

Asia-Pacific Rural Development and Food Security Forum 2022

22–24 March (Virtual)

Battling Climate Change and Transforming Agri-Food Systems



World Vegetable Center

SYNTHESIS: DAY 1 ACTIVITIES AND SESSIONS

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Okay, Tom, thank you very much. So, my job is to summarize the discussion at the 1st session, Leaders' roundtable session. I'm not going to summarize all the rich discussions but here I have just a few key takeaways from the message we received in the session.

First, ADB Vice President Casali and IFAD Associate Vice President Mr. Brown presented key challenges we face for food system transformation in the region. Their presentations set the scene for the preceding discussions in the forum. We had very lively discussions with the key leaders in the region, Shenggen Fan, Yutaka Arai, and Cao Duc Phat.

I would say we've taken three points. First, we all agree that we are again, in a perfect storm in the global food markets, driven by high energy prices, COVID-19 related disruptions, and ongoing Russian-Ukraine conflict, and of course, more extreme weather events happening all over the world. We need to manage all these situations well. We have lessons actually learned from the previous crisis. There are a lot of speakers who emphasized the importance of open and transparent trade which are playing a key role here. We also need to monitor the global market situations. It's important to look at the evolution of the local food security situation of the country or sub regional level, because its situation is very different depending on the country. We really need to intensively monitor the situations of our developing member countries for the next 6 to 12 months. We must be ready to provide timely and effective social protection measures. Some of the speakers emphasized the importance of enhancing local capacity, or producing healthy and nutritious food, in addition to the importance of global trade.

The second point in the medium to long term, many speakers agree that climate change imposes major challenges to the food and agriculture sector in the regions. The sector will be suffering more from extreme weather events, but it also plays a key role in the mitigation of climate change. So they emphasize the important role of technological innovations but also call for more integrated and coordinated policy responses. We need financing mechanisms, policy interventions, research and development, and capacity building at local level to promote climate smart agriculture technologies. Just to pick one point, Professor Fan also emphasized the opportunity of exploring



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a carbon trade market to allow farmers to get return from adopting climate smart agricultural technologies.

Lastly, all of the speakers call for a platform of knowledge sharing including government, private sector, international organizations like us, also the non-governmental organizations on the food system transformation in the region, so that the response from all the parties are aligned and corroborate with each other.

In particular, the vice minister of Japan's Minister of Agriculture expressed a high level of expectation to ADB and also a high willingness to work with ADB and the other DMC governments to support this regional food system transformation. We will have more opportunity to discuss these key issues in the next few days from various aspects. We already have a very lively discussion on digitalization issues. I hope we can elevate the discussion of our partnership with different organizations present today. With that, I'll stop my summary of the session. Thank you, Tom.

Navin Twarakavi

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To synthesize the digital technology and agriculture session we just had, I will just offer a few points. The first thing that came across all the speakers, the panelists, and the keynote speakers, is that we need to take a problem-driven approach to digital technologies for agriculture. I often think of solutions that will potentially disrupt our food systems, maybe lying in the intersection of public sector, private sector and agriculture sector players. We need to always keep this in mind.

There's a need to promote digital solutions for scaling good agriculture practices. So, if that means that we can introduce low-cost robotics to the smallholder, we should definitely try to see the feasibility of it. In agriculture value chains, there is a need to enhance the transparency that means that we need to allow a free movement of data, financial services and knowledge across the supply chain.

So then on the direction, while we need to look for solutions that directly disrupt farmers' value chains, as one of our panelists, Mr. Grant pointed out, we can also look for approaches where we can indirectly disrupt by supporting research institutions such as CGIAR to come up with better seed varieties and with better ways to manage the crop and so on. There is also a need to support



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globalizing value chains supply chains, at the same time promoting local agri food systems. All the speakers described the need to keep farmers' skills and capacities at the heart of designing digital solutions. Pinduoduo and Precision Development highlighted those aspects. Ground reality largely determines the success of the solution, therefore, empathy for the ground reality needs to be considered at all times. That came across in all the experiences.

And finally, as Professor Teng mentioned, crisis is becoming the new norm so we need to explore the use of digital technologies to address food security radically. He talked about food security exchanges. That's another area we have to work on in the future. So we look forward to, as Shingo mentioned, elevating this discussion in the next few days. Thanks everyone, back to you, Tom.



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