

Digital Public Infrastructures for Better Climate Action and Food Security.

The 15th IFAD Innovation Talk focused on the significant benefits that Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs) bring to smallholder farmers, specifically in enhancing market access and financial services, promoting inclusiveness, and supporting disaster prevention and response. This discussion also highlighted how robust agricultural-based DPIs can reduce operational costs for the private sector along the value chain.

As a kick-off, Director General Stephanie King-chung Hung emphasized that DPIs are a foundational layer essential for driving innovation in agriculture. She highlighted the powerful role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this sector, particularly in smart irrigation systems that minimize losses and provide farmers with access to broader markets and financial services. Real-time data empowered by AI allows farmers to make informed decisions, enhancing market transparency and overall efficiency.

The talk continued with a **fireside chat** with leading experts Ms. Mara Balestrini and Mr. Jérémie Josling, who discussed the critical role of governments in facilitating the implementation of DPIs to maximize the impact across agricultural food systems. The conversation also touched on how International Financial Institutions (IFIs), in partnership with governments, can invest in DPIs to create new opportunities for smallholder farmers.

Insights from IDB Lab by Mara Balestrini:

Mara introduced the innovation laboratory of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Group, the IDB Lab, which aims to improve lives in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2019, IDB Lab launched the fairLAC initiative to promote responsible AI usage as a regional public good. The initiative assesses risks associated with AI, with a focus on its responsible implementation.

Mara also discussed the transformative potential of Web3 and blockchain technology in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The LACChain initiative, funded by IDB Lab, initially aimed to benefit one million people but has now reached 9.5 million beneficiaries with over 100 projects developed on its platform. LACChain has evolved into a DPI, creating an internet of value with tokenized fiat money and self-sovereign identity, all while ensuring compliance with existing regulations.

Key takeaways from the fireside chat:

- **DPIs as Drivers of Innovation:** DPIs are essential for enhancing market access, financial inclusion, and operational efficiency in agriculture.
- **AI and Real-time Data:** AI and real-time data are crucial tools for empowering farmers and improving market transparency.
- **Government and IFI Roles:** Governments and IFIs play key roles in facilitating DPI implementation and investment to support smallholder farmers.
- **Open-source and Blockchain:** Open-source and blockchain technologies are prominent in creating secure, inclusive, and efficient digital ecosystems.

Speakers and panellists at the event

- Stephanie King-chung Hung, Chief Information Officer, Director General of ADB's Information Technology Department
- Mara Balestrini, Digital Transformation Lead Specialist, InterAmerican Development Bank LAB
- Jérémie Joslin, Chief Technology Officer, Newlogic and Executive Director, Open SPP
- Dr. Phommy Inthichack, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Planning and Cooperation at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Laos
- Michel Mouchiroud, Director for Public and Corporate Affairs, OpenSPP
- Moderator: Gladys H. Morales, Senior Officer, Global Head of Innovation IFAD

Insights from Open SPP by Jérémie Joslin:

Jérémie introduced Open SPP, an open-source social protection platform that provides social and farmer registries and manages social protection programmes. This platform is a Digital Public Good (DPG) used in various sectors, including humanitarian efforts like a cash transfer project in Haiti and a farmer registry initiative in Laos. He highlighted the G20's recognition of DPIs as secure, interoperable shared digital systems that provide equitable access to public and private services. Jérémie emphasized that DPGs, such as open-source software and open AI systems, help countries avoid dependency on specific vendors, allowing them to own and continually develop their systems.

The Talk also offered insights on the Government perspective on DPIs, with remarks by Deputy Director General of Planning and Cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR Dr. Phommy Inthichack. Dr. Inthichack emphasized the critical role of digital tools and solutions in agriculture for ensuring economic sustainability in Lao PDR, highlighting the significance of stakeholder collaboration in leveraging digital innovations to address agricultural challenges and promote sustainable development.

During the Live Q&A, speakers underscored the importance of supporting both Digital Public Infrastructures and Digital Public Goods. It was stated that DPI initiatives are primarily driven by government support, fostering innovation across public and private sectors. Similarly, DPGs receive backing from diverse sources, including universities and governmental entities. Furthermore, the speakers explained that the extent of support varies by country and problem domain, with standards compliance increasingly essential for driving value creation and fostering community collaboration.

If you are interested in the discussion with the audience, please consult the event [recording](#) on the [event page](#).

The **closing remarks** focused on the significant role of DPIs to build strong government services based on smart and responsible use of data and technologies, facilitating collaboration in an interconnected world. Michel Mouchiroud also talked about building strong foundations through DPI approaches, such as leveraging digital identity and registration of agricultural assets to improve benefits and services for farmers.

The event aimed to answer the following questions:

- What are Digital Public Infrastructures, and why are they crucial for modern agriculture?
- How can Digital Public Goods (DPGs) support the development of DPIs?
- How do DPIs enhance food security and agricultural sustainability?
- How can governments facilitate the implementation of DPIs to maximize their impact across agricultural food systems?
- Why should International Financial Institutions, Development Partners, and governments invest in operational DPIs?
- What opportunities could DPIs offer for new revenue sources for farmers, including carbon credits?

“The discussion about Digital Public Goods is the discussion about the global governance of technology in an interconnected world.”

Mara Balestrini

“Developing Digital Public Infrastructures for agriculture in Laos could significantly enhance agricultural productivity, sustainability, and resilience.”

Dr. Phommy Inthichack

Missed the event? Watch it online!

- A recording of the event can be found [here](#).
- If you would like to skip directly to certain sections of the event, the times are listed in the table below.
- Join the [IFAD Innovation Network](#) to receive our updates and to contribute to the knowledge sharing and learning of our innovation community of practice: <https://ifad.dgroups.io/g/IFADInnovation>

Time (minutes)	Section
00.00-02.05	Welcome by moderator Gladys H. Morales
02.05-07.31	Keynote presentation by Stephanie King-chung Hung
07.31-08.09	Comments by Gladys H. Morales
08.09-38.55	Fireside Chat with Mara Balestrini and Jérémie Joslin
38.55-50.29	Q&A
50.29-58.39	Government Perspectives with Dr. Phommy Inthichack
58.39-1.02.45	Concluding remarks by Michel Mouchiroud