

SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION
A WEB-SITE ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD PRODUCTION
FROM 18TH SEPT. TO 04TH NOV. 2008

Proceeding available at:

http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/PROCEEDINGS_FoodAidandProPoorGrowth.doc

I. ISSUES RAISED

- Main gaps in sharing methods for producing basic foods at the household and community levels (G. Kent):
 - There is a lot of **information already available** about home gardens, community gardens, roof gardens, sack gardens, small scale aquaculture, and so on. The problem is that it is **very scattered**;
 - Few efforts have been made to **systematically gather information on household food production** in a form that would be **directly useful to householders** and the NGOs that work with them;
 - Most of the **information** about food security, farming, livelihood strategies, etc., is presented in a **form designed to reach specialists, and not to address ordinary people in their own terms**. Few of them provide practical guidance in ways appropriate to householders with low income.

II. OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTIONS

Opportunities for improving the sharing of information and methods on household food production:

Tools:

- **Internet could be used to facilitate more systematic exchange of ideas** about how households and communities in difficult circumstances could produce basic food in new and different ways. (G.Kent)
- Often support to people with low incomes can come from other people in comparable circumstances. A **website could facilitate that process** and this effort should be made to **communicate with the end users more directly**. (G.Kent)

Approach:

- Have a platform to share information that can be also shared with those who need **it most for improved food access**, particularly the resource poor households, then both the hunger gap period as well as the number of hungry people will be reduced. (R.Opiyo)
- The **grassroots-"for-the -poor" approach** will work only where CBOs and NGOs can actively communicate information to the organized groups that are willing to produce for cluster communities. The scientists would then be able to **communicate new innovations/science to the organized groups**, merging livelihood strategies and cluster multi-component food production. (V. Mugalavai)
- Most poor people would not be able to access the Internet directly, but the use of internet

combined with **small local NGOs could serve as the bridge** to share information and ideas about household food production. (G.Kent)

Suggestions for the establishment of a Website on HH Food Production:

▪ **Objectives:**

- The website could be used to link people together, especially to **connect those who have questions to those who have answers**. More experienced people could provide advice on how to get started with particular food production techniques, and suggest ways to apply the ideas in specific local situations. (G.Kent)
- The Household Food Production Website (**HFPW**) should focus on **providing practical how-to-do-it information in a form that would be useful to householders** with low income who are looking for practical information on how to produce food at home. (G.Kent)
- **The goals and aim of the website need polishing and should begin with adequacy**, and then have a human approach-regalia and field work in communicating science - new innovations after enabling access to vulnerable groups, sharing innovative regional approaches and practices. (V. Mugalavai).

▪ **Target/End Users:**

- Start simple and with **rural towns** and not the capitals of states and precisely with the suburbs of these rural towns where farming still forms an integral part of their livelihoods. (E.Elamin)
- The establishment of a website is an important means for sustaining the livelihoods of **small and marginal farmers**. (M.Yusuf Ali)
- The website should actually serve **small nongovernmental organizations** that can help to make the connections between people in their own countries, and also with people in similar situations in other countries. The NGOs could print out documents of interest to local people, and maybe translate or adapt them as necessary. (G.Kent)

▪ **Structure:**

- Two-tiered system on Internet (P.Shrestha):
 - **Central (global) level:** Information on 'Global knowledge used by the NGO, CBO networks to get the ideas that are relevant to the local context;
 - **Local level:** Information that is useful to deliver (by the relevant NGO, CBOs) directly to 'community level' people. This tier should be simple with key concepts and hands-on tips hopefully in local language and with many simple sketches (pictures) as far as possible.
- **A central office is needed to help with the coordination of this activity** by (G.Kent).
 - **Setting up a central global website** on household food production that would be available to everyone who had good Internet access. The central operation would provide **links to other computers and to documents that provide the needed information**. One can start collecting information in many different places, in various forms and then create the links;
 - **More decentralized initiatives** that could be linked together in a kind of network and channelled in the global website (G.Kent).

▪ **Information Content:**

- How to grow food in the house yard or **home food production using farm yard manure**. A website will be very fruitful as many people in the world are there who can

grow food in their home lawns without the deleterious effect of chemical fertilizers and injurious pesticides. (A.R.Kakar)

- The Local tier should (among others) include (P.Shrestha):
 - **Promotion of local foods:** Local foods particularly in the remote villages are most dependable food for local people. The information on the 'household food production' should reiterate its importance and values.
 - **Demotion of commercialized foods:** Villagers should be made aware of such food and taught to use their scarce resources wisely.
 - **Proper Storing:** One of the concerns in Nepal (and in other developing places like Bangladesh or India) is the loss of a significant proportion of staple foods during storing.
 - **Nutritional information:** The proposed site should also include information on micronutrients which the locally available food does not have and possible ways to get these micronutrients.
- The website in the connection of the home food production needs a reasonable set of **data and documents along with some picture of the production in the home yards.** (R.Kakar)
- Attractive/beautiful **pictures related to agriculture** (for example the farmers sitting in the home garden) (K.Sokkheng), that should come **together with practical information** about how to do household food production. (G.Kent)
- Posting the **success stories in the field of food security** (K.Sokkheng). The website and the organizations that work with it could help people to **create their own success stories.** (G.Kent)
- it would be better to **include good practices and indigenous knowledge and technology in regard to organic food production** (cereals and vegetables) at household level. (B. Rajbhandari)
- It should include **traditional food systems of different parts of the world** (S.Yesudas) and highlight **those elements that focus on practical methods** of household food production. (G.Kent)
- **Sections focusing on food security success stories and challenges** on (R.Opiyo):
 - Livelihood Strategies;
 - Socio-Cultural Factors in Food Access;
 - Access to better markets as an incentive for small scale farmers.
- **Sources of Information:**
 - **Some people might be interested** in focusing on particular issues, and devote some energy to building up that information by **writing short documents on those themes** and/or by **developing new practical guidance** on how to do household food production. (G.Kent)
 - **Some members can** take responsibility for different countries and **collect the local information including research papers** on Household Food Production to enrich the quality of the website. (S.T.Hossain)
 - **Links to selected websites and documents** that talk about livelihood strategies, socio-cultural factors in food access, and access to better markets. (G.Kent).

▪ **Technology:**

- As most of the users on less developed countries (like Nepal) have very slow access to internet resources, the local tier should be built on very '**basic internet technology**'. (P.Shrestha).
- There are **several possible software platforms** for supporting the exchange of information and ideas on household food production. They should be accessible on the Internet from anywhere in the world. (G.Kent)
- **Yahoo sharing-** or **Google groups** is a very practical way of sharing/ discussing the issues among the working groups and others interested in it. (P.Shrestha)

▪ **Who might host it:**

- There are many organizations willing to host the website, but the funds and responsibilities related to its maintenance should be considered;(Z.Shaban):
 - The NGO Integrated Science for African communities (ISAC) is willing to host it;
 - The Governor of the Bugiri district in Uganda finds it a good idea and assured that could be passed through the council to help with the setting up of the website;
 - The State Minister of Agriculture in Uganda is willing to help in any possible way.
- FAO's Headquarters or regional offices, or other organizations, may be willing to host this activity as part or **complement of other types of initiatives** taking place in **different places**. (G.Kent)
- Such a site could be **designed, moderated** (M.Yusuf Ali) and **rolled out by FAO** (V. Mugalavai).

▪ **Sources of Funding:**

- There some organizations that might be interested in funding it once the proposal is on table (Z.Shaban):
 - Bill Gates and Melinda Foundation;
 - National and local governments in Africa;
 - There are organizations at national and local level in Uganda, such as the ISAC network, where this website could be started, also benefiting from local and national government's networking.

▪ **Proposed names for the website:**

- **Pro-poorest household food production**, to distinguish it from similarly titled programmes that are broader in scope, or in application (J.Appleton)
- **Food Security Success Story Website** (FSSSW) – (K.Sokkheng)
- **The Household Food Access Website (HFAW)** (R.Opiyo)

III. CONCLUSIONS BY THE DISCUSSION FACILITATOR

- This initiative has a **good potential for supporting people** with low incomes to increase and improve their food production at the household level.
- Creating **strong networks** on the issue could help to facilitate the process.
- The **Internet could be used to tie local nongovernmental organizations** together with a **global network** of people interested in household food production.

- **These groups could serve as the bridge** between global (and, possibly, national and local) websites and local end-users, i.e. the householders.
- The pilot online group called “Household Food Production Website” will be used to experiment the ways of doing it.

IV. PILOT PROJECT – “HOUSEHOLD FOOD PRODUCTION WEBSITE” ON YAHOO GROUPS

George Kent has created an experimental “**Household Food Production Website**” on **Yahoo Groups**, called HFPW for short. The HFPW itself is used to experiment with ways of setting up the final website.

To make it more manageable, the access to the HFPW is not open, but requires invitation from and approval by the website owner. Those interested are invited to send an email to kent@hawaii.edu with their email address and a few lines about themselves.

The instructions on the Yahoo Groups site may seem to suggest that it is necessary to create a Yahoo email address in order to join this group. However, it is actually possible to continue using any e-mail address one may have.

There is a “Files” section on the website, accessible from the menu on the left side of the front page. In that section, it is possible to create a number of folders, labelled with different topic names such as, say Sprouting Seeds, Sack Gardens, Composting, and Aquaculture etc. Copies of documents can be stored inside those folders.

There is also a “Links” section on the website, where links can be set up to other websites. In time, if some of the folders become very full, other groups might be created on this specific topics.

HFPW will also maintain an **archive of email messages** that have been exchanged through that system.

V. RESOURCES

Web-Based Platforms for knowledge sharing (G.Kent):

- **Wikia:** www.wikia.com
- **Global Knowledge Partnership, described at:**
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn_viewresdet.html?r=503
- **Yahoo Groups:** It can organize a members’ list, archive e-mail exchanges and maintain document files and a list of links to other websites or documents. An introduction to this system can be found at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/>

Material on Household Food Production:

- **Homestead Vegetable Gardening: Meeting the Need of Year Round Vegetable Requirement of Farm Family.** On-Farm Research Division (OFRD) of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) has long been working for household nutrition and food security of small and marginal farmers under its Integrated Farming Systems Program. It has developed and recommended nine models of homestead vegetable/fruit production for the resource poor farmers of different agro-ecological regions. (M.Yusuf

Ali) : http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn_viewresdet.html?r=501)

- **National conference on "Climate change: Food Security in Bangladesh"** held on August 2008 by the Bangladesh Agricultural Economists Association in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In the conference a number of papers was presented on food security from a national and global perspective. **Household food production issues were highlighted in the seminar** (S.T.Hossain):
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn_viewresdet.html?no_cache=1&r=540&nocache=1
- **Extension material of the Pro Huerta program, Argentina** (available only in Spanish) This programme is being implemented in other countries such as Haiti. "La Huerta Organica" is the basic text (A. Marcos):
http://km.fao.org/fsn/resources/fsn_viewresdet.html?no_cache=1&r=538&nocache=1