



Repurposing agricultural support to transform agrifood systems

Intersessional Event of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP)

Background

Agricultural development has contributed substantially to reducing poverty and improving food security globally. However, agrifood systems are facing increasing pressures and tremendous challenges to provide adequate, nutritious and safe food for all and contribute to bettering livelihoods, while achieving environmental, economic and social sustainability. Only seven years remain to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Urgent and scaled actions are needed to transform our agrifood systems to become more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Agricultural and food policies have an important role to play in shaping agrifood systems by providing incentives or disincentives to producers, processors and consumers, affecting all stages of the food chain from production to consumption, including trade, and defining the conditions in which interactions occur. These policies affect agrifood systems in different ways and extents, depending, inter-alia, on the level of development of the country, its trade status and exposure to international trade and markets, and the structure and functioning of its domestic agricultural and input markets. Whether the impact of the policy is examined in the short or the longer term also makes a difference. To contribute effectively to the transformation of agrifood systems, agricultural and food policies need to be designed to maximise positive impacts, while avoiding or minimising trade-offs. It is clear that there is no one-policy package that will be appropriate and applicable to all countries and contexts.

The debate on how agricultural support can be reoriented towards the provision of public goods and the promotion of sustainability objectives as well as the need for the transformation of agrifood systems (as expressed by the UN Secretary-General on the occasion of the Food Systems Summit 2021) have attracted increased attention.

FAO and other international institutions have contributed to this debate through a number of publications¹ examining the potential benefits of repurposing agricultural support towards environmental and global food security goals. Moreover, discussions in the context of the UN Food Systems Summit and statements by Heads of international organizations have also covered this subject. For instance, in their [3rd Joint Statement](#), the Heads of FAO, International Monetary Fund, World Bank Group, World Food Programme and World Trade Organization called on countries to reform and repurpose general universal subsidies towards temporary, better targeted programmes for global food security and sustainable food systems. Indeed, targeted programmes will support the transition of food systems and help achieve the SDGs and the Paris Agreement outcomes. Moreover, in its

¹ Examples of relevant publications include the following:

<https://www.fao.org/3/cb6562en/cb6562en.pdf> <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/cc0639en.pdf>
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9b868e1d-ad84-5229-a0df-12b5411e848b/content>
<https://www.t20italy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TF2-4.pdf>

“Agricultural Policies Monitoring and Evaluation 2022” Report, the OECD recommended to “re-orient budgetary support to the provision of public goods and key general services to improve the performance of the agricultural sector, or increase it where current budgetary support is low” as one of the six complementary elements of a policy agenda to achieve both food systems and climate objectives.

Objectives of the event

The primary objective of the event will be to contribute to this debate by providing a platform for sharing how countries are designing and implementing programs to repurpose agricultural support to improve food system sustainability.

To ensure a balanced and representative discussion, the event will include panellists from different regions and countries in different development stages and trade positions. It is expected that the event will also discuss the role of FAO and other international organizations in providing information and evidence to support policy decision-making at country and global level, as well as the policy space available for countries to repurpose agricultural support in the context of international agreements.

Date and venue

The event will be held on 1 June 2023. It will be organized in a hybrid mode to allow a broad participation, especially from capitals. The in-person meeting will be held at FAO headquarters, in the Sheikh Zayed Centre.

Participants

The event is aimed primarily for Permanent Representations to FAO and government officials from capitals.