Food Systems: Harnessing nutrition co-benefits of climate resilient agriculture

On 4 June 2021, IFAD nutrition team, in partnership with Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation-(WCDI-WUR), organized the webinar "*Food Systems: Harnessing nutrition co-benefits of climate resilient agriculture*" gathering together speakers from academia, research, government, civil society and development agencies to discuss the climate nutrition-nexus from different perspectives, including evidence, , possible solutions, policy strategies, and research gaps. Four new publications, presenting the interlinkages between climate and nutrition, produced under the same ASAP 2 Grant which funded the Webinar were launched, as well as a five-minute video. .

Esther Koopmanschap, Senior Advisor in Participatory Planning for the Water, Food and Environment Nexus at Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI-WUR), together with **Diane Bosch**, Senior Advisor Food and Nutrition Security and Focal Point Programme Fostering Lifelong Learning at WCDI-WUR moderated the webinar.

Jyotsna Puri, Director of IFAD's Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion (ECG) Division, welcomed participants, acknowledging the close collaboration that IFAD has engaged with WCDI-WUR for nearly 10 years in many areas of development. She recognized the webinar as the concluding event in a series of activities aimed at establishing approaches and processes that will harness and maximize the nutritional benefits of climate resilient agriculture. She emphasized the need for detailed analyses of the interplay between food security and climate change, and their impact on the most vulnerable groups, through a food systems lens and explained how the ASAP2 grant, through the same perspective, draws attention to these bidirectional linkages, their trade-offs and co-benefits.

Jessica Fanzo, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Global Food Policy and Ethics at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, presented the latest scientific evidence of the climate-nutrition nexus focusing the discussion around the question "*Can we have both human and planetary health*?". She noted that food systems contribute about 30% of total greenhouse gas emissions and that climate change is expected to significantly decrease the yields of many crops, along with their nutritional qualities. Transforming food systems is therefore necessary, among other objectives, to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, to ensure that diets are no longer a major risk factor for disease and death, and to avoid increasing zoonotic diseases spillover. Moreover, ensuring both human and planetary health will depend on several factors, including decision making, evidence, political will and action, accountability, negotiation, data availability, and greater consideration towards consumers' choices.

Diane Bosch, together with **Esther Koopmanschap**, illustrated the main findings of three case studies carried out on three IFAD's investments in Ghana, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. The Ghana study highlighted the main barriers to the adoption of climate-smart agricultural techniques, including lack of adequate knowledge and technical support, poor access to inputs and credit, and unfavourable market structure. Opportunities, on the other hand, include the adoption of a gender equality approach, the importance of credit schemes, access to land, and continued collaboration through facilitated multi-stakeholder partnerships. The research on Lesotho, a country particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, found that its food systems do not provide accessible, healthy, and affordable diets. A combination of cash transfers and improved home gardening, however, has proven to have positive impacts on climate-smart agricultural production, with positive effects on food security and the welfare of poor families. Agriculture in Zimbabwe is mainly rain-fed, making the sector highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change. In addition, Zimbabwe's food systems provide diets with little diversity and, especially in rural areas and insufficient quantities of food for normal household meal frequency. Accounting for over 70% of the country's agricultural workforce, women are key players in the climate-nutrition turnaround and policies are needed to promote gender transformation in value chain activities to ensure their participation and to increase their adaptive capacity to adequately

respond to climate change challenges. In conclusion, both Diane and Esther re-emphasized the need for a food systems transformation by stressing that "w*hat we eat affects climate and climate affects what we eat*".

A panel discussion of four experts followed.

From the perspective of a civil society organization, **Lotte Wouters**, founder of the Ghana Food Movement, a network of young people from different professions advocating for the promotion of indigenous Ghanaian food, discussed the transition towards healthier diets in Ghana. Specifically, the goal of the movement is to promote healthy and local food by changing consumer behaviour, especially among young people, inspiring them through creative and innovative ways to make traditional crops, neglected and underutilized species attractive through a formula that meets modern needs.

From a government perspective, **Abdoulaye Ka**, National Executive Secretary of the National Nutrition Development Council, Government of Senegal, shared his experience on how to bridge the nexus between climate and nutrition. The National Council is responsible for the development of a multi-sectoral approach in the fight against malnutrition and it has implemented a series of projects including in agro-ecology, also with such as the beneficial effects on the preservation of the forest, and for the planting of fruit trees that improve the nutritional intake of families. Drip irrigation systems are also being implemented to protect water resources and raise community awareness on water saving and promotion of adoption of improved cooking stoves. He concluded by stressing the importance of new technologies, innovation, research and development, in order to ensure human wellbeing and healthy lives, especially in an environment increasingly subject to shocks, as the Covid 19 pandemic has shown.

Dina Saleh, Regional Director of IFAD's Near East, North Africa and Europe Division (NEN), explained how IFAD is addressing the challenges of climate change, food security and healthier diets in its programmes. She provided specific measures undertaken by IFAD such as the "*Rural Resilience Program*" (2RP) that focuses on alleviating the climate change drivers of food insecurity, irregular migration and land degradation. She also shared operational strategies from the "*Natural Resources and Sustainable Livelihoods Program*" (SNRLP) in Sudan which promotes jubrakas (integrated home gardens) that have demonstrated the capacity to increase the availability of nutritious food at the household level and improved access to clean water by adopting climate-smart agro-ecological techniques. In conclusion, she stressed that "*getting policy makers to implement some of the solutions is key*" and strongly advocated for innovative solutions to be implemented through the creation of strategic partnerships.

To achieve a healthy and sustainable diet, **John Ulimwengu**, Senior Research Fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), stressed the importance of contextualizing national goals based on local conditions. At country level, designing and implementing climate and nutrition smart agricultural policies and investment plans also requires knowledge about micronutrient deficiencies and their geographic and age distribution. Finally, systems of mutual accountability are needed to ensure that actors and institutions involved in food systems contribute fully to the common goal of achieving a sustainable diet for all.

Among the main findings, the moderator concluded that, for a transition towards more sustainable food systems, it is essential to adopt a horizontal approach, going beyond the sectoral one, for integrated food policies that are able to be implemented in line with the peculiarities of each context. She also stressed the importance of participatory monitoring and evaluation of projects and activities, especially with young people.

The discussion generated from the webinar will be reported to the Food Systems Summit Secretariat and will contribute to the FSS Dialogue Gateway.

To consult all the reference materials and watch the video of the event, you can visit the dedicated webpage at this link.