

# Making Food Affordable for Rural People: Is It Possible?

30th November 2021  
10:00 - 11:30 (CET)

**Background** - Gaining access to healthy and affordable food regardless of income is a challenge for the majority of rural people in developing countries. The most basic requirement of getting enough calories is not met by up to 811 million people, who were undernourished last year (SOFI, 2021). Healthy diets are expensive: more than four times the cost of a basic, calorie-sufficient one.

This event brings together the perspective and experience of food systems experts, governments and civil society voices to discuss and explore solutions to increase food availability and affordability for rural people, identify interlinkages and connect the dots.

**Number of participants** - 205

## Speakers

- **Gilbert F. Hougbo**, President, IFAD
- **Takako Suzuki**, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
- **Takeharu Yamanaka**, Mayor, City of Yokohama, Japan
- **Gunhild Stordalen**, Founder and executive chair, EAT Foundation
- **Josephine Joseph Lagu**, Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Republic of South Sudan
- **Kiran Rupakhetee**, Joint Secretary and Division Chief, Good Governance and Social Development, Government of Nepal
- **Michael Waweru**, Senior Monitoring & Evaluation and Knowledge Management Officer, Aquaculture Business Development Programme (ABDP), Kenya
- **Lawrence Haddad**, Executive Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
- **Phrang Roy**, Coordinator, Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (TIP)

**Moderator:** Ronald Thomas Hartman, Director of Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization (GPR), IFAD

## Event Summary of key points:

- Current food systems are flawed healthy diets, with safe, nutritious and sustainably produced foods are more expensive, and often inaccessible or not available for the most vulnerable people.
- It is important to reform the system, so that the price of food reflects its true cost.

- Improving governance, accountability and commitment, and effective coordination and collaboration among multi-sector stakeholder are fundamental to improve food affordability.
- Adopting an integrated food systems approach, enhancing resilience of communities, and investing on sustainable food systems is key to make food affordable for all.
- Complementary measures can be adopted to increase food affordability, such as increasing income support, reducing prices for consumers while increasing returns for farmers and reducing the time burden of food preparation. Also engaging and supporting SMEs can be key to improve food affordability.
- Indigenous Food Systems have been proven to be equitable and sustainable. Incorporating traditional knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous Peoples and can help scaling affordable and nature-based nutrition for the well-being of all.

## Summary of Speeches

- **Gilbert F. Hougbo** *President, IFAD (Welcome Remarks)*
  - It is indeed possible to make food affordable for rural people. However, it is a tragedy that so many of the people that grow our food are going hungry. A third of our food is grown on small family farms, but small-scale producers are not connected to the markets. The world has failed them.
  - Initiatives like N4G play a critical role in bringing together different sectors of the food systems. By working together and listening to experts, we can find creative and impactful solutions.
  - At IFAD, we have stepped up our N4G commitments. We commit to ensure that 60% of our new projects, from 2021 to 2025, are nutrition-sensitive, that 25% of women report MDDW, and that 6 million people in developing countries are provided with targeted support to improve nutrition.
  - Thanks to Japan for its longstanding partnership with IFAD, and IFAD has just opened a liaison office in Yokohama. IFAD commits to enhance its engagement with Japanese stakeholder, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the City of Yokohama.
- **Takako Suzuki** *State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan (Opening Statement)*
  - With the exacerbation of malnutrition due to the pandemic and the rising number of people experiencing hunger, addressing issues related to nutrition is more important than ever.
  - IFAD plays a significant role in achieving the SDGs, particularly Goal 1, No Poverty, and Goal 2, Zero Hunger. Less than 10 years are left to achieve the SDGs, there is a need to enhance international cooperation in tackling nutrition issues globally. This event will help to build momentum to the Tokyo N4G Summit on December 7 and 8<sup>th</sup>.
  - Enhancing access to nutritious and affordable food is a matter of utmost urgency, especially for the majority of poor people living in rural areas in the poorest countries. IFAD's works to make sustainable and effective investments in agricultural development and food systems while mainstreaming nutrition is valued and appreciated.
  - The Government of Japan is determined to strengthen its cooperation with IFAD, and welcomes the establishment of the Japan IFAD Liaison Office in Yokohama.
  - Also through the Tokyo N4G Summit, Japan aims to lead international efforts to improve nutrition around the world, ensuring that no one is left behind. Japan will work closely with international organizations, including IFAD and other important stakeholders.
- **Takeharu Yamanaka** *Mayor, City of Yokohama, Japan (Opening Statement)*

- This month, IFAD opened its Japan Liaison Office in Yokohama, at the Yokohama International Organizations Center, a facility created by the City of Yokohama dedicated to the development of a global society and world peace.
  - The City of Yokohama will collaborate with international institutions such as IFAD to address food security issues, such as reducing food loss and supporting developing countries.
  - The government of Japan has designated Yokohama as a “SDGs future city”. With an active and valued urban agriculture sector, Yokohama will host the International Horticultural Exhibition in 2027, showing how cities can coexist with nature.
  - Yokohama will continue to foster strong partnerships with international institutions and overseas cities, and contribute to sustainable growth in Japan and the world.
- **Gunhild Stordalen** *Founder and executive chair, EAT Foundation* **(Keynote Statement)**
    - It is fundamental to transform how food is priced and valued. Affordable access to healthy sustainably produced food for all would be incredibly impactful on the progress towards the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.
    - Our current food systems are failing. Three billion people cannot afford healthy diets, and food has become the number one cause of human mortality. The consequences can also be seen on our planet: destruction of nature, loss of biodiversity and climate destabilisation.
    - At the recent COP26 we witnessed some important progress, but there has been a lack of commitment on food systems.
    - Scientific reports have confirmed that current food systems have negative impacts on the planet, and food systems today are generating more cost than value to the global economy: these hidden costs have been estimated to be 12 trillion.
    - We need to reform the system, so that the price of food reflects its true cost. Healthy diets are currently expensive, but when we consider all environmental, social and other hidden costs, there is nothing inherently more costly in healthy food compared to ultra-processed foods. By reflecting the true cost of food, regenerative practices food production practices would be rewarded.
    - 0.5 Trillion USD from government subsidies to farmers every year, and 90% of this support is harmful to people and the planet. We need to break the trend.
    - EAT recently launched the Good Food Finance Network to help accelerate a shift in food finance to healthy sustainable and equitable outcomes. IFAD is an active partner of this Network.

**Q:** In your opinion, is it possible to balance the “true cost of food” and at the same time ensure affordability?

**A:** It is possible and imperative and can be done by applying the right policymaking, and reforming policies from agricultural practices, taxes and incentives, and public procurement.

- **Josephine Joseph Lagu** *Minister for Agriculture and Food Security, Republic of South Sudan*
  - The challenge of food accessibility is very complex, beyond production and availability, people need to have the choice to eat nutritious food and understand the choice they make.
  - We cannot focus only on production, but we need to mobilize political will, set smart nutrition targets and accountability mechanisms to stay on track to the 2025 Global Nutrition targets and SDGs.
  - The youngest country in the world with a very young and diverse population, South Sudan is committed to end all forms of malnutrition. Despite challenges that have affected the food

and nutrition security of all people, South Sudan is striving to transform national food systems and wants to support and invest in young people, women and the most vulnerable.

- Efforts to end malnutrition should be always underpinned by accountability and commitment. A strong resilient food system needs to be built on foundations of national unity, stability and security. Resolution of conflict is instrumental to build peace and resilience.
- Ensure access to adequate and nutritious food is one of the six priorities of South Sudan. The government of South Sudan, with FAO, IFAD and WFP, identified levers to prioritize efforts, transform food systems, and make agriculture profitable, commercially oriented and regionally competitive.
- Communities need to be less dependent on humanitarian assistance, and this can be done by improving governance, enhancing resilience of communities through innovations, and investing on the processing, storage and transformation of food products.
- The Ministry of Agriculture is focused on empowering small scale producers, pastoralists, farmers and fishers, who are the backbone of food production in South Sudan.

- **Kiran Rupakhetee** *Joint Secretary and Division Chief, Good Governance and Social Development, Government of Nepal*

- Nepal has made significant progress in improving malnutrition among children under 5 years of age. However, Nepal has a moderate level of hunger, it ranks 76<sup>th</sup> out of the 116 countries of the Global Hunger Index. And Covid-19 had serious impacts on food and nutrition security, as well as affordability of nutritious diet.
- A recent study with WFP highlighted how in Nepal the cost of a nutritious diet is more than twice as expensive as the cost of a diet that meets the energy needs alone, and there is a significant regional variation. Nationally, at least 22 % of households would not be able to afford the lowest cost nutritious diet
- Nepal's Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan II (a national guiding document for nutrition interventions) aims to reduce malnutrition to enhance human capital and overall socioeconomic development. This will be achieved by scaling up nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions and creating an enabling environment for nutrition and governance.
- The MSNP has contributed in fostering collaboration among multi-sector stakeholders to work on common nutrition agenda; prioritizing nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions and creating an enabling environment with strengthened governance mechanism.
- Based on Nepal's experience, there is a need to have nutrition sensitive agricultural policies to encourage the production and consumption of a wider variety of locally available and culturally acceptable nutritious foods. Focus must be on improving and strengthening food supply chain to increase availability of nutritious foods.
- There is a need to adopt a 'Food Systems Approach' to integrate policies and deliver the multi-sector actions required to combat hunger, malnutrition and deliver healthy diets to the people. It is also important to transform food systems, and the policies governing them.
- We need to advocate for more domestic allocation of finance for nutrition and food security in order to strengthen food systems and explore how the private sector can be engaged.
- It is possible to make food affordable for all only through effective coordination and collaboration among multi-sector stakeholders and engagement of people at all levels.

- **Michael Waweru** *Senior Monitoring & Evaluation and Knowledge Management Officer, Aquaculture Business Development Programme (ABDP), Kenya*

- The Kenya Aquaculture Business Development Programme aims to improve food availability and affordability by increasing fish production, particularly in rural areas. Including fish in the

diets will increase diet diversity. The project also works on women empowerment and youth employment.

- A recent study on affordability of healthy diets found that 84% of the population of Sub Saharan Africa is unable to afford healthy diets. Many more people will be exposed to this risk if the incomes decrease.
  - Aquaculture is the key source of fresh and nutritious fish, other than being an important resource for fish stocks. Aquaculture addresses one of the main challenges of Sub Saharan Africa and Kenya: land deficit to produce healthy food. As aquaculture uses very little land, it can be an empowerment tool for young people and women.
  - ABDP aims to reduce poverty and improve food and nutritional security by adopting a “whole value chain approach”. ABDP supports smallholder farmers with improved production, and works on the value chains to improve their efficiency.
  - Among the many activities of the programme, there is extensive nutrition education in the target communities and in public primary schools. ABDP adopts a PPP model, links smallholder farmers to markets, and support the development of mini-processing plants.
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- **Lawrence Haddad** *Executive Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)*
    - Implementing the true value of food is the first best solution to make food affordable for all. There are also complementary measures, second best solutions, to achieve this.
    - The first is improving income support through social protection programmes that are more targeted to the most vulnerable and better connected to nutritious foods.
    - Reducing prices for consumers while increasing returns for farmers through regenerative techniques of farm productivity, whenever possible. Regenerative practices reduce both input and output prices. Lowering transaction costs along the value chains can help in reducing the prices. This means supporting micro, small and medium enterprises, and know how to reach low-income consumers in rural and urban areas.
    - Another important solution is to make nutritious food affordable in terms of time. Women are often the ones on which the time burden of food falls. GAIN is working on pre-cooked beans that reduce preparation time, and that can be produced quickly and are affordable to all.
    - Oftentimes, affordability is hidden and not recognized. Local species, often nutritious and locally adapted, and traditional foods are not appreciated. These foods are affordable, but are not attractive, and need to be reinvented, and be made desirable and aspirational.
    - Engaging with the private sector is fundamental to make food affordable for all. SMEs are often hidden or ignored by policy view. Focus on the middle of the value chain can make nutritious foods more available and affordable.
    - SMEs are the engine of growth, and the ones that have the capacity to shape food systems in emerging markets. However, they need policy support, financial support, technology and infrastructure support.
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- **Phrang Roy**, *Coordinator, Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (TIP)*
    - Traditional food systems and indigenous communities have a fundamental role in making sustainable food affordable. In India, Indigenous communities in the North East have a better nutritional status compared to the national average.
    - Studies on indigenous food systems have highlighted how they are equitable and sustainable, in some cases even achieving zero hunger. Severe food insecurity in indigenous villages in North East India does not exist.
    - Wild plants and neglected species are responsible for the good nutritional status and the food security of indigenous communities. A mapping of agrobiodiversity and dietary diversity in

indigenous communities in North East India found that on average indigenous villages have 200 food plants.

- Increasing modernisation reduces the number of households that rely on local available agrobiodiversity, thus experiencing reduced diet diversity.
- Indigenous Peoples food systems can be a solution to improve food affordability, if they are not pushed in situations of vulnerability, bombarded with narratives that lack a focus on nature and are driven by economic considerations, without consideration on the true cost of food.
- TIP was able to create a new storyline with agrobiodiversity at its centre, promoting better nutrition, consumption of local plants in school gardens and school meals. This has led to improve diet diversity in some indigenous communities in North East India.
- Looking to 2030, we need innovations to tap agrobiodiversity, converting our gardens into pharmacies and places where we can get both micro and macronutrients. Indigenous communities need nutrition analysis infrastructure.
- It is fundamental to build the capacities of Indigenous youth. What is needed is a new narrative where science and the wisdom of Indigenous people is blended equally. Organizations such as IFAD are fundamental to help the 470 million Indigenous Peoples to scale affordable and nature-based nutrition for the well-being of all.

## Event Q&A

### **Q1: To Lawrence Haddad:**

*How to link SMEs with policy makers and particularly funders for nutrition? How to ensure the voice of SMEs in decision-making spaces?*

#### **A1: Lawrence Haddad**

Find an association or network of SMEs or MSMEs. These networks can give a collective voice to SMEs in decision-making spaces and with policy makers.

### **Q2: To Kiran Rupakhetee:**

*One of the main challenges governments face is limited financial resources for nutrition. What can be done to increase financing, particularly domestic financing, in the context of Nepal?*

#### **A2: Kiran Rupakhetee**

In countries when resources are meagre, domestic resource mobilization can be a challenge. In Nepal, 15% of the domestic resources need to be allocated by the local government to the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan. In addition, movements and networks such as SUN can facilitate countries like Nepal in resource mobilization and policy-influencing.

### **Q3: To Josephine Joseph Lagu**

*What practical urgent actions are needed in South Sudan from a policy point of view, to increase affordability of food?*

#### **A3: Josephine Joseph Lagu**

The Ministry of Agriculture has a masterplan that aims to empower smallholder farmers and focuses on large national schemes. Empowering smallholder farmers is crucial, particularly in countries like South Sudan where they make up 90% of the workforce. Provision of inputs and technologies need to be facilitated, while at the same time work needs to be done in capacity building. South Sudan is

also focusing on commercializing agriculture and encouraging farmers to focus on cultivation of fruit and species to improve diet diversity and food and nutrition security.

**Q4: To Phrang Roy:**

*Should we seek to integrate IPs communities and food systems within the global food supply chain, and how to do it without losing their peculiarities and qualities?*

**A4: Phrang Roy**

One thing that needs to be recognized is that food systems are diverse. Indigenous food systems are diverse and one of their driving forces is their value system. IPs relationship with their land is sacred. These values can be taken and incorporated in other food systems.

However, we should also recognize that all food systems have their blind spots, and IPs food systems have them too. Therefore, there is a need for an intercultural knowledge system where science and traditional indigenous culture are equal.

**Q5: To Michael Waweru:**

*Why shall the Maasai people grow fish?*

**A5: Michael Waweru:**

ABDP is looking to diversify local diets and increase diet diversity of Maasai People.