

1. What is the current status of the Goal or target, in terms of actual measured progress and trends?

Even before the pandemic, it is well known and reported that we are globally not on track to meet any of the SDGs by 2030. The same status was confirmed by Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report 2021 by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), where to date, out of 104 measurable targets, the region is on track to reach only nine by 2030 at the current pace of progress. The report noted that food security and nutrition (SDG2) is likely to regress without substantive changes in the way our food systems is being managed.

The farmer representative (Ajay K Jha, CECOEDECON) of APRCEM during the 8th APFSD noted that “350 million people in acute hunger were added during the pandemic to 1.9 billion people already facing difficulties in accessing food (FAO, 2021). 120 million children are stunted, wasted or obese. In 2019, UN food agencies (FAO, UNICEF and WFP) estimated that 3 million needed to be lifted out of hunger every single month until the end of 2030 to achieve sustainable development goals. These would seem to be even highly unlikely now due to the economic recession brought by Covid19”.

Another Farmers’ Organization representative to the Food Systems Summit Advisory Committee (Esther Penunia, AFA) refers to our food system where food is produced faster than global population growth yet poverty, hunger, and malnutrition including obesity prevails. And where there is continued biodiversity loss, soil and ecosystem degradation, air, water, and sound pollution, and youth is unattracted to agriculture and small scale producers and family farmers have weak control of the food system. Small-scale farmers are regarded as food heroes, yet victimized by weak access to markets and low prices of their produce.

And so while UNESCAP reported some progress on SDG 2, this progress was too slow and beleaguered by a lot of systemic issues to create any dent by 2030. SDG 2 is also affected by the delays on other interlinked SDGs e.g. 1, 5, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. For instance, there is hope of the possibility and opportunity of increasing food production from the ocean to bolster long-term food security, yet the Asia Pacific region is regressing on the critical goal of life below water (Goal 14). Current efforts to protect key marine environments and small-scale fisheries, and to invest in ocean science do not stand up to the urgent need to safeguard the vast, yet fragile, resource. In some of our countries, like the Philippines, the UNCLOS and other legal frameworks at international and local levels to protect the access rights for small-scale fisheries are being seriously being violated.

SDG 2 is also intrinsically linked to the agenda of eliminating poverty (SDG1). But poverty especially in the rural areas prevails. According to UN FAO, 74% of the world’s food producers are family farmers and living Asia and the Pacific (FAO, 2014). However, these same small-scale food producers are threatened with food and livelihood insecurity brought about by changing climate risks, economic shocks, and, land and water grabbing threats. These realities confronting rural communities have been exacerbated with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. With no adequate rural infrastructures for social services such as health and sanitation, and access to communications, among others, rural communities’ risks are further worsened. The movement

restrictions affecting access to agricultural inputs, processing, marketing, and transporting of agricultural products have also badly hit the rural workers and producers, which are predominantly casual, informal and self-employed. Since most of the rural and agricultural workers do not have access to insurance and other social protection means, they are among those who heavily suffered from income losses (FAO, 2020; ILO 2020).

Policies and programs in food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture must recognize the role of small farmers in producing 80% of the world's food, and their innovations in food production, post-harvest and processing primarily based on agroecological practices and traditional knowledge systems. This recognition is the foundation of a sound and inclusive STI that promote diverse sources of knowledge. Technological innovations in laboratories and formal institutions need to respond to actual needs and conditions of farmers and must be culturally appropriate, gender responsive, economically feasible and ecologically sustainable. Local innovations, indigenous knowledge systems and endogenous technologies must be encouraged and promoted, and solutions to problems should not be solely limited to technological options. Promotion and adoption of appropriate technologies for sustainable farming to make agriculture economically viable will encourage poor and indigenous communities to invest their efforts and future in ensuring food and nutrition security of their family and society as a whole.

Public-private partnership is not a panacea, and is not the solution to address the root causes behind food insecurity, malnutrition and highly uneven distribution of resources that seriously persist in the region halfway towards the 2030. Strategic investments in agroecology, education and the public health systems, as well as on disaster and pandemic preparedness should never be presented as potential profit-making enterprises for the private sector and must only come from the public sector and as part of basic rights of citizens. Strong partnership between the people and democratic government based on mutual trust, solidarity and recognition of each other's contributions is a far more strategic and bottom-up approach to investment and financing. The recognition of the real value of farmers' labor, genius and contribution to society is a first step towards broadening the concept of investment beyond monetary value.

2. What has changed since the last time this Goal was reviewed at the HLPF?

- **Any deviations in progress from what was expected (including due to COVID-19)?**
- **Additional obstacles or opportunities in implementation including through interlinkages with other Goals, and connections to related processes?**
- **New/promising openings for tracking progress, including from additional data sources?**

SDG 2 was reviewed at the HLPF in 2017. The recommendations identified then remain to be as urgent and important: accelerate efforts to end hunger and malnutrition, prioritize building sustainable agriculture systems that account for heightened climate and extreme weather risks, attention to major humanitarian challenges confronting the international community, provide spaces to exchange knowledge and foster productive partnerships, promote policy convergence and coordination of efforts, including gender-inclusive, multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships, creating food systems that are more efficient, sustainable, resilient and inclusive, addressing insufficiency of investment in sustainable agriculture to reduce poverty and food insecurity, and the follow-up and review process to ensure accountability and results-oriented actions.

We can find initiatives and good practices among civil society and farmers' movements that could connect to these recommendations, at national and sub-regional/regional levels. But the question that need to be asked is how these good practices have been recognized by governments or the UN system, to serve as learning ground, and be supported for mainstreaming or upscaling. There has been pro-active effort on the part of CSOs to engage governments to influence policies and designs of public programs, and for grassroots organizations to directly benefit from these, but the openness of governments have been uneven. Investment in agriculture may have grown but most of these have benefited those who have the capital and capacity to leverage and manage risks, e.g. big agri-businesses. The space for family farmers' organizations to participate in decision-making had been limited and dependent on the willingness of policy makers or of UN agencies to strategically bridge their participation, if needed.

The Covid19 lockdowns and movement restrictions in the urban areas are affecting rural communities since many of the urban dwellers are migrating back to rural areas due to loss of jobs and employment. This urban-to-rural migration is overloading the capacities of rural areas, resources and services. But on the other hand, the pandemic has raised the awareness among middle-class consumers in cities and peri-urban communities for safe and nutritious food, and their empathy or solidarity towards small food producers. The closer the buyers know the suppliers of food, the higher their willingness to pay fairer prices. This presents an opportunity that could compel stakeholders to further invest in and give attention to connecting rural and urban communities to spur inclusive and sustainable development. Responses to the pandemic in the region and at the national level, if done effectively should help accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

The pandemic has pushed development stakeholders to make full use of ICT for communication. This could be optimized to find innovative ways to track progress of implementation, with greater participation of those involved in the issue or action. But beyond the availability and access to technologies, it is imperative that there is recognition of the role of civil society and rural peoples' organizations, and social movements and commitment to capacitate to be able to benefit from access and use of ICT, which is key to democratizing spaces for participation. Digitalization should ensure inclusive access to technologies and skill development, and avoid exclusion and narrow the digital divide between rural and urban areas and between men and women.

3. What are promising strategies to accelerate action (by UN and partners) and to mobilize other stakeholders to advance implementation?

An imperative to sustainable development is the active participation of local people through organized action and their linking with processes at national and global levels. Corollary to this is the presence of legal frameworks and political will to allow people to organize themselves and carry out actions according to their plans. Organizing includes investment in human development, which is key to the acceleration of SDG implementation. Inclusive and effective partnerships with local authorities and associations, and national government agencies and partners are foundation to the localization of SDGs. Territorial and ecosystem-based development will facilitate rural transformation, strengthening the interconnectivity of rural-urban communities, where dynamic interactions through people and their activities along the urban, peri-urban and rural areas take place, and where associations of small-scale farmers, cooperatives, and rural women could take lead role in the development of their communities. Strong partnerships across sectors and stakeholders at different levels shall serve as antidote to Covid19 and booster to SDG 2030.

The UN Decade for Family Farming (UNDIFF, 2019-2028) has developed a global action plan aimed to accelerate actions undertaken in a collective, coherent and comprehensive manner to support family farmers. It has seven pillars of action that correlates with various SDGs and targets e.g. developing enabling policy environment on family farming based on inclusive and effective governance processes, gender integration, rural youth, climate resiliency, and the strengthening of family farmers' organizations. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other rural peoples organizations (UNDROP) shall be popularized to help raise awareness about peasant situation, advocacies, and actions. International policy coordination and coherence at the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and other relevant UN bodies is essential to keep track on the implementation of CFS instruments (voluntary guidelines, etc) at national level, recognizing the role of its CSO partners in the monitoring of implementation.

More important is the upcoming UN Food System Summit (FSS) that if done in most responsive way, could bring about commitments that will boost SDG 2 and other related goals. Action Track 1 will work to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and agro-ecology as a cross-cutting theme for all tracks. SDG2 requires that all people at all times have access to sufficient quantities of affordable and safe food products. There is a need to shift to a food system that not only raises productivity and incomes, but also protects the environment, increases soil health, biodiversity, resiliency, and adaptation while mitigating climate change, strengthens health and immunity to diseases, provide access, make available and affordable health and nutritious food, while reducing food waste, and eliminating hunger and poverty, and that links the rural and urban populations, the farmers and consumers, in a web of life that is interconnected and interdependent. The FSS should support the follow up and review of the FSS results at the regional and sub-regional level, where there could be greater incentives to participate, being closer to the action arena.

Private businesses have to be made more accountable for their impact on sustainable development which requires regulation and the extensive implementation of ex-ante evaluation of human rights, social, environmental and gender equality impacts, and operating in alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. The CFS instrument on Responsible Agriculture Investments (RAI), which is now being rolled out in some regions, could complement this.

4. How would one monitor action for implementing these?

The VNR is an important process that should be strengthened, with more investment in building capacities of CSOs in organizing VNRs and in building trust and confidence among SDG stakeholders. As reported by UNESCAP, more data are becoming available as countries prioritize SDG monitoring. Nearly half of all the SDG indicators now have enough data for tracking progress toward the goals in the AsiaPacific region.

Continue and strengthen role of CSOs and grassroots organizations at the national and local level to hold their governments accountable, address any failures in progress to achieve the goals and targets, and ensure that the people's transformative development agenda is not subsumed under the expansive work of monitoring the SDGs. Grassroots SDG registry that will focus on local initiatives in relation the SDG2 and interlinked SDGs could be explored, to supplement available data at the national and international levels.