TRIGGERING THE TRANSFORMATION OF AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS THROUGH STRATEGIC FORESIGHT: CONCEPTS AND EXPERIENCES

Organized by: FAO (ESA, OIN and the FAO Foresight Network); Foresight4Food Network; Nepal (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development); Viet Nam (Institute for Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development); IFAD; Food Security Information Network (FSIN); and the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT.

Summary of the side event:

The hybrid event was moderated and facilitated by Lan Huong Nguyen, Economist at PIB-GP, and had introductory key words by David Laborde, ESA Director, whom, with the support of a short video on strategic foresight, provided further contextualization and introduced the topic of why it is necessary and how to trigger transformation of agrifood systems. The ESA Director's intervention was followed by quick presentations from expert contributors on several angles that relate to strategic foresight work.

Overall, the rich content covered several interconnected points of discussion between all presentations. There are many reasons, barriers to progress, and pervasive incentives that help explain why countries have underachieved and why policies, projects and other actions have not triggered so far, the required transformations to achieve Agenda 2030. Short-termism, geopolitical economy dynamics, geoeconomic tensions supported by agendas of the wealthiest parts of the global society have undermined correct diagnoses and game-changing strategies for decades. Strategic foresight and its methodology can support a more accurate diagnosis of why the transformation hasn't occurred yet.

Strategic forward-looking exercises need to be useful and usable for decision making. Anchoring future visions to historical patterns provides a solid ground to gain useful insights regarding the possible "futures". This is achieved, for example, through FAO's step-wise approach encapsulated in the future of food and agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation (FOFA-DTT) report which considers key "drivers" of agrifood systems, "weak signals" of possible futures, "scenarios" narratives for alternative futures, "challenges" that

have long impeded progress or may emerge, "triggers for transformation," and "strategic options and policies" to activate these triggers. This framework, FAO's Country Policy Profiles (CPPs), regional and thematic foresight reports on innovation and food safety and the F4F network, just to mention some, are available assets to support strategic foresight work at all levels. Datasets and information systems such as the database for the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) and the FAO FOFA Data Dashboard, play a crucial role in documenting historical trends and projections of key variables to inform critical and strategic thinking for the transformation of agrifood systems.

Additionally, the focus on trade-offs that may emerge along transformative patterns, e.g. between short-term unsustainable achievements and long-term sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity, or between the development of some regions to the detriment of others, help decision makers to address conflicting agendas, intergenerational and transnational issues for better collaborative strategies.

Fabrizio Bresciani, FAO Senior Innovation Officer, provided the wrap-up and closing remarks, highlighting ways forward and further work required in the strategic foresight domain, comprising unexplained performances' failures, persistent challenges, cause-effect linkages along development patterns that deserve more investigations, potential game-changers difficult to implement, or trade-offs to be considered.