



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY SUPPORT BROCHURE

Focus on governance for more effective policy and technical support

“Transformative processes of agrifood systems require, as a precondition, much stronger, more transparent and accountable institutions and governance.”

FAO, 2021

One of the most pressing challenges of our times

‘Teaching people to fish’ may sound like the answer to just giving them the catch. But to make your solution possible, you must unravel what is below the surface. Many challenges societies face to development involve complex, underlying, tangled and often invisible disputes on the ways things should be governed.

Achieving sustainable food and nutrition security is strongly influenced by governance: it requires strengthening and capitalizing on the knowledge, experience and capabilities for collective action of a broad range of public and private actors, with different interests, needs, resources and influence.

Governance can be a catalyst or a bottleneck for development policies and projects. This is why governance, along with institutions and human capital, emerges among the most pressing priorities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations).

GOVERNANCE AT A GLANCE

At FAO, the concept of governance refers to *formal and informal rules, organizations, and processes through which public and private actors articulate their interests and make and implement decisions.* (FAO, 2013)

In other words, “governance” is about the manner power is exercised and the ways to design and implement sets of rules that govern people’s behavior and action to pursue collective goals, like food security and nutrition, climate resilience and sustainable management of natural resources.

Why governance matters for agrifood systems transformation

Governance issues are as complex and varied as the countries in which they are found and the people who are bound by them.

In many countries, actors tasked with food and agriculture-related policies tend to underestimate the complex negotiations, the management of different interests, beliefs, power and resources among sectors and actors. There are often overlapping institutional jurisdictions, clashes and difficult trade-offs between competing objectives at global, national and sub-national levels.

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Power relationships and difficult choices are at the heart of balancing and addressing these trade-offs, and can lead to both intended and unintended social, economic and environmental impacts at larger scale. The agrifood transformation needs to be sensitive to interactions and trade-offs as well as equitable and inclusive, leaving no one behind.

Therefore, understanding the governance – both institutions and political economy – behind existing food and agriculture systems can make or break the success of any policy or technical support work.

For example, a given policy intervention can make a lot of economic sense, but it is likely to fail if it is perceived as threatening or not taking into consideration a powerful interest group.

A systematic governance analysis provides a realistic evaluation of the potential – and obstacles – to start change and address priority problem(s) in a given context. It can identify strategic entry action points and help build coalitions of actors for transformation.

How to analyze agrifood systems governance

The FAO Governance Analysis Framework is presented in the publication: *Focus on governance – for more effective policy and technical support – Framework paper* (Bojić, Clark, and Urban, 2022).

The Framework helps practitioners recognize key governance issues that impact or influence policy and technical work related to agrifood systems. It guides the design and evaluation of technical solutions, which in turn must be informed by a realistic appraisal of the political, economic and social context for which they are being designed, and the institutional setting and capacities needed for their implementation.

Considering huge national and territorial differences in structures, capacities, economies and phases of development, the Framework stresses that a technically viable, realistic and politically feasible response to food and agriculture problems must be developed at the request of, and in partnership with, governments. They have the final say on what policy to choose and how to carry it out.

Indeed, the FAO Framework relies on involving key stakeholders early on to co-create knowledge while helping to build trust and create a coalition for transformative action.



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YOUR GUIDE IN FOUR PHASES

PHASE 1 Problem framing

The first thing to do is to identify a priority problem that fuels major challenges in food and agriculture (e.g., water scarcity, unhealthy diets, extreme poverty) and that can be solved. The problem often lies in the eye of the beholder. In this phase, key actors aim at reaching a common agreement on what the priority problem is and its likely drivers. This approach is more likely to engage stakeholders, as it is in everyone's interest to recognize the problem, focus resources and find a solution.

PHASE 2 Institutional analysis

Here the analysis focuses on mapping the existing institutions linked to the problem statement. This key phase allows policy-makers and practitioners to identify the main drivers behind the acknowledged problem, and possible solution(s) within the existing rules, organizations/structures, actors and processes.

PHASE 3 Political economy analysis

It is critical to understand the key stakeholders around the priority problem identified, their relations, interests and influence, capacities and skills, and their likely response to proposed policy reforms and technical interventions. Achieving change relies on the collective commitment to turn promising ideas and interventions into action. Some policy options may provoke tension among stakeholders who have different interests, influence and resources.

PHASE 4 Priorities for action

Building on the previous phases' findings, this last phase focuses on strategic action to start transformative change. Here one should pursue an agreed theory of change, recommended course of action and a coalition of actors ready to lead the change.

Basic framework for governance analysis



Source: Bojić, Clark, and Urban, 2022.

The Governance Analysis Framework is intended for:

- Policy and development practitioners
- Government decision-makers
- Agrifood systems' practitioners
- International development experts
- Non-governmental organizations
- Academia



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Governance in action

Governance analysis involves balancing complexity and sensitivity. In keeping with FAO's mandate, the Framework Paper provides a general roadmap and a flexible approach to analyze and address governance issues related to food and agriculture in different contexts.

The FAO experience shows that where a systematic focus on governance has been applied, the Organization supported governments and other relevant country actors in adopting relevant national policies and strategies while improving their effectiveness and implementation.



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POWER YOUR WORK

- **Systematically integrate governance analysis and action** into the formulation and implementation of policy and technical work.
- **Invest in strengthening capacities** of governments and national actors to identify and analyze governance issues related to food and agriculture.
- **Promote engagement and ownership** of key stakeholders.
- **Improve dissemination of knowledge** across sectors to facilitate more participatory, better informed and better integrated analysis, decision-making and action.
- **Identify ways to strengthen governance arrangements** to enable and sustain better coordination and partnerships.
- **Strengthen linkages** between processes and mechanisms at the international and country levels.
- **Invest in documenting experiences** and key lessons learned from governance work to better understand what did or did not work.

Find out more



Bojić, D., Clark, M., and Urban, K. 2022: Focus on governance for more effective policy and technical support – Framework paper. Rome, FAO. <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0240en/cc0240en.pdf>

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Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy.

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available at:**

www.fao.org/policy-support
policy-support@fao.org



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