

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

2020 Global Food Policy Report Launch: Building Inclusive Food Systems

July 6, 2020 New Delhi – The COVID-19 pandemic in South Asia has triggered the largest disruption of livelihoods in human history, affecting over 1.7 billion people. The disruptions to supply chains, lack of access to health and nutrition services, and overwhelmed social protection system is leading to increased food and nutrition insecurity in the region. To address many of the long-standing issues underpinning food insecurity and poverty the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) officially released the 2020 Global Food Policy Report (GFPR) on April 07.

A virtual event was co-organized by IFPRI South, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS) on July 6, to present the highlights of the report in the South Asian context. The policy makers and thought leaders shared their perspectives in light of the COVID-19's impacts on our food systems.

The COVID crisis has accelerated the importance to reshape our food systems making them more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. The disruptions to supply chains, lack of access to health and nutrition services, and overwhelmed social protection system have led to increased food and nutrition insecurity in the region. Consequently, the awareness and need to work towards inclusive food systems have been amplified for all countries in the region.

The IFPRI 2020 Global Food Policy Report (GFPR) highlights the central role that inclusive food systems play in meeting global goals to end poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, and offers recommendations for making food systems more inclusive for four marginalized groups – smallholders, women, youth, and conflict-affected people. The report also provides analysis on transforming national food system in several countries like Bangladesh and Ethiopia, and advice on development of food system in different regions worldwide.

“Food systems provide opportunities to improve food and nutrition security, generate income, and drive inclusive economic growth, but even in prosperous times too many people are excluded from fully participating in them and securing these benefits,” said Johan Swinnen, director general of IFPRI. “In times of crisis like today, inclusion is an even greater imperative for protecting the most vulnerable.”

“COVID-19 has struck the world at a time when experts were already deliberating on the need for a paradigm shift in the agri-food sector that could address the broader challenges of sustaining the humanity. COVID-19 is expected to lead to a significant shift in dietary preferences, adding new dimensions to the food system thinking,” said Ramesh Chand, member NITI Aayog.

“Over the past two decades, Nepal has gone through atypical structural transformation, marked by desertion of agriculture and epic out-migration of young people. After COVID-19, reliance on remittances will fall, and there is urgency to find gainful jobs for millions,” said Swarnim Wagle,

chair, IIDS and former vice-chair, NPC, Nepal.“ Renewed agriculture can become a source of inclusive growth if we incentivize high-value-to-weight products and food processing, streamline the subsidy regime through targeted digital transfers, and invest heavily to combat deficits in hard infrastructure as well as the softer menace of childhood malnutrition. These efforts need to be undergirded by enhanced capacities across all tiers of Nepal’s newly federated governance structure.”

South Asia’s steady progress has reshaped the region’s diverse food systems over the past decade. This regional transformation has been marked by strong economic growth, rising real wages, and the expansion of nonagricultural sectors. In recent years in South Asia the growth rate of high-value foods has been greater than that of cereals. The increase in income and greater diet diversity has also led to growth of the food processing sector. Yet post-harvest losses continue to be high in South and Southeast Asia compared to other regions.

“South Asian economies are transforming. Real wages are rising, shares of agriculture in GDP are declining, and nonfarm employment in much of the region has surpassed that of farm employment. These structural changes will bring about changes in food system with new challenges—the challenges of ensuring that food system transformation is efficient, inclusive, and sustainable,” said Shahidur Rashid, director South Asia, IFPRI.

The report recommends three key policy levers which will be critical in making the food system transformation inclusive and sustainable: (1) reforming agricultural input subsidies and price supports; (2) improving the targeting of social protection programs; and (3) building effective institutions for governing the emerging food system. Reforming some of the age-old programs on agricultural subsidy and price policies could free up public funds, to invest in fostering more inclusive, equitable, and gender- and nutrition-sensitive food systems.

In South Asia, social safety net programs can be effective platforms for making food systems inclusive. “IFPRI-WFP’s Transfer Modality Research Initiative in Bangladesh found that providing young mothers cash transfers combined with nutrition behavior change communication reduced child stunting by three-times the national average decline. This is substantial evidence on the potential of social transfers to enhance nutrition,” said Akhter Ahmed, senior research fellow and country representative of IFPRI-Bangladesh.

Establishing effective institutions for food system governance is another strong policy lever for inclusive food systems. “Food system governance have significant potential for promoting an inclusive food system but the political will is required to provide adequate funding and to respond to bottom-up pressure from consumer rights groups and civil society organization,” said Abdul Wajid Rana, program leader, Pakistan Strategy Support Program, IFPRI.

“Indian agriculture has shown great resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it has also highlighted the needs for policy thinking beyond staple food to ensure nutritional balance and environmental sustainability. The current pandemic will accelerate the process of nutrition-sensitive, inclusive and sustainable agricultural growth,” said Trilochan Mohapatra, secretary, DARE & director general, ICAR.

The report also features chapters analyzing developments in agri-food systems in Africa south of the Sahara, the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. For more information on the report, click [here](#). visit the GFPR website <http://gfpr.ifpri.info/>



To speak with chapter authors about the content of the report and event panelist please contact Rebika Laishram, Communication Specialist, IFPRI-South Asia: r.laishram@cgiar.org

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. IFPRI was established in 1975 to identify and analyze alternative national and international strategies and policies for meeting the food needs of the developing world, with particular emphasis on low-income countries and on the poorer groups in those countries. It is a research center of CGIAR, a worldwide partnership engaged in agricultural research for development. visit global website www.ifpri.org and regional website <http://southasia.ifpri.info/>