

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 51
**COMBINING INCOME GENERATION AND FOOD ACCESS FOR VULNERABLE
POPULATIONS**
FROM 25 JANUARY TO 15 FEBRUARY 2010

Summary available at:
http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/SUMMARY_combining_income_generation.doc

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Duration: from 25.01.2010 to 15.02.2010

Number of participants: 22

Number of Contributions: 17

Contribution marked with (SE) have been contributed by Members of the Solution Exchange India Network where this discussion has been cross-posed.

All FSN Forum discussion documents are available at: <http://km.fao.org/fsn>

II. INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC

Dear colleagues,

My name is Danuta Chmielewska and I am a researcher at IPC-IG. The [International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth](#) (IPC-IG) is a joint project between the United Nations Development Programme and the Brazilian Government to facilitate South-South cooperation on key development issues. It specializes in offering research-based policy recommendations for inclusive growth. By encouraging South-South cooperation, the centre specifically aims to expand the knowledge base and capacities of developing countries to design and implement nationally-owned poverty reduction strategies.

IPC-IG's recently established research program on Rural and Sustainable Development aims at producing knowledge and fostering debate about the benefits of integrated policies that jointly tackle diverse dimensions of poverty.

In this context, **we are interested in policies that reconcile food availability and food access in order to ensure positive impacts on both rural poverty reduction and food security.** These interventions are important from at least two perspectives. On the one hand, they support agricultural production that benefits the rural poor, providing opportunities of market access and income generation. On the other, they ensure that all people, and especially the most vulnerable, have access to food provisions at all times.

We are therefore mapping innovative experiences in developing countries that benefit both food producers and consumers, linking support to smallholder agriculture and food access initiatives.

- **We would thus be very grateful if you could share ideas and experiences that combine market access and income generation for smallholder farmers with food access for vulnerable populations.**

For example, in **Brazil a public program named PAA** (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos http://www.ipc-undp.org/doc_africa_brazil/2.SESAN_PAA.pdf) allows government procurement of food items from smallholder farmers, which can be or are further donated in food aid programs.

Information, perspectives and knowledge resources on country programs, evaluations, national project/ program materials and so forth are all welcome.

We thank you very much in advance.
Kind regards from Brazil,

Danuta Chmielewska International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG)
Poverty Practice, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP
Brasilia, Brazil
<http://www.ipc-undp.org>

III. LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution by Víctor Puac from SESAN, Guatemala

Dear Members

I think that in Latin America a number of experiences oriented towards this goal do exist, and it has almost become a tradition to implement "productive" projects with the poor while aiming at the "famous" sustainability. Many initiatives have been implemented to date by NGOs and, in some rare cases, by the government of the day in some countries. It would be best to look specifically at which countries have these experiences and then proceed to document them properly so that we can learn the necessary lessons and divulge them.

In the particular case of Guatemala I can tell that the experience of the *Cooperativa 4 Pinos* (focused on the exportation of non-traditional agricultural products <http://www.cooperativacuatropinos.com/>) may be a good example that deserves further documentation as a case study, given its significance in the country, the coverage of their partners and their recently being awarded by the government with "The Order of the Quetzal", the highest non-military award given by the Republic of Guatemala to both domestic and foreign recipients. This cooperative was founded in 1976 following the earthquake that struck Guatemala, and was where external cooperation funds were placed (Government of Switzerland and national funds). This Cooperative has been through a lot but is currently in full recovery. I do not think there is a case study- like documentation relative to this cooperative, but it surely teaches a series of lessons that can be useful.

Best regards
Víctor Puac

Original message in Spanish

Estimados Miembros:

1. Me parece que en América Latina sí existen una serie de experiencias orientadas hacia dicho objetivo, ya que casi se ha vuelto una tradición implementar proyectos "productivos" con las poblaciones pobres y buscando la famosa "sostenibilidad". Muchas iniciativas han sido implementadas a la fecha por ONG's y algunas otras, escasas por cierto, por los Gobiernos de turno en algunos Países. Sería de buscar específicamente en que Países existen estas experiencias y luego proceder a documentarlas adecuadamente para que nos puedan brindar los "aprendizajes necesarios y que estos se puedan socializar".

2. En el caso de Guatemala, podría comentarle que la experiencia de la *Cooperativa 4 Pinos* (exportación de productos no tradicionales agrícolas <http://www.cooperativacuatropinos.com/>) puede ser un buen ejemplo que ameritaría documentarlo como estudio de caso, dada su relevancia en el País, la cobertura de sus asociados y que recientemente fue galardonada por el gobierno actual con "LA ORDEN DEL QUETZAL" que es el más alto distintivo que los gobiernos otorgan a una serie de eventos relevantes tanto a nacionales como extranjeros. Esta cooperativa fue fundada en 1976 a raíz del terremoto que azotó Guatemala, en donde se colocaron fondos de la cooperación externa (Gobierno de Suiza por un tiempo y fondos nacionales). A esta Cooperativa le ha pasado de todo y actualmente tiene una franca recuperación integral. Me parece que no existe una documentación tipo Estudio de Caso para dicha Cooperativa, pero seguramente que tiene una serie de lecciones y aprendizajes que pueden ser útiles.

Saludos cordiales
Víctor Puac

Contribution by Alberto Zezza from FAO, Italy

Dear Members,

The experience of the Cuatro Pinos Cooperative is indeed an interesting one in many respects and relevant to the current debate.

The case has in fact been studied in quite some detail. The latest studies came out just recently and investigate the long term welfare effects of some of the interventions related to the establishment of the cooperative. The studies I refer to are the following:

- [Calogero Carletto, Talip Kilic and Angeli Kirk. 2009. Non-traditional Crops, Traditional Constraints: Long-Term Welfare Impacts of Export Crop Adoption among Guatemalan Smallholders. World Bank Policy Research working paper ; no. WPS 5142.](#)
- [Carletto, C., Kirk., A., Winters, P., Davis, B. \(2007\). Non-traditional crops, traditional constraints: The adoption and diffusion of export crops among Guatemalan smallholders. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4347.](#)

Both papers are freely accessible from the World Bank's website.

A number of other papers on this experience have been published since the 1980's with Carletto, Immink and Von Braun as lead authors. These are referenced in the two papers I have listed above, so I will not repeat that information here.

I hope these resources are useful.

Regards,

Alberto
Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA),
FAO, Italy

Responses by Danuta Chmielewska

Dear Mr. Víctor Puac, Dear Mr. Alberto Zezza, thank you for your contributions.

This is in line with what we are trying to promote through the FSN Forum: a way to identify experiences and related documents about programs that combine market access and income generation for smallholder farmers with food access for vulnerable populations. Further on we would evaluate this material in order to share among other countries. Lessons learned could be incorporated and new initiatives could be drawn.

Thank you for the example of the Cooperative 4 Pinos.

We are looking towards new contributions.

Best regards, Danuta

Contribution by B.P.Gangadhara Swamy from India (SE)

Dear All,
Here is my suggestion for the query

What programme and schemes have helped in combining market access and income generation for smallholder farmers with food access for vulnerable populations?

While designing a programme for small holder farmers, first we have to focus on immediate benefits, because they can't wait for long term returns as they are economically weak. Hence, vegetable cultivation, value addition to agriculture and food crops should be the first activities. Then dairy, fisheries and such other activities can be taken, finally we can focus on integrating the agriculture components like horticulture, agro forestry etc.

What are the challenges in implementing such initiatives?

One should have the thorough knowledge of the area, their food habits, customs, seasonal demands and festivals.

What are the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders involved in getting such programmes operational?

NGOs and Government agencies has to work hand in hand, NGOs can focus community organization, participatory planning, need analysis of the nearby by areas, cities etc. While government agency can focus on leveraging the resources and working out policy matters with different departments

B. P. Gangadhara swamy
CCF-India
Raichur

Contribution by Kanchan Lama from WOCAN, Nepal

Dear All

In response to the request, I want to share my experience from my past with **Hills Leasehold Forestry and Fodder Development Project (HLFFDP)**, a project on poverty alleviation implemented by the Department of Forestry funded by the International Fund for Agriculture (IFAD) with technical assistance support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The project aimed at poverty alleviation of those poor communities that were landless or had below 0.5 hectares of land but mainly dependent on forest resources for livelihood. Most of the target communities were from indigenous caste groups with very low level of literacy whereas most of them were illiterates. The project combined two objectives: **1) improve livelihood of the poor and 2) improve forest condition, thus combining environmental improvement goal with human development objective.** The project offered an attractive bond to the communities that they could use the degraded forest land for a period of forty years as leased forest and use the benefits derived by managing the given patch of forest land for producing grass, fodder, fruits and herbs so that they could harvest these minor forest products for making a sustainable livelihood. The project banned plantation of crops and cereals in the forest land given on lease to the communities. At first the poor communities were scared at the uncertain government forest policy and could not accept the proposal made by DoF staff in the field, thinking that they could be used like labor to improve forest but going to be displaced from their habitat gradually when the forest will be regenerated and improved.

However through social mobilization and extension services the project was successful to attract many communities (at least 1250 groups made of 5-10 households in its first phase) to adapt to the provision. First of all the communities stopped open grazing, then planted newly introduced grass for seed production and fodder. The project provided technical training on effective forage management and as the project was linked to livestock department as one partner, the communities were provided improved livestock and new technologies for managing forest for livestock development. The communities are known as Leasehold Forest Users Groups (LFUGs). **They produced encouraging results of not only economic development but also of socio-political development alongside improving the forest condition. The project taught us some important lessons.**

A collaborative approach among four line agencies, e.g., Agriculture Development Bank for providing soft loan (without interest for few initial years) to land development and buy livestock, National Agricultural Research Council for innovation of appropriate technology, Department of Livestock and Department of Forest remained as an exemplary coordination mechanism for reaching the small landholder farmers groups (organized by Department of Forestry staff working at implementation level) with integrated services to manage forage for livestock development, thereby increasing purchasing capacity. The farmers groups gradually harvested pineapple, bananas, sweet potatoes, mangoes, broom grass, stylo and molasses grass and in some places women users started cooperative to sell stylo grass seeds. Later on due to raising political conflict in the country, some groups could not continue functioning well, still many of the communities reached by the project have changed their livelihood condition to a comfortable level and their children are in schools, access health care systems and participate in local political processes. The following important lessons were learnt further from the project:

- Social mobilization integrated with gender sensitive strategies must be a special “component” of such program so that the actual users of the forest or agriculture or livestock, in this case, the women are targeted as the major stakeholder group at all stages and all levels. In Nepal, women contribute more than 72% of work in forest management.
- In order to reach pro-poor smallholders’ women, employing women motivators from among the target communities need to be developed as change agents. They can effectively mobilize women users for active participation and also can motivate the men folk of the community to assist /encourage women in participating in project activities with full involvement.
- The situation of women in developing countries is socio-economically and legally discriminatory and in most cases, they cannot even access formal credit to initiate income generating activities due to lack of capital. In such cases, the group saving may not be enough to meet their need for financial support. There should be provisions for alternate ways for such women to access credit, whether it is bank, or government development fund or donor created Trust money. Investment on this area is important.
- Technology is very important for these farmers, as in the project being reported, NARC played a critical role by transferring appropriate technology of suitable fodder production as an income generating activity for the leasehold forest communities.
- Small scale rural infrastructure (combined with food for work in few cases) proved to be very helpful to link their products to the market in an easy way; the project coordinated with local village development committees and provided small money to support such infrastructures for linking rural forestry groups and the nearest town based markets.

This has been a model project and many studies were conducted on this project by various professionals which can be accessed from website of Department of Forest of Government of Nepal (<http://www.dof.gov.np/programmes.htm>).

Kanchan Lama
Coordinator
WOCAN

Contribution by Carol Djeddah, FAO, Italy

Dear Members

The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) experience could be a good example of projects that combine income generation and food access. In particular in Mozambique where the JFFLS are now included in a UNJP on Youth employment. Another good example is the Gaza and West Bank JFFLS programme.

You will find the following documents on the web:

Getting Started! Running a Junior Farmer Field and Life School
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1111e/a1111e00.htm>

Sharing Junior Farmer Field and Life School Experiences, Challenges And Innovations: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/011/i0379e/i0379e00.htm>

Education and training for food security:
<http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/documents2007/impaginatomaisOk.pdf>

Junior farmer field and life schools: experience from Mozambique.
Djeddah, C., Mavanga, R., Hendrickx, L.

in: AIDS, poverty, and hunger: challenges and responses. Highlights of the International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Food and Nutrition Security, Durban, South Africa, 14-16 April, 2005

<http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/books/oc50/oc50ch17.pdf>

We will have soon as a publication: Promoting Employment and Entrepreneurship for Vulnerable Youths in West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Furthermore a facilitator's guide will be at disposal by April this year.

Best regards

Carol Djeddah
FAO, Italy

Responses by Danuta Chmielewska

Dear Kanchan Lama,

Thank you for sharing this experience. The integration between livelihood improvement and environmental improvement is a nice parallel to the integration of smallholders' livelihood and food access for vulnerable populations. It emphasizes the importance of intersectoral approaches and the potentialities that can emerge from such approaches. Besides, the lessons learned you presented give us an idea of the extension such project can have, for example, on gender issues, as mentioned.

Best regards, Danuta

Dear Carol Djeddah,

We appreciate the information on the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS). The concern about youth in rural areas is critical, particularly for those living in a world with HIV and AIDS. The conditions of vulnerability may vary, but initiatives such as the JFFLS may be shared and constructed on.

Best regards, Danuta

Contribution by Sanjay Aggarwal from Clover Organic, India (SE)

Dear Chmielewska,

We have been working with several World Bank and IFAD funded projects besides advising some State Governments to ensure food security and higher income generation for the farmers, while ensuring environment conservation at all times. Though your query does not ask for environment conservation, I feel that it is the key ingredient to bring in sustainability in the whole

system. Unfortunately, since our Company started operations only last year, most of the documentation is still lacking and would be made available soon for everyone to view. I am personally involved with sustainable development for the last 11 years and it has been an enriching experience so far. Currently, we are working with about 15,000 farmers across 5 States of India.

The key issues according to me that need to be focused upon to address all the 3 key issues are as follows:

1. Build agriculture interventions around existing ITKs (Indigenous Technical Knowledge). The farmers have come up with ways to carry out traditional farming over thousands of years. These practices need to be respected as these systems contain rules that define how the environment should be treated, while ensuring maximum productivity. We have always found that creating interventions while keeping this knowledge in mind always increases the acceptability of the farmers.
2. Our approach is to study these ITKs and create small changes for infusion of our certified organic input and simple organic package of practices like green manuring, mulching, crop rotation, permaculture etc. This leads to an increase in the income of the farmers by at least 15-20% in rupee terms fairly easily. We measure the same through CRY (reduction in Cost of production, getting better Rates owing to quality aspects and not any premium and higher Yield).
3. We ensure that the farming communities become instruments of change by helping them set up FTS (Farmer Training Schools) and also dealers for our products. Farmers buy the products from them without any subsidy and get trained on these practices over time from these Schools.
4. Innovative solutions are encouraged like dry dairy farming, integrated farming, introduction of poultry not only as food, but for pest control, fertilizing and airing the soil etc. It is difficult for us to share all these via mail.
5. Supply chains are being formed to feed local economies and external markets by the farmer groups themselves thus getting remunerative rates for their produce. This also helps to contain the flow of Capital within a geographic area.

I guess common sense and simplicity are the best answers to solve most of the problems that we confront. The ancients knew farming better than any of us – instead of re-inventing the wheel, just mimic them keeping today's issues in mind!!
Wishing you all the best in your endeavour.

Sanjay Aggarwal
Clover Organic Pvt. Ltd.
Dehradun

Contribution by Deeksha Sharma from from GREEN Foundation, India (SE)

Dear All,

I agree with the observations of Sanjay Aggarwal, on similar lines I wish to share Green (Genetic Resource Ecology Energy Nutrition) Foundation experience, which is well documented and can be searched at http://www.greenconserve.com/vision_mission.html

Some of the highlights of Green Foundation's work are:

1. Along with the staple crops, several millets, pulses, oilseeds and vegetable seeds have been regenerated and distributed
2. The process involved in the on-farm conservation includes interaction with individual farmers, community farms, community seed supply, training of farmers as key seed keepers and forming an association of farmers to take the movement forward. The high point of the annual event is the seed mela that is held in different locations where people gather to celebrate their culture and agriculture
3. As participatory research, farmers have been identified to participate in plant breeding through varietal selection

4. Documentation of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices on biodiversity and its use, which paves the way for the revival and sustenance of the resource base of people
5. Finally strengthening endogenous development initiatives by creating institutional structures "Community Seed Banks" and human resources "Farmers Federations" at the grassroots level

Sustainable agricultural practices form a major component of the training. As it involves farming systems that are environmentally sound, profitable, productive and compatible with socioeconomic conditions. Green Foundation has looked at sustainable agriculture with a wide-angle lens. Having begun with the seed, more elements have evolved through the years as equally important. It has integrated soil, water, agro-forestry and live-stock into its programmes, as each fits into the other and one without the other leads to lopsided impact.

The crux have however always been the farmers and what each action would mean to their lives.

Deeksha Sharma
GREEN Foundation
Bangalore

Contribution by Dheeraj Singh from India

**Success Story of Local Tunnel Solar Drier for Small Scale Entrepreneurship in Rural India
Dheeraj Singh, M L Meena, M Chaudhary, H Dayal and A Dudi KVK,
Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Pali, Rajasthan, India**

The paper presents the innovation of Shri Madan Lal Deora, a progressive farmer of Pali, district of Rajasthan in India who had established himself as a successful entrepreneur using self made tunnel solar drier.

The solar tunnel dryer is a poly house framed structure with UV-stabilized polythene sheet, where products on large scale could be dried under controlled environment. The enterprise consists of different aonla products including juice, squash, candy, powder, pickle, dry aonla, churan tablets, preserve and ladoos. Aonla pulp from moisture content of 80.95 % to safe moisture content 9.0 % can be successfully dried in 2 days at the prevailing conditions in the drier. The enterprise manufactures two types of dry aonla, one is direct drying of green aonla which is used in a number of ayurvedic medicines and traditional drugs and another is the aonla dried after blanching which is used in as eating supplement of betel nut and as a mouth freshener. The farmer produces four types of preserve namely chutney preserve produced by making flakes of fruit, preserve from big size fruits from improved cultivars, preserve from small size fruits from local cultivars and preserve aonla from which seeds had been removed. All the products are purely organic have high demand in the local and regional market.

Please read the full paper here:
http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/Local_Tunnel_Solar_Drier.pdf

Responses by Danuta Chmielewska

Dear Aggarwal and Sharma (*Sanjay Aggarwal and Deeksha Sharma Ed.*),

Thank you for your responses.

I totally agree that environmental conservation should be ensured at all times. I appreciate your examples and I would say they help us to further consider ways to integrate these lines of income generation, food access and the environment, especially by:

1. Promoting technical assistance based on the experience of the farmers;
2. Incentivizing different production systems such as organic and agro ecological;
3. Fomenting training schemes with local capacity building and exchanges, and so on.

Multi-sectoral policies/initiatives can emphasize such needs and direct us to a more complete approach towards poverty reduction.

Best regards, Danuta

Dear Singh (*Dheeraj Singh Ed.*),

Thank you for your contribution.

The issue of processing agricultural products is regularly present when talking about income generation to smallholders. Incentives as well as successful experiences shall be shared on this respect. We appreciate it.

Best regards, Danuta

Contribution by Kanchan Lama, WOCAN, Nepal

Dear Members

Kindly find an interesting case of income generation of one GTZ facilitated project in Nepal, provided by Mr Sunit Jha, a project officer of GTZ Nepal

Traditionally the landless people living in the Churia foothills, who represent the target group of Rural Community Infrastructure Work (RCIW) programme, earn their living either by selling labour in landowners' farms or by selling fuel wood. Excess collection of fuelwood for sale from nearby forest for decades had increased deforestation in the area, leading to increased soil erosion, aggradations of the riverbeds and consequent flood problems. RCIW is operating in the district since 1997, the aim of the collaborative efforts of RCIW programme and Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management (DSCWM) is to improve the socio-economic conditions of beneficiaries on the one hand and to check deforestation and soil erosion, on the other.

Please read the full study here:

http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/Case_study_of_Dalit_group-Jandol-Behra_Chhaape.pdf

Regards
Kanchan

Contribution by Gyaneshwar Singh from India

Dears,

The raised issue is a very good topic and has great relevance in the present context especially when the majority of global community is being perceived vulnerable. The income generation activities and food access are interlinked and beneficial for vulnerable community. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar of India, I have found that agro-based income generation activities and organic low input farming techniques play significant role in improving the income and livelihood of the community. In these two states, majority of population are vulnerable to many factors. Ineffective and inappropriate implementation of government policies has not been improving their

socio-economic status. In last 63 years (after independence), their status has not been comparatively improved. In these states, majority of population belong to rural areas (75-85 % approximately). This population is dependent on mainly agriculture and labour work for their livelihood. The landless and small-marginal landholders (in large population) also adopt sharecropping mechanism as additional income generation process. The income generation activities, likes, goatery, poultry, buffalo rearing, duckery, nursery development, vegetable production, *dalia*, candle making, and others give them good income. Also, organic farming techniques, likes, vermi compost, vermi-wash provides additional income support. The application of by-products of animal and birds and organic low farming techniques in their field helps in improving their farming field and reducing agricultural cost. The development of kitchen garden also helps in improving their food access and nutritional health. The application of sustainable agriculture practices has also great role in improving their field and food access.

There are many examples of vulnerable communities that have improved their food access through adoption of these techniques. One landless rural woman has got built her own concrete house from vermi compost and agro-based income generation activities. I never forget the face of another rural woman in my area, which inspires me to promote sustainable agriculture, low input farming techniques, kitchen garden and agro-based income generation activities. She had told me that when she had come in new house after her marriage, their husband's family was facing food crisis but now there is adequate food availability and enhanced household income. Looking at her contribution in household development, she is given due respect by her family.

In my view, capacity building of community and market development can create huge potential for increasing and improving income generation process. In result, livelihood and food access of the community will certainly be increased. The support of ease or soft loan will gear up the developmental process of income generation.

I hope the shared information will be helpful in developing understanding and strategies. If further information is required, I can be contacted.

Thanks

Regards
Gyaneshwar

Contribution by Abdul Raziq Kakar from the Livestock and Dairy Development Department, Pakistan

Dear All,

I think capacity building, resource management and marketing of the special items produced by small farmers can bring change, as food security and socioeconomic uplifts of the vulnerable societies in the globe.

Best regards

Contribution by Fanny Moffette from the FAO Food for the Cities Initiative, Italy

Since 2007, the urban population has already overtaken the rural population. According to UN projections, by 2050, 70 % of the world population should live in cities. The urban households spend a bigger part of their budget on food than rural households and their food security is more related to their purchasing power.

(*The food price crisis and urban food (in)security* - [Marc Cohen](#) and [James L. Garrett](#) <http://www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=10574IIED>).

In the last years, food riots have occurred in many cities because accessibility to food has become more difficult due to the increased prices. Hence, a discussion regarding food

accessibility (quantity and quality) for vulnerable populations cannot ignore the problems faced by the urban poor. In our contribution, we will focus on urban vulnerable populations and the links between rural and urban areas.

Strengthening the links between producers and consumers

Supply to cities

It is possible to have better food supply and distribution systems to cities by involving local authorities, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, within the government policies framework. The rural-urban linkages can be strengthened by different ways, ranging from better infrastructures to public markets and better access to wholesale stores. Efficient linkages have many advantages: on the one hand, the capacity of getting fresh and nutritious food at affordable prices and on the other hand, contribute to secure income for small producers.

You can find more information about this subject on “Food for the Cities” website: <http://www.fao.org/fcit/food-marketing/en/>

Globalization has increased exposure of local markets to international food exchange. This has affected domestic markets, mainly smallholder farmers who face significant challenges. Efficiency of infrastructures for both imported and domestic goods have an impact on prices paid by consumers and diversity of available products, particularly fresh products. Food transportation is longer when transportation network is in bad condition than in good condition. This will lead to a longer ride from rural towns to cities, with reduction in the quality of fresh food and generate food losses. Hence, policies focussing on improvement of rural-urban linkages should be addressed. These may impact on the overall economic growth in the region.

Policy-makers could also consider street foods and processed foods as opportunities for vulnerable people, especially women, to get an income, and at the same time enhance the food security in cities, (even if some sanitary/hygiene problems occur).

For further information: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/y4312e/y4312e00.pdf>

Urban and peri-urban agriculture

The urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) initiatives can improve urban food security. Without linking directly to economic growth, favouring these initiatives at least saves household expenditures on food and can increase their income by selling the extra production. Furthermore, urban agriculture may function as an important strategy for poverty alleviation and social integration, for groups such as orphans, disabled people, women, recent immigrants without jobs, or elderly people (RUAF, <http://www.ruaf.org/node/513>).

About UPA, FAO has made the “Urban Producers' Resource Book” in 2007: a practical guide for working with Low Income Urban and Peri-Urban Producers Organizations. There are many success stories in the guide; among them, the example of city gardens in Dakar shows the importance of urban and peri-urban agriculture.

FAO, Urban Producers' Resource Book: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a1177e/a1177e00.HTM>

Focussing on consumer practice in order to build local, sustainable food systems

According to Kennedy, Nantel and Shetty (2004) (<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/y5736e/y5736e00.pdf>), food habits, which were based on local agriculture, have been replaced by a new conception. Firstly, food availability has become less linked with seasonality: some fresh food can be bought in the market all year-round, even if it only grows in the country for a certain period of time. Secondly, consumption of transformed food and food with long product shelf-life has increased. With the globalization, main changes in the diets include: a convergence of diets from an international point of view, the fact that affordability drives food choice and an increased intake of fat, sugar and salt.

In this context, policy-makers, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can emphasize on the transformation of consumer practices for food policy. Marketing strategies are powerful tools that can be used by policy-makers to raise the consumer awareness on the health benefits of eating local fresh products. This can be learnt from the private sector which has used marketing tools to increase their sales. The example of Kenya where sales of African leafy vegetables at supermarkets have increased of 1100 % in two years is astonishing. Since 1995, Bioversity International has led a campaign to promote these vegetables. Family Concern Inc, a Kenyan NGO, and supermarkets, has also promoted the traditional vegetables by providing recipes and information about how to cook it.

http://www.bioversityinternational.org/news_and_events/news/news/article/kenyans-flock-back-to-traditional-leafy-vegetables.html

Creation of buyers' organizations for local products could help to strengthen the link between rural and urban areas by the coordination of the local food demand. As example, there is the "Marché de solidarité régionale" in different cities of Quebec (Canada), (http://www.atestrie.com/MSR/VISITEUR/CADRE/cadre_principal.php) an initiative of a non-profit environmental organization.

By increasing the demand for local food, policies will increase the sales of the local producers.

Best regards,

Fanny Moffette,
FAO Food for the Cities

Contribution by Maroti A. Upare from India (SE)

Dear Members,

The topic raised is relevant in the global scenario when prices are increasing and affecting access for food to vulnerable people. The developing countries have to take urgent and effective measures to increase food production combining income generation in a sustainable manner. In this connection it be worthwhile to study World Bank, UNDP funded projects as well as national government initiatives.

National initiatives of the Government of India, such as subsidy for plantation programme under Horticulture Mission, watershed development programmes, venture capital for livestock programmes, promotion and financial support for fisheries sector through National Fisheries Board, concessional interest rate for production credit of crops, support for agroprocessing through government subsidies, infrastructure development credit support to state government for National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. Even the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) helps to promote food production.

The above schemes are excellent but they do not reach the maximum number of people since extension is weak and because of a beauracatic approach; what is needed is programme implementation reforms and make policy makers and implementing staff accountable for development and where necessary good work needs to be recognssed and awarded for best performance .

The important aspect of food production i.e marketing access, is very weak. In this connection Central Asian countires i.e Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have established best practice for wheat procurement. Government gives loan through banks at 3% interest rate to wheat farmers and 70% wheat is purchased by the Governemnt at reasonable rate. This type of initiatives will definitely increase income of farmers.

Following key factors need to be addressed for the reforms 1. Organisational 2. Technological 3. Credit and insurance 4. Marketing, storage and processing.

Maroti A. Upare
Independent Consultant
Mumbai

Contribution by Rajib Kumar Roul from India (SE)

Dear Members,

I am working in Muzaffarpur and Samastipur district of Bihar. In this area about 75% people are landless but out of those people some take lease and grow both cereals and cash crops like vegetable and tobacco.

They don't have any option, for them agriculture wage labor is the only option to earn their livelihood. Generally they don't plant vegetables (info from a survey report). So to cater those families we have done one plan to promote kitchen garden with a land area of 1500-2000 sq ft area with round the year planning. The main objective is to supply nutrition to the family and the surplus vegetable can be sold in the market to earn some income.

The total plan is made with the working hand available in the house (basically the women and elderly). Each plot divided into 4 or 6 subplot depending upon the area available in the back side of the house. This is the first year of implementation.

Rajib Kumar Roul
Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
Muzaffarpur

Contribution by Prabhat Kumar from Thailand (SE)

Dear Rajib,

Being a resident of Samastipur, Bihar, I can suggest you with full confidence that you need to understand the area well first. Idea of kitchen gardening and any further promotion of it is always good, whether in the context you mentioned or otherwise! Challenges for development agencies are to find a good match between the resources and needs/aspirations of the landless laborers and smallholder farmers. For your kind information, a substantial revolution in form of vegetable cultivation is underway in these two districts often using the leased lands by smallholder farmers. What I see the immediate challenge is to bring knowledge to the domain of the farmers especially in the area of off-season vegetable cultivation and/or extending the growing condition beyond the normal season to enable them to earn good returns. Second area where one should work is to reduce the rampant use of pesticides and other agro-chemicals. The small village based shops and pressures from the peers are the main motivating force that is compounding pesticide use frequency and quality. Also, there are endless number of so called 'tonics', growth boosters are being pushed by known and unknown companies to these markets and in many cases simply these are not required to grow a healthy crop. Something on a line of a season-long farmer's field school (FFS) consisting of locally needed and adapted adult learning based sessions to enhance productivity and net returns are the need of the day for these group of farmers. Can your agency take lead in doing that?

Another area that is very timely is working on contingency cropping plans and its adaptation for the flood affected parts of these two districts.

Let me know if I could be of further help in this matter.

Wishing your farmers success!

Prabhat Kumar
School of Environment Resource and Development
Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)
Thailand

Contribution by Virendra Kumar from India (SE)

Dear Friends,

At the outset, I am very happy to note the concern for vulnerable population. In order to share the experience I would like to cite the example of the success story of Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperative (IFFDC) - www.iffdc.org.in. This has been an initiative of Cooperative in India for over 15 years. IFFDC has benefited over 100,000 members during the period with following objectives:

- Wasteland development for ecological balance and generating additional employment
- Development of wasteland as a step to combat ill effects of Climate Change through adopting 'Integrated Farming Systems' by the members
- People' involvement including women empowerment through Cooperatives / Self Help Groups (SHGs)
- To provide Financial, Technical and Extension services to the members

It would be our pleasure to further interact on specific queries.

Virendra Kumar
Consultant
New Delhi

Contribution by L. P. Semwal from India (SE)

Dear friends,

I found this query very relevant considering livelihood promotion and food security issues at the same time.

I would like to share our experiences of working with small farmers (apple growers) in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. These farmers normally get money for their produces one time in the year comparably low on the price index (As during harvesting season prices are just one fourth of the off season) and buy these apples at very high prices for their own consumption. The problem remains same in the case of other commodities. Small farmer always have very small needs of money for inputs (seed, fertilizer etc.) at one hand and lack of investment in storage infrastructures at other therefore they sell produces as soon as its harvested at cheaper rate which also create a situation of food insecurity (except in the case of grain which could stored for longer time).

In our opinion the small grower need an integrated package of backstopping (assistance) for capacity building in business planning (of value addition chain) from business world, technical support for yield and quality promotion (from technical institutions) and investment for infrastructure creation (from Investors).

To explore the opportunities from small and marginal farmer's perspective we are experimenting with Fresh food technology (A Dutch company facilitating Ultra Low Oxygen Storage facilities around the world on turnkey solution basis) the annexed innovative approach of development of farmer's joint venture companies and already established seven joint ventures in Himalayas. The model details are available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/food/cr/res02021001.pdf>

I would like to invite like minded people/organisations to visit the small farmers on their small holdings and companies board room as well.

Hopefully, the model will help to contribute in the issues shared to some extent.

L. P. Semwal
Shri Jagdamba Samiti
Rishikesh

Contribution by Mahtab S. Bamji from India

Dear members

Dangoria Charitable Trust which is working in villages of Medak district, Andhra Pradesh, India, is currently running a Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India-funded project on "Crop livestock integrated farming system for food, nutrition, environment and livelihood security' in 15 villages (20,000 population)". Most farmers are small and marginal. Bore wells and lake water are the most important sources of water. Water guzzling crops like paddy and sugar cane with some maize and millets are the major crops. Few farmers grow vegetables. Use of chemical pesticides is rampant. In this project we are motivating the farmers to divert small plots of land (1/4 acre) for growing micronutrient-dense vegetables and fruits. Green methods of farming like vermicompost, botanical pesticides (neem kernel decoction, chilli garlic decoction) besides other organic methods are being promoted. Vermi compost and botanical pesticides have been well accepted. Vegetable cultivation is expected to add to household nutrition security. Production of finger millet and pulses is encouraged. Back-yard poultry is great success and has increased household access to eggs. A food processing and training centre has been established to prevent wastage of farm produce, generate employment and contribute to nutrition security. Cereal-pulse-based and vegetables-fruits-based products are made.

For more details see the web site: www.dangoriatrust.org.in. Impact is being assessed through initial land final KAP surveys. The latter is in progress since almost 3 years are over. Impact will be assessed after the survey.

Mahtab S. Bamji
INSA Honorary Scientist, Dangoria Charitable Trust
Hyderabad, India

Responses and final remarks by Danuta Chmielewska

Dear Fanny,

Thank you for raising the issue of the urban poor. In Brazil, the urban population has overtaken the rural population before 1970, so this issue has been a critical one for years here.

In this respect, the support to a local circuit of production and consumption is indeed central, and the linkage between the demand for local food and policies that sale local products is crucial.

We appreciate the articles suggested.

Dear Maroti A. Upare,

Thank you for emphasizing the importance of access to market among other relevant issues.

Dear Virendra Kumar and Rajib Kumar Roul,

Thank you for the examples given; it seems India has developed quite a wide range of different alternatives to tackle these problems.

Dear members,

Thank you all for participating on this discussion and for your valuable contribution.

I would like to emphasize the importance of an intersectoral approach as pointed by Sanjay Aggarwal, Deeksha Sharma Ed. and Kanchan Lama regarding the integration of sustainable livelihoods and environmental issues, and how this type of approach should always be on the back of our minds.

The central idea of this discussion was to be aware of what is going on elsewhere regarding this topic. Therefore, we appreciate the examples given and experiences shared, which helped us to enlarge our point of view of possible alternatives.

Best regards,
Danuta