Summary - CFS Partner Event 7

"Addressing data gaps in agriculture and global coordination efforts to strengthen food security and nutrition policies in response to COVID-19"

14 October 2020

CFS Partner Event on "Addressing data gaps in agriculture and global coordination efforts to strengthen food security and nutrition policies in response to COVID-19", 14 October 2020, brought together panelists from diverse region and from FAO, to highlight efforts to address data gaps in agriculture and how a shared global commitment could contribute to closing these gaps to prevent further deterioration of global hunger from COVID-19. The event was attended by more than 150 participants.

Country Perspective. Mr. Ariel Martinez, the Chief of Cabinet, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Argentina presented Argentina's efforts in harnessing digital technology and a mix of new and traditional data sources to fill data gaps in agriculture. These innovations provide information to mitigate crisis and improve not only food security and nutrition, but also improve productivity of agricultural commodities that are central to Argentina's economy.

Mr. Sarwar Mahmud, Director General of Food, from the Ministry of Food of Bangladesh, and Mr. John Okiror, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of Uganda, pointed out that data collection and analysis has been disrupted during COVID-19 pandemic due to movement restrictions, limited transportation and communication, and reallocation of budget to emergency response. The Government of Uganda highlighted their efforts to mitigate data gaps through capacity building (public and private sector) and improving data governance in agriculture. Bangladesh has been able to mitigate data gaps through e-Govt systems under 'Digital Bangladesh' and deliver targeted social assistance to vulnerable groups despite transportation and budgetary constraints.

FAO Data Strategy. FAO Chief Economist, Mr. Maximo Torero, presented the Digital Strategy of FAO, which is organized around 4 pillars, i.e. data (big data), innovation, technology and complements (governance, human capital and institutions). FAO data strategy emphasizes the use of geospatial information and artificial intelligence to fill data gaps, improve data granularity and timeliness, and providing early warning.

Discussion. During the discussion, the panelists underlined the importance of data inclusiveness and capacity building for stakeholders, including smallholder farmers, to produce data and to benefit from accurate and timely data to inform their food production choices. The panelists also highlighted the need for collaboration and sharing of good practices and experiences among countries in their efforts to improve their data systems and drive digitalization and innovation.

Global Commitment and Collaboration

In her closing remarks, Ms. Jenny A. McGee, Associate Administrator for Relief, Response, and Recovery, USAID, stressed the need for immediate action in response to COVID-19 to protect food systems and rural economies particularly in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Donor countries are developing a Commitment to Action that calls for collaboration and collective action across all international and

national stakeholders to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from increasing food insecurity and malnutrition, in particular through ensuring coordination around monitoring and data.

Priority considerations for the CFS Data Workstream:

- Need to invest in digital infrastructure and technologies to strengthen agricultural data and ensure its use by decision makers

- Attention should be given to data governance to build robust and transparent data systems with the necessary safeguards and protections.

- Support should be provided to farmers to improve their access to data and ability to use it for everyday decision-making that will impact their livelihoods.

Recording: https://fao.zoom.us/rec/play/cmCEWebHV90SQ73kgkxG2VurRWPkef-NjgNEUUwL_hKafj8zfSYL29oI-pkBFu5DHYJKt6KDc559zT83-.kY6IrN6ZvZ0g6IVZ

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