



### **Conference on**

## **Rural Transformation, Agricultural and Food System Transition: Building the Evidence Base for Policies that promote Sustainable Development, Food and Nutrition Security and Poverty Reduction**

### **Objectives**

1. Understand the diverse patterns and drivers of rural development transformation as well as the challenges to achieving sustainable structural, agricultural, food system and livelihoods transformation for food security, nutrition and poverty alleviation.
2. Promote balanced and holistic policy approaches to the development of rural areas and rural-urban linkages to facilitate sustainable structural transformation of agricultural and food systems and economies at large.

Structural transformation describes the process by which low-income societies, in which agriculture absorbs most labour and generates a large portion of the economic output, become higher income societies characterized by a relatively smaller but more productive agricultural sector. Looking at past and existing patterns, structural transformation has been a clear pathway out of poverty whenever the process was characterised by accelerated productivity growth in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and by strong linkages between both sectors and between urban and rural areas. Where this was not the case, the relative decline of agriculture was characterised by workers being 'pushed' into low-paying informal service jobs, rather than 'pulled' out by high-productivity manufacturing and services. Also, where there are strongly widening gaps in labour productivity between agriculture and non-agriculture, income inequality rises, poverty reduction slows and pressures mount on rural populations to adjust (including through distress migration).

Today's realities, including the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, require a fundamental reassessment of patterns of structural transformation. First, continued population growth in the presence of limited capacity to expand the agricultural use of land and other natural resources, require intensified resource use and faster productivity growth in order to feed the world population. Second, income growth and urbanization has accelerated dietary transitions towards protein-rich foods, which further increases pressures on resource use along food value chains. Third, population pressures and limited natural resource availability have caused increased fragmentation of landholdings, leading to impoverishment and making achieving adequate agricultural productivity growth the more challenging. This trend is especially present in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where food insecurity is severest. Fourth, climate change and other environmental threats require sustainable intensification of agriculture and food systems. Fifth, in connection to climate change and countries' mandates for renewable energy, agricultural markets are more strongly linked to energy markets, which may alter how we think of structural transformation and food security relative to past experiences of transition. Sixth, farm populations are ageing, also in low-income countries despite large shares of youth in those countries. This is posing challenges to the adoption of new (sustainable) technologies and practices needed to secure sustainable food security. It is also putting added pressure on (rural) labour markets to bring sufficient employment opportunities for youth and avoid mass distress migration.

### **Conference**

FAO is developing a programme of work that will provide evidence on the diversity and the determinants of the pathways of rural transformation and patterns of agricultural and food system



transitions in a context of accelerated urbanization and increased pressure on natural resources. In this program of work, ongoing collaborations with IFPRI and the Pontifical University of Chile, examine the structural transformation experiences in sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa and the Latin America and the Caribbean. The assessments give importance to the role of policies, governance and institutions in steering such change processes. When studying agricultural and rural development pathways, the specificity of regional and local contexts has to be considered, including geographic conditions and the quality of governance. Evidence from this programme of work will feed into FAO's normative work and policy support to countries, promoting sustainable development, food security and nutrition, and poverty reduction.

Within this program of work, FAO invites the submission of papers to be presented on a technical conference on:

**“Rural Transformation, Agricultural and Food System Transition:**

**Building the Evidence Base for Policies that promote Sustainable Development, Food Security and Nutrition, and Poverty Reduction”**

The conference will be held on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016, at FAO headquarters in Rome. The conference will bring together researchers and policy makers from around the world in an effort to provide evidence, promote understanding, enhance dialogue on feasible pathways for sustainable rural transformations and agricultural and food system transitions. Relevant areas of work refer to micro and macro research on rural and structural transformation and agricultural and food system transition including:

- Past experiences rural and agrarian transformation and transition patterns across regions and countries;
- The role of land tenure patterns, farm size, and land distribution;
- The role of natural resource endowment and water availability and governance systems for their management;
- Agricultural productivity growth and the role of technology innovation, adaptation and diffusion;
- Sustainability in use of inputs and natural resources;
- Patterns of farm and non-farm income and employment diversification;
- The role of infrastructure, market access, rural-urban linkages, and territorial development;
- The role of shock and risk-coping mechanisms (or absence thereof), including social protection;
- The role of demographic dynamics, migratory patterns and processes of urbanization;
- Impact of dietary transitions on land use, food and farm systems; and
- The quality of governance and institutions.

Papers presented at the conference will be published in FAO's working paper series, as well as in book form as proceedings of the conference.

**Submission Instructions**

Extended abstracts (of length 3-5 pages) explaining the core question(s), data and methods used, and (anticipated) findings or complete papers should be submitted by email to [rural-transformation@fao.org](mailto:rural-transformation@fao.org) before May 31, 2016. Acceptance decisions will be communicated within two weeks of the submission deadline. Participants are expected to cover their traveling and accommodation costs. For more information, please contact [rural-transformation@fao.org](mailto:rural-transformation@fao.org)



**Rural Transformation, Agricultural and Food System Transition:  
Building the Evidence Base for Policies that promote Sustainable Development, Food and  
Nutrition Security and Poverty Reduction**

Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 & Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016  
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Headquarters  
Rome, Italy

Monday 19 Sep	Tuesday 20 Sep
08.30-09.00 <b>Registration</b>	
09:00-09:15 <b>Opening remarks</b>	09:00-10:30 <b>Parallel Sessions 1</b>
09:15-10:30 <b>Keynotes 1 &amp; 2</b>	
10:30-11:00 Coffee break	10:30-11:00 Coffee break
11:00-12:30 <b>Region 1: Sub-Sahara Africa</b> ( <i>International Food Policy Research Institute, IFPRI</i> )	11:00-12:30 <b>Parallel Sessions 2</b>
12:30-13:30 Lunch	12:30-13:30 Lunch
13:30-15:00 <b>Region 2: Latin America &amp; Caribbean</b> ( <i>La Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, UC</i> )	13:30-15:00 <b>Parallel Sessions 3</b>
15:00-15:30 Coffee break	15:00-15:30 Coffee break
15:30-17:00 <b>Region 3: Middle East North Africa</b> ( <i>International Food Policy Research Institute, IFPRI</i> )	15:30-17:00 <b>Panel Discussion</b>
17:00-18:00 <b>Other regions/ Summary of the day</b>	17:00-18:00 <b>Summary and closing</b>