Despite recent progress, still today 1 billion people are poor and around 800 million are hungry. Extreme poverty is concentrated in rural areas, and the rural poor (largely) rely on agriculture. In sub-Saharan Africa 66% of the income of poor small family farmers comes from agriculture.

How can agriculture and social protection work together in helping poor small family farmers break-out of poverty and hunger?

What are some examples of well-coordinated agriculture and social protection interventions?

Programmes in Bangladesh provide poor households with integrated packages of livelihood support that include agricultural and social protection interventions.

Benefits of Peru’s Juntos cash transfer programme also extend to livelihoods and financial support offered by the Haku Wiñay programme.

Ethiopia’s Food Security Programme combines public works with agricultural support, including credit and farmer education.

Kenya’s Hunger Safety Net Programme allows beneficiaries to collect transfers when and where they like and is therefore consistent with their semi-nomadic pastoralist livelihoods.

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Peru

Lesotho

Kenya

Ethiopia

Bangladesh

Agriculture can:

• Improve poor small family farmers’ access to natural resources, insurance, credit, extension services and markets.

• Increase employment opportunities as well as food availability and keep food prices low, with benefits for poor net food buyers.

Social protection can:

• Alleviate credit constraints and allow poor small family farmers to engage in more productive and profitable agricultural activities.

• Foster local economic activity by increasing demand for food and other goods and services.

What are the main challenges in bringing together agriculture and social protection?

Ministries of agriculture and those managing social protection programmes share the same objectives of combating poverty and hunger. However, they have different strategic approaches and so see little value in working together.

Agricultural programmes tend to focus on more commercial farmers whereas social protection interventions focus on the most vulnerable households. There is growing but still limited understanding of how social protection can unleash the productive potential of poor small family farmers, of the benefits of greater coherence between agriculture and social protection and of how to achieve this.

The coverage of social protection programmes is increasing, but is lowest in regions where poverty rates are highest. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia only 20% of the poorest households are covered by social assistance, which is by far the most common form of social protection in the developing world.

What is FAO doing to promote synergies between agriculture and social protection?

FAO and its partners, FAO is generating evidence on the impacts of coordinated agricultural and social protection interventions and is using this to provide related policy, programming and capacity development support to governments and other actors.

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