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)**
   
   University of Foggia

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

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

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

   The transformative intervention aimed to address the challenge of fragmented and isolated expressions and knowledge regarding short supply chains (FC) across Europe. By bringing together information, experiences, and stakeholders, the SKIN project sought to develop and disseminate a model of short supply chains, promoting collaboration, systematizing knowledge, and identifying good practices.

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

   **Economic Impact:** The intervention aimed to enhance economic benefits by promoting direct sales of food products through short food supply chains (SFSCs). This approach reduces intermediary costs, allowing producers to capture a greater share of the value-added and providing consumers with more affordable prices.

   **Social Impact:** By fostering direct relationships between producers and consumers, SFSCs empower farmers to have more control over pricing and establish trust-based interactions. This direct connection promotes information exchange, builds trust, and contributes to rural development, particularly in marginalized areas.
Environmental Impact: SFSCs have the potential to reduce environmental impact by minimizing energy consumption related to packaging and transportation. The shorter distances between production and consumption points in SFSCs result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions and lower environmental footprint compared to conventional distribution channels. Additionally, SFSCs promote organic production methods, further enhancing environmental sustainability.

6. What was the impact achieved in practice?

The impact achieved in practice through the SKIN project’s findings includes:

- Diverse geographic representation: Good Practices were primarily collected by project partners within their own countries, instances of SFSCs were collected by one project partner in a region of another partner.

- Identification of Hot Topics: Hot Topics, representing prevalent themes in Good Practices, were most frequently related to the thematic module of 'Product', followed by 'Sales', 'Organizational/Institutional/Systemic', and 'Governance'. A total of 1124 Hot Topics (micro-categories) were identified, with an average of approximately 5 Hot Topics per Good Practice.

The pursuit of these objectives is implemented by regional law in Apulia Region in Italy, specific measures aimed at promoting and supporting SFSCs in the Apulia region, derived as an outcome of the SKIN project. This law reflects the project’s objectives and outcomes as encourage farmers to directly sell their agricultural products to consumers; supporting the use of zero-kilometre products in the catering and hospitality sectors; ensuring compliance with regulations regarding the presentation and labelling of zero-kilometre products.

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) Data and Evidence Collection: The intervention involved collecting data and evidence on Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) practices and successes in Europe. Specifically, the SKIN project collected and analysed 105 Good Practices in SFSCs during its Phase 1.

The policymaker prioritized measures that:

- Promoted a more effective and modern structuring of short food supply chains (SFSCs) in agriculture, providing a survival opportunity for small-scale agricultural producers across the national territory.

- Enhanced transparency, food safety, and traceability of agricultural outputs, offering concrete political and institutional responses to overcome competitiveness among involved actors.
These measures aimed to systematize and process at least 100 best practices related to SFSCs, making them accessible to stakeholders through various formats such as web platforms (following the EIP AGRI formats), videos, and page-flows. Additionally, the establishment of regional nodes facilitated deeper dissemination of knowledge into practice. Through the identification of key issues, including hindrances and opportunities around SFSCs, the policy maker sought to address challenges and leverage potential advantages within the agricultural sector.

The transformative change was facilitated by the involvement of diverse actors, including:
- Project partners: partners of the SKIN project played a crucial role in identifying and collecting Good Practices within their respective countries.
- Stakeholders within SFSCs: producers, consumers, and other stakeholders directly involved in SFSCs contributed to the success of the intervention by sharing their experiences and practices.
- Policymakers: regional laws and policies, such as those implemented in the Apulia region, reflect the engagement of policy-makers in promoting and supporting SFSCs as a result of the evidence provided by the project.

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?

- Gender disparities and generational differences among farmers hinder effective engagement in SFSCs. Women often lack resources for involvement, while older farmers struggle to adapt to direct consumer interaction.
- Skill deficiencies: Farmers often lack technical, psychosocial, and financial skills needed for advanced harvesting, post-harvest practices, and adopting technologies to maintain product freshness.
- Resource scarcity: limited financial resources hinder farmers from acquiring external expertise and accessing advanced technologies, complicating the adoption of practices to maintain product freshness.
- Political issues: existing policies may not always facilitate peer-to-peer exchange beneficial for SFSCs. Mainstream agricultural advisory services tend to support industrial regimes rather than alternative practices.
- Regulatory and contractual constraints: regulatory and contractual issues pose significant bottlenecks. For example, exemptions from HACCP regulations for small farmers selling directly to consumers are inconsistently implemented across member states. Additionally, small primary producers often face barriers accessing public procurement contracts and other lucrative market opportunities.
- Geographical fragmentation: geographical fragmentation further complicates the scenario for producers operating within SFSCs, although this specific issue is not detailed, suggesting challenges related to territorial diversity and consistency of practices across different geographical contexts.
How can the hidden costs and benefits of agrifood systems be effectively incorporated into decision-making for transformation?

These challenges collectively hinder European producers from fully leveraging the potential of SFSCs to provide socio-economic, ecological, and territorial benefits.

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?

Government agencies and policymakers: responsible for designing and implementing regulatory frameworks, providing financial incentives, and creating supportive policies to promote SFSCs. They have the authority to enact laws and regulations that influence the operating environment for SFSCs.

Agricultural associations and cooperatives: represent the interests of farmers and primary producers. They advocate for policies supportive of SFSCs, provide training and support services to farmers, and facilitate collaboration among producers to strengthen their collective bargaining power.

Research institutions and universities: conduct research on SFSCs, provide expertise, and generate knowledge to inform policy and practice. They may collaborate with other stakeholders to develop best practices, training programs, and innovation in SFSCs.

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?

None of the key actors and stakeholders opposed or resisted the SKIN initiatives. The policymakers welcomed the project, particularly in Italy, where the regional institution of the Apulia Region decided to approve a specific law promoting 0km food consumption.

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?

By empowering small-scale producers, including marginalized farmers and rural communities, SFSCs create economic opportunities, reduce poverty, and strengthen community resilience. They enhance food access and affordability, particularly in underserved areas, while promoting environmentally sustainable practices that benefit present and future generations. SFSCs contribute to building social cohesion, addressing food insecurity, and mitigating environmental degradation, ultimately creating a more equitable and resilient food system that benefits all members of society, especially those who are most vulnerable.

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

To demonstrate positive changes in the most disadvantaged sectors of the population within Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs), several means were employed. Firstly, the project Short Supply Chain Knowledge and Innovation Network (SKIN) adopted a bottom-up approach, fostering dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders, including producers, researchers, practitioners, and citizens. Through participatory activities and development tools, SKIN aimed to share information on successful examples and transfer useful practices across various actors and territories. This included organizing thematic seminars and collecting "Best Practices" available in a public repository. By engaging stakeholders in intensive dialogue and improving knowledge exchange to foster innovation in SFSCs, SKIN explicitly aimed to overcome existing challenges and bottlenecks, including social issues. Furthermore, monitoring and accountability mechanisms were implemented to ensure proper implementation. These mechanisms included regular assessments of project activities, progress reports, and evaluations conducted by independent bodies to measure the impact of interventions on disadvantaged sectors. Additionally, feedback loops were established to gather input from stakeholders, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation of strategies to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations within SFSCs.

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

Key lessons derived from the SKIN project encompass both positive and negative insights, offering valuable implications for their applicability in similar contexts. Positive takeaways include the successful implementation of Best Practices, demonstrating their potential to enhance performance within Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs), thereby suggesting their transferability to other settings. Additionally, the innovation and validation of successful practices underscore the value of integrating tested and recognized innovations in diverse contexts. Moreover, the transferability of Best Practices across different contexts proves pivotal, albeit requiring adjustments to local specifics. However, challenges such as subjectivity in practice selection, underscore the need for structured approaches to ensure objectivity when adapting practices. Furthermore, the thematic organization of Best Practices highlights the importance of addressing specific SFSC-related issues, aiding in prioritizing interventions in new contexts. Identifying favourable characteristics of Best Practices, including multi-actor dynamics and sustainability, offers guidance for their development or adoption in similar settings. Nonetheless, the non-statistical representativeness of the collection underscores the necessity for further research to explore the dissemination and effectiveness of Best Practices across diverse geographical areas and contexts. Overall, the lessons learned from the SKIN project provide a foundation for others to draw inspiration or guidance in developing or adopting Best Practices in SFSCs. However, it's crucial to consider the context specificity when applying these practices, adapting them if necessary to ensure efficacy.

14. Based on your experience, what gaps/areas of improvement still remain that need further action?
Enhancing stakeholder engagement: While the project emphasized collaboration among stakeholders, there may still be room for improvement in engaging a broader range of actors, including marginalized groups and local communities, to ensure diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making processes.

Scaling up successful practices: While the project identified and validated best practices within SFSCs, there is a need for strategies to scale up these successful practices beyond pilot initiatives to have a more widespread impact on food systems.

Addressing regulatory barriers: Despite efforts to highlight regulatory and contractual constraints within SFSCs, further action is needed to advocate for policy reforms that facilitate the growth of SFSCs and create a more supportive regulatory environment for small-scale producers and local food systems.

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

Collaborative approach: Successful improvement in Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) requires collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders to address challenges and promote innovation effectively.

Transferability of best practices: Identifying and validating best practices within SFSCs demonstrates their potential transferability across different contexts, offering valuable insights for similar initiatives elsewhere.

Addressing social disparities: Recognizing and mitigating social disparities, such as gender and generational differences, is crucial for fostering inclusivity and empowering all actors within SFSCs.

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

https://wastelesseu.com/networking/corenet/