

## **CFS Side Event: Agroecology, diversification, resilience & dietary diversity in times of pandemic.**

The side-event showcased nutrition-sensitive agriculture approaches based on agroecological practices and the improvement of dietary diversity. Government representatives (from Nepal, Ecuador, Ethiopia and Pakistan) spoke about how peasant production systems responded to the pandemic and government actions to sustain and strengthen practices that hold the potential to transform into nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices. Experts analysed and assessed their experiences with solutions and practices from various aspects (economic, ecological, nutritional, gender equality), outlining the advantages of an approach based on nutrition-sensitive agriculture in giving comprehensive, systemic responses to combat hunger, poverty, malnutrition and the ecological crisis.

### **Highlights of the side event**

In 2016 and 2018 Ecuador has been able to recognize the essential role of family farming and the important link that there is between producer and consumer to achieve resilience, emphasized **Andrea Martinez**, from the Ministry of agriculture and livestock in Ecuador. She adds that their strategy is to have a short chain supply (they call it CIALCO) that has different forms of distribution, but their model is the same: linking family farming (also hotels and restaurants) together with consumers. She emphasizes how 81% of the farms are managed by women and how on the other hand the average of working hours is 37 per week, excluding domestic hours. What they are trying to do is to have more information about the domestic work in order to have a more accurate assessment of the actual hours women work for the agro-productive activities.

In their video addresses, Ethiopia and Nepal described the challenges posed by COVI-19 on food systems in their respective countries and the responses that were given to it at the different levels, including ones by the [Nutrition in Mountain Agroecosystems](#) project.

**Sudha Khadka**, Manager of Helvetas Nepal, explained how the local government is taking initiatives in for example, giving safety nets for most vulnerable and returnee migrants through food baskets, free meals, agri-input provisions, transport facilities and youth and returnee focused agriculture.

Also, the government is creating awareness, through local radios and mentorship approaches and especially ensuring that the post Covid food system is adapted to the local conditions.

Mr. **Ovais Zuberi** (Shazday fruits) talked about their projects taking place in Pakistan that help farmers from remote mountainous villages to process the food they cultivate and later introduce it to the local and international markets. This project not only improves the lives of the communities but also delivers education programmes about better nutrition and hygiene so that these communities become healthy and thriving.

**Oscar Castaneda** (HEIFER International) presented the project that he has been working on in Ecuador and stated that the biggest challenge that need to be addressed is the fact that 78% of the food that goes to the table is coming from a small holder farmers system and yet, those are the very same farmers that don't have access to enough food into a nutritious diet, and that is what they are trying to address with their program. To conclude he highlighted how important is to talk to communities and to Community participants and develop a network of rural service providers as well as bring a very clear connection between the people that are producing and those that are consuming.

### **Panel discussion**

- *How do you promote and encourage renewed appreciation for local and global diversity?*

**Sudha Khadka** explains that at the local context they are working with parents and schoolchildren by creating awareness about how nutritious local products are and how the latter also provides a link with the markets. In urban areas, the solution would be to create demand for it, but also, to value it through two different programs of local Government.

**Oscar Castaneda** brings up the concept of how “traditional” and “native” have a bad reputation nowadays. As this is part of fake news, we need to organize a movement where native and traditional people receive the reputation that they deserve.

- *What is the role of the business sector, and how, for example, all these agricultural approaches could be scaled up?*

**Ovais Zuberi** explains how if we give much more variegated options of crops to the consumers, instead of main crops, consumers will be more willing to try different products, hence giving them a more nutritional balance and nutritional diversity. This can be achieved by interesting marketing, including messaging to the end consumer.

## **Concluding remarks**

In conclusion, Cristina Maria Tirado, lead author of the next IPCC report Chapter six on health and desertification, highlighted relevant remarks about the studies they are working on.

The studies also focus on the social component of agroecology which is quite fundamental. She also remarks on the gaps present in the studies like the impacts of a more equitable land and resources governance on food and traditional security.