

PARALLEL SESSION 1

Tackling socio-economic challenges in building resilient agri-food systems



Despite drastic reductions in poverty worldwide over the past decades, the deprivation of basic needs remains widespread among populations living in fragile situations, who are vulnerable to economic shocks, the impacts of climate change and, often also, conflict. These vulnerabilities have also been identified as the main causes underlying recurrent food crises. Food crises disproportionately hit countries where demographic pressures are high, social protection is not accessible, and prospects to provide young populations with employment opportunities and a future free of want are slim, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Any poverty reduction, resilience, and food security strategy in these contexts requires a strong focus on agriculture and the development of food value chains. It is where most people currently find the means to support their livelihoods.

Background

Low productivity in agriculture, which is increasingly aggravated by climate variability, is a main constraint to food security. Fragmented markets and weak or broken links (often because of conflict) in food value chains (handling, transport, distribution and processing) pose further obstacles to improved livelihoods. Such deficiencies are also conducive of high price volatility and uncertainty in food markets, eroding the means and incentives of supply chain actors to invest in farms and food value chains. All these factors persistently conspire against food security and income opportunities in those contexts vulnerable to food crises, especially in Africa. What is more, they reflect deep-seated inequalities, can fuel feelings of dispossession and, hence, can trigger conflict and forcible migration.

Structure

The session consists of two panels.

Chair of the session and panels:

Rob Vos, Director of Markets, Trade and Institutions Division, International Food Policy Research Institute.

Panel 1: Fixing missing and broken links: promoting innovation and investments to foster sustainable agri-food systems

In view of the critical role of agri-food systems in improving livelihoods of vulnerable populations, especially in areas with high population growth, this panel will explore opportunities to overcome market fragmentation and develop better integrated agri-food systems to secure sustainable and affordable availability of nutritious food. Panelists will identify what type of innovations, investments and incentives would be needed to better connect smallholder farmers and small-scale enterprises in food processing, distribution, and trade to markets, strengthen rural-urban linkages and create integrated and inclusive agri-food systems. As one important aspect of the discussion, the panel will discuss constraints and opportunities to leverage large-scale job creation, especially for youth and women, through agri-food system development.

Demand for food is projected to grow substantially over the next decade, especially in low-income countries with high population growth. Food production and productivity growth may not be sufficient to meet the demand where links between the different stages of food supply chains are weak, broken, or missing all together. A key question is how to strengthen, fix, or establish those links and create better integrated agri-food system capable of leveraging employment and income generation while securing adequate supplies of nutritious food accessible to all. The challenges will be largest where people are trapped into protracted food crises, conflict is raging, and/or climate change is producing continuous setbacks. Levers will need to be found to break through vicious cycles.

The panel will focus on how such challenges can be overcome and what interventions would provide the incentives and conditions to leverage innovations and investments for the development of inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems and for the prevention of food crises. Accordingly, the panel will address the following issues:

- What interventions can help trigger innovation and investments to overcome market fragmentation and develop better integrated agri-food systems to secure sustainable and affordable availability of nutritious food in the context of protracted crises?
- How important is it to strengthen local markets and agri-food system linkages, e.g. between rural areas and close-by small townships and between peri-urban and large urban areas?
- What is needed in order for integrated agri-food systems to leverage higher farm incomes for smallholders and large-scale job creation for workers along the food supply chains, especially for youth and women?

Panel 2: Reducing inequalities for decent livelihoods free from food insecurity and malnutrition

Food price volatility and dysfunctional food supply chains are major constraints to keeping nutritious food affordable and available. New approaches need to be developed to mitigate and contain the impacts of these factors in order to safeguard the nutritional status of vulnerable populations, especially in fragile contexts. Social protection could simultaneously help to improve access to nutritious food, mitigate risks, incentivize investments in the development of food systems in low-income and crisis contexts, and strengthen nutrition resilience. In this sense, social protection can bridge humanitarian and development interventions. Inequalities in the access to assets like land, water, credits, or livestock remain pervasive in contexts at risk of food crises. Addressing these will be essential for building resilient and sustainable livelihoods that are free from food insecurity and malnutrition.

Against this background, the panel will discuss:

- Possible solutions to contain food price volatility and improve supply chains to keep nutritious food affordable and accessible to vulnerable populations.
- Modalities of social protection that contribute to the creation of resilient and vibrant livelihoods and serve in bridging humanitarian and development interventions.
- Approaches to provide hundreds of millions of youth with access to skills training and attractive jobs over the next decade.
- Approaches that can effectively overcome inequalities in the access to assets essential for farm productivity and agri-food system development; in particular, ways to improve women's access to assets and women's economic empowerment in agri-food systems.
- Further interventions needed to strengthen nutrition resilience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Panel 1: Fixing missing and broken links: promoting innovation and investments to foster sustainable agri-food systems

Presenter:

- **Thierry Giordano**
Senior Researcher, the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development

Panelists:

- **Tom Arnold**
Chair of Task Force Rural Africa, European Commission
- **Luc Christiaensen**
Senior Economist, The World Bank
- **Lisandro Martin**
Director for West and Central Africa, International Fund for Agricultural Development
- **Suzanne Moorhead**
Chair, Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- **Fatma Ben Rejeb**
Chief Executive Officer, Pan African Farmers Organization
- **Atze Schaap**
Corporate Director Dairy Development, Royal FrieslandCampina

Panel 2: Reducing inequalities for decent livelihoods free from food insecurity and malnutrition

Presenter:

- **Ibrahim A. Mayaki**
Chief Executive Officer, New Partnership for Africa's Development

Panelists:

- **Djime Adoum**
Executive Secretary, Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel
- **Jean-Louis De Brouwer**
Director, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission
- **Gerda Verburg**
Coordinator, Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
- **Fokko Wientjes**
Vice-President, Nutrition in Emerging Markets & Food Systems Transformation, Royal DSM
- **Noël Marie Zagre**
Regional Nutrition Adviser, The United Nations Children's Fund