



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

#ElCampoSigue Radio: Safeguarding rural livelihoods in the face of COVID-19 in Colombia

Webinar – 18 March 2021

SUMMARY POINTS



Speakers:

Silvia Bolliger, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
Colombia

Anna Ricoy, Disaster Risk Management Coordinator, FAO Regional Office Santiago

Ángelo Quintero Palacio, Director of Innovation, Technological Development and Sanitary
Protection, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Moderator:

Alan Bojanic, FAO Country Representative in Colombia

María Consuelo Vergara, Risk Management and Rehabilitation of livelihoods Senior Specialist,
FAO Colombia

Background

This second webinar on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) for COVID-19 prevention along the food value chain, was presented as part of a series of webinars organized by the Knowledge Sharing Platform on Resilience (**KORE**), within FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience.

Introduction

In the face of the **COVID-19** pandemic, **radio broadcasts**, among other channels, have been extensively used as a **Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)** strategy. In **Colombia**, they have been instrumental in especially reaching rural communities. FAO in Colombia, through the **#ElCampoSigue campaign**, designed a **communication and social mobilization strategy**, aimed at providing information to actors along the **food supply chain**, in order to manage the impacts of COVID-19—and the other shocks—on the **agriculture sector and food and nutrition security**. The campaign that translates to “**Farming doesn't stop**”, offers a suite of communication tools for advocacy, public training and awareness to food supply chain actors. Almost a year after Colombia's first lock down measure in March 2020, communication and innovation have proven to be vital strategies in the fight against the pandemic.

Against this background, this immersive webinar sought to recreate the experience of the El Campo Sigue radio broadcasts. This radio show style webinar specifically aimed to:

- Share experiences from #ElCampoSigue and the **lessons learned at the community-level**.
- Emphasize how communication programs are a **strategic mechanism** that support rural communities in sustaining the processes of production, transportation and marketing of agricultural products despite the economic barriers generated by COVID-19.
- Discuss the **synergies and partnerships** that facilitated the response to the emergency, as well as the recovery approaches.

Summary points

Collated points from the speakers

1. About #ElCampoSigue

- #ElCampoSigue, or Farming never stops, is the name of the communication and social mobilization campaign that was rolled out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Colombia. This webinar took place one day before the one year anniversary of the first nation-wide lockdown (19 March 2020) in Colombia.
- The campaign was born as a way to stay connected with the actors along the food supply chain despite the lockdown restrictions and limitations imposed by COVID-19. The campaign also sought to provide information on the impacts of COVID-19 on the agriculture sector and on food and nutrition security.
- The campaign activities included but were not limited to, informational flyers and brochures in local languages, public training and awareness-raising on safety measures for the food supply chain actors, infographics, micro videos, radio public service announcements (PSAs), webinars, press articles, an informational 2021 calendar with key messages, and a couple radio programmes of which, "El Campo Sigue", that are currently broadcast mainly in the South of Colombia.

2. FAO's position as a humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) actor in Colombia

- FAO is seen as a valuable actor operating along the HDP-nexus in the diverse Colombian context (e.g. working in remote rural areas, with Indigenous Peoples, in contexts of armed conflict, displacement and migration and in contexts of natural disasters.)
- During the pandemic, FAO has been actively supporting both communities and institutions. As stated by Ms. Bolliger, "The work carried out in FAO Colombia with rural communities has been a fundamental support to overcome difficulties, improve production and nutrition."
- ECHO recognizes that in the context of COVID-19, FAO was able to act fast adapting to more virtual and remote-based solutions to continue carrying out ongoing activities as well as start new ones. Specifically, through #ElCampoSigue, FAO was able to promote biosecurity measures and reach communities despite the distance.
- Mr. Quintero noted, "From production to commercialization, [#ElCampoSigue] has supported local ventures, and by extension improved the quality of rural livelihoods."

3. Old versus new media

- Communication tools have been crucial to transition into this new normal. The speakers in the webinar highlighted some challenges as a result of the technological divide (which include the gaps in digital literacy, the challenges with network infrastructures, the issue of digital access gaps and so on). However, they also talked about how understanding the channels of communication most used by the beneficiaries was key in tailoring efforts around that.
- While digital technologies have been promoted during the pandemic, traditional communication methodologies should not be taken for granted. Simple leaflets, local newspapers, someone walking around with a megaphone with messages are effective and often well-established approaches that can be adopted in contexts where technology is not as effective or ubiquitous or when dealing with a digital gap.

4. Reflections on regional uptake

- The experience in Colombia has demonstrated that by adapting health and safety protocols, especially in relation to the various activities from “farm to fork” (i.e. production, harvesting and post-harvesting, transportation, commercialization, and dietary and feeding habits), stakeholders working along the food supply chain can continue operating despite the pandemic. Innovative solutions and creative approaches to sharing technical processes have been fundamental. Ultimately, this was key in preventing the COVID-19 crises to turn into a food crisis.
- The experience in Colombia has underscored the important roles that the state, social organizations and businesses play in supporting agricultural livelihoods and ensuring food supplies, especially in the context of COVID-19. This really reflects the synergies that have been reinforced among institutions and the effective collaboration.
- At FAO Colombia, risk management was applied and looked at from a multi-risk perspective of interconnected risks (such as COVID-19, climate change and extreme climatic events, animal and zoonotic diseases, and so on). The case of Colombia has showed us that a multi-risk perspective for what concerns food and agriculture systems is necessary to enhance the resilience of livelihoods.
- According to Ms. Ricoy, what has been noted in the region is that countries have prioritized investments in health and prioritized stabilizing macroeconomic indicators. Agriculture has been absent in political agendas in the majority of the countries because of a general misconception, i.e. that agriculture is not one of the most affected sectors. Therefore, the role of technical and development institutions is to give visibility to the rural sector and position agriculture as a necessary sector to be included in National Response and Recovery Plans and Fiscal Recovery Packages. In other words, we have to be able to articulate the existing financing to address challenges to the agricultural sector. This goes hand in hand with the need to promote social capital

of the territories and tackle inequities, with emphasis on vulnerable groups such as women, smallholder farmers, Indigenous Peoples, etc.

- On one hand, it's important to be able to articulate programs that are able to support the livelihoods of smallholder families, and on the other hand, it's important to have programs designed to guarantee economic reactivation for the agriculture sector. This two-track approach has gone under the radar. The need to improve financial access of smallholder farmers means enhanced collaboration with the private sector.

5. Challenges and lessons learned

- Beyond the obvious obstacles of reaching communities brought about by the pandemic, other obstacles such as for example the technological gaps that include poor network coverage or digital literacy and access divides and so on, have characterized the challenges in Colombia.
- The pandemic fundamentally changed the day-to-day activities, and as such, one key lesson learned was that the integration and adoption of policies from state/national level to municipality to local levels were essential for continuity in the new normal. It was noted that there were a lot of complimentary activities that enhanced the design of the national public policies and that was a great basis to start on.
- One of the biggest challenges faced at the governmental level was how to design a whole strategy around biosecurity. This exercise needed the participation of not only government entities, but also other key stakeholders, including FAO, resource partners, the private sector, etc.
- COVID-19 accelerated the path to digitization of agricultural extension services. Communication tools have been key in this innovation. The Ministry of Agriculture developed a campaign called "The Farm Innovates" and was able to roll out virtual business roundtables, virtual training and technical support, among other activities. The campaign seeks to close the technological gaps in the agriculture sector. Worthy of note is that this innovation-themed campaign is attracting a substantially younger demographic: youth ranging from as young as 13 years old to 34 years old. According to Mr. Quintero, "[we] can infer that there is a generational transfer and that we can hand over to the new generations."
- According to Ms. Ricoy, "one of the lessons that the pandemic taught us is that we must orient production towards sustainable systems and nature-based solutions."

Further information

- [Webinar series on Risk Communication and Community Engagement \(RCCE\) for COVID-19 prevention along the food supply chain](#)
- [#ElCampoSigue Testimonials](#)
- [Trabajo de la FAO Colombia: En Tiempos de COVID-19](#)
- [Estrategias comunitarias de comercialización en el marco del COVID-19 \(Boletín informativo\)](#)
- [Acciones de FAO Colombia en respuesta a la emergencia por COVID-19 \(Infografía\)](#)
- [Acciones de FAO Colombia en respuesta a la emergencia por COVID-19 \(Fichas Programáticas\)](#)



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