Traceability Services Centre for “emerging farmers” in Ceres.
- CGCSA cancelled the Ceres Services Centre initiative after a change in management. Their involvement in SA FPTP ended soon after, with conclusion of the BrightAnimal project.

2011-2012: I completed inaugural GS1 Global Traceability Compliance auditor programme:
- This standard has been updated.


2003-2009: SA Fruit Industry:
- Fruit Industry Plan / Fruit Logistics Project / Info sections of the Fruit SA Trade Chain Manuals.
- Traceability impact assessments.
- Information profiling, flows and vital records.
- Investigation into a social networking systems’ approach to traceability.
- Compliance assessments, including new phytosanitary- and export certification systems.

2008: Bosnia and Herzegovina: Readiness-assessment for electronic traceability.

2007-2008: Develop Traceability Standard Operating Guideline for DOA.
- This document needs updating.


2005-2007: Wine Industry Foresight project:
- Winetech project. I was a member of the CSIR team.
- Value chain ICP-SLA - Information Communication Protocol and Service Level Agreement.
- The documentation produced was still relevant in 2022 however now needs updating.

2004-2006: FAO: Assess the impact of EU food safety regulations on small-scale farmers.
- Contract: AGS214A9001401
- Traceability systems models for fruit supply chains.
- Consolidation of findings in 8 countries.
- Evolving technical solutions guide.

2004-2008: Traceability in Tanzania:
- Training, facilitation, mentoring.
- Industry bodies, private sector consultants and SME food processors.

2006: Assessment of the Impact and Export Feasibility of Maize-ethanol from SA.
- A consortium of Dutch NGOs on contract to Dutch government under leadership of CREM B.V.
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

2002-2003: Ryder Strategies Limited:
- Acting as Senior Traceability Consultant, ACP countries.
2000-2003: Pick ‘n Pay Enterprise Data Integrity Project:
- Facilitation, profiling, business analysis and mapping enterprise structures, processes and business rules in preparation for replacing home-grown systems with SAP.
2000-2001: Helderberg Administration IT Disaster Recovery Planning Project:
- IT Disaster Recovery Plan for Helderberg area. Unicity DRP Committee.
2000: Helderberg Municipality Human Resources Project:
- Preparations for the formation of the Cape Town Unicity.
2000: PQ Africa Agricultural Systems Investigation:
- Positioning and strategies of PQ Africa’s resources and activities in the Agricultural sector with focus on fruit exports.

Summing up: Agricultural industry information initiatives have tended to focus on exports. Market requirements have related mainly to quality, food safety and phytosanitary compliance. The associated education has typically been limited to commercial services providers. The impact of sustainability in market requirements is already affecting all actors in supply chains. I have initiated the Market Access Services Programme (MASP) to get to grips with changes.

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

Refer to Section 6. I am happy to provide documents and details if required.

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?

Refer to Section 6. I am happy to provide documents and details if required.

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?
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?

Refer to Section 6. I am happy to provide documents and details if required.

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?

Extensively! I am happy to discuss. There are some sensitivities in the agricultural space.

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?

That will be determined during MASP (the proposed Market Access Services Programme). The Global Stocktakes and many international carbon accounting initiatives will set the scene.

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

Lots of relevant lessons. I am happy to elaborate.

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

There are many. In particular...
- We need credible programmes such as those provided by FAO and FSN and Cambridge. 
- We need to standardize the identification of production areas and those that are sensitive for biodiversity. I recommend the use of the GS1 Global Location Number.
- We need to structure managed communal production e.g. co-operatives. 
- We need to address the opportunities of indigenous plants s.a. medicinal herbs that are used as ingredients in health products. Cannabis and rooibos are examples. I recommend the GS1 system for pharmaceuticals as baseline.
- We need to formalize project implementation programmes and standards.
- We need to standardize skills development programmes – practical and quick.
- We need to provide training in soft skills.
This is huge!

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

Youth. Local ownership. Ground-up.
Info-tech education and infrastructure.
Develop discipline.
Train trainers, Mentor mentors, Coach coaches.
Elders pull back from the frontline and advise.

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

I am happy to provide documents of interest regarding the interventions I have listed. I appreciate this opportunity to think through where I have come from and where I am heading …
Sincere thanks! Gwynne Foster