

Asia-Pacific Rural Development and Food Security Forum 2022

22–24 March (Virtual)

Battling Climate Change and Transforming Agri-Food Systems



SYNTHESIS: DAY 2 ACTIVITIES AND SESSIONS

Narayan Iyer

Senior Natural Resources and Agriculture Specialist (Agribusiness)
Asian Development Bank

Thanks, Yasmin. I am just here to provide a synthesis for a couple of sessions that have already taken place. I'll be followed by Kazuko who will synthesize sessions that I haven't covered.

So I'm first talking about the Deep Dive Session on Urban Control Environment Farming and what we saw in that session is that, it is very important to withstand disruptions in markets, which are increasing in frequency and to meet the demand for fresh and nutritious food. With less reliance on markets, where food is we can see frequently getting contaminated. Examples mentioned are of small scale vertical farming and hydroponics from India and from Nauru.

We also saw that there are some constraints. The success and scaling up of this type of farming and hydroponics will require more support and one of the biggest challenges faced by vertical farming is a lack of right seed varieties. Current seeds are meant for soil and as a result, their use in vertical farming or hydroponics are quite low, and that makes it a costlier affair. So, in order to make the produce from these techniques, affordable for consumers, it is very important to develop the right kind of seeds for them.

We also saw how Philippines is showing the way in how right government policies can be a strong enabler and DMCs in the region could benefit from their experience.

We also saw how awareness of home farming kind of technology is very important. Training is a key factor in scaling of these kinds of activities.

Then we had a technical session on pathways to sustainable and inclusive food systems, which highlighted the fact that biodiversity loss and climate change are more serious issues than ever, and tackling these issues is critical to achieving sustainable and inclusive food systems. It is noted that while meat consumption and rice cultivation are major contributors to GHG emissions, but solving these issues needs a systems approach to food security, piecemeal tackling of issues may not get us there. Multiple stakeholders across public sector, private sector, civil society organizations etc. need to present a united front and work together. Organizations like the Asian Development Bank can be a convener and an honest broker to bring together various stakeholders for this kind of integrated approach.



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World Vegetable Center

We also saw that gender inequality in agriculture and food systems, it is endemic and is further exacerbated by climate change. Adaptation measures should ensure that this is not further compounded. A gender responsive approach to climate smart agriculture is the need of the hour. Measures should reduce women's labor burden, provide them with more information, and make resources more accessible. It was also mentioned that structural economic transformation is needed to pull agriculture and make it more efficient out of where it is. But it has yet to be achieved and what is needed is policy financing and incentives provided to industry and services for labor to slowly find its way into industry and services as well. Instead of remaining stuck in agriculture where it's probably not required. private sector investment is critical for food system transformation. And it must also remember that while doing all this, food systems have to also be environmentally sustainable. We also saw that small scale farmers are clearly the foundation of food systems. Statistics show that the majority, 85% of land is tilled by smallholders but they only produce 25% of food. So, clearly, productivity needs to increase and they need more help. Our only very negligible proportion of finance study climate finances is targeted towards small scale agriculture. SMEs are equally critical and almost equally neglected. Various pilots have demonstrated the efficacy of supporting them achieving more sustainability.

And lastly, we saw a case study of Vietnam and agri based economy. One of the highlights was its low carbon crop value chain development, which drives policy as well as response measures and which could be a model for other DMCs to seek inspiration from. I'll stop here and I'll hand it over to Kazuko.

Kazuko Ogasahara

Senior Natural Resources and Agriculture Specialist (Health and Nutrition)
Asian Development Bank

Thank you, Narayan. So I'll just summarize very quickly. The webinar session was on the nutritional security. Nutrition has not been prioritized as against the other interventions ever, but must be an integral component of every development intervention. It was shown that the early life under nutrition influence not only children to poor physical and cognitive development in life but also increases risk of non-communicable diseases in adulthood. Mandana said that there are opportunities and benefits of investment in maternal and early child nutrition. That is a benefit for one generation in addressing both under and over nutrition and it will be carried through to the next generation. It was also mentioned that people in Asia and the Pacific face not only a double burden of malnutrition, but a triple burden - it means under nutrition and over nutrition and moreover, micronutrient deficiencies such as anemia.



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To tackle the burden of malnutrition, cross sectoral approach is needed based on data and reliable expert analysis. We've seen in the post-pandemic recovery efforts that there are opportunities for integration. For example, in the social safety net platforms.

There are three takeaways from the presentation of all panelists and speakers. First, how to access healthier diets. It includes the dietary choice or consumers. Professor Ladda showed some interventions in Thailand to bring the healthy food in the environment in the market and school. There is a need for dimensional behavior change messages on the quality of food. Also, affordability or healthy diet is important, so, the lack of knowledge and education and factors such as distance to market impair people's access to quality food. Second, the importance of science and technology. Diet has two important dimensions, quantity and quality. On quality, we need more evidence on nutrition, nutrient absorption into the body. It was very interesting such an isotope ethno technology was used in this field. Regarding evidence, Jody showed study results in Asia on vegetable consumption. So, it is also important for communities and local governments to work together to gather data on the progress and challenges faced by the programs. Finally, it is mentioned in other sessions that close collaboration is important including with the private sector. Kaz introduced the DSM's commitment at Food Systems Summit on September 2021. To achieve this commitment, they are working on developing partnership to scale up much more micronutrient supplementation with government and private sectors. In this way, partnership is key to solving the enormous problem of nutrition insecurity. It is important to work in coordination to avoid any duplication of efforts and a missed opportunity to make the best use of available knowledge and financial resources.

Let me stop here. We now close the session. Please answer the questionnaire for the evaluation.



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