

OECD work on food systems – presentation to FAO CFS Bureau and Advisory Group meeting

Aide memoire (6 April 2021)

How is OECD influencing policy transformation efforts?

- Providing evidence and data
 - “Making better policies for food systems” report (2021)
 - Monitoring and evaluation provides cross-country comparable data
 - Upcoming work on overcoming data gaps in food systems
- Sharing best practice on policy processes that can overcome barriers to change
- Engaging with stakeholders in preparation for the UN Food System Summit

Making better policies for food systems (Report, January 2021)

- Report focuses on three main questions.
 - First, what is the performance of food systems, not only in terms of challenges but also achievements, and what has been the role of policies?
 - Second, given food systems’ complexity, how can we make coherent policies?
 - And third, what are the obstacles we face when we are trying to achieve better policies for food systems, and how can we overcome them?
- Triple challenge for food systems.
 - Food security and nutrition for a growing population; livelihoods for millions of farmers, fishermen, but also many others who are working along food supply chains and environmental sustainability. In addition, resilience across these three dimensions
 - The performance of the food system on these dimensions is not black and white - there are both important achievements as well as serious shortcomings.
 - Better policies can make a difference – and in fact much work by the OECD and others has highlighted areas where policies can be improved
- Principles to improve policy coherence.
 - Policymakers should be aware of synergies and trade-offs with other policy areas when they are developing new initiatives.
 - We also need to critically evaluate the possible interactions to make sure that they are real, and important enough to matter for policy design.
 - Synergies and trade-offs depend on the specific choice of policy instrument
 - No “silver bullet” exists - we should be searching for a mix of policy instruments.
 - When society has to make a choice due to policy trade-offs, the choice should be based on the best available technical analysis, and should also be a democratic decision.
- Change is made difficult by differences in facts, interests and values
 - A lot is known about the kinds of policies which could improve the performance of food systems. Still, there are also important data gaps that need to be addressed.
 - For addressing conflicting interests, OECD has a number of good practices and recommendations on improving transparency, accountability, and creating a level playing field to make sure all stakeholders have an equal chance to be heard.
 - Many policy debates on food systems actually involve a strong ‘values’ component. These require different approaches to address differences in values – creative approaches, deliberative processes, etc.

OECD monitoring and evaluation for agri-food policies

- Across these 54 countries OECD finds that *the agricultural sector receives more than 700 billion in support each year*. This includes the effects of protectionist trade policies and investments in public goods such as public R&D.
- The vast majority of the 700 billion does not go to such public goods – instead it is used to support the incomes of individual producers, and public goods only receive a small share of the total.
- Governments tend to use the most distorting instruments, those that are coupled to production.
- Moving some of the existing support away from the most distorting support and towards less distorting instruments, or towards public goods (R&D, infrastructure, extension, etc.), would help improve the performance of food systems.

Data gaps in food systems

- Making better policies for food systems will require overcoming data gaps.
- In many cases, existing data is not granular/detailed enough to be useful.
- Sometimes data is fragmented across public and private actors, or siloed across public agencies.
- Sometimes inconsistencies in methodologies prevent comparisons across countries.
- Evidence on the effectiveness of policy instruments (and their synergies and trade-offs) is especially problematic.
- Covid-19 has revealed the need for better data in a number of areas.
- Policies are always made under imperfect information - we need to focus on where extra data can really make a difference
 - Obtaining better data and evidence is costly.
 - Skills and capacity also constrain collecting/maintaining high quality data
 - Different tools can help the prioritization exercise
 - New tools and data sources can lower the cost of filling data gaps
 - Use of digital technologies/novel data sources
 - We should not reinvent the wheel – share datasets when appropriate, modify existing structures if possible.

How is OECD engaging?

- Governments
 - Maximizing engagement with country experts on making better policies
 - Sharing experiences of policy transformation
 - Developing learning networks
 - Providing easy access to OECD resources
- UN and other organizations
 - Inviting FAO community to OECD events
 - Speaking at CFS side-events
 - Engaging in Summit Action Track debates
 - Producing Summit briefs for Scientific Advisory Group
 - Co-organizing webinars with the World Bank/GIZ/ADB
- Private sector
 - Supporting private sector dialogues
 - Rapporteur for High Level Dinner “Food Systems Dialogue”
 - Rapporteur for High Level dialogue series - Finance, Innovation, Gender
 - Participating in World Business Council for Sustainable Development discussions
 - Consulting with business through OECD mechanisms