

Action Track Discussion Starter

Action Track 4 – Advance Equitable Livelihoods and Value Distribution

1. The problem: Inequality and power imbalances – at household, community, national and global levels – are consistently constraining the ability of food systems to deliver poverty reduction and sustainable, equitable livelihoods.

About 80% of the world's extremely poor people reside in rural areas and most rely, at least in

Other social and economic inequalities, such as in access to employment opportunities, also increase vulnerability and cause political instability.^[ii] For instance, there is overwhelming evidence that gender-based discrimination, or the denial of women's human rights, is one of the major causes of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity (cross ref to AT1).^{[iii],[iv]} Though technical, political, financial and other challenges to gender equality are complex, evidence illustrates that social norms and structural barriers are primary barriers to the advancement of gender equality within food systems.

Discriminatory social norms, practices and roles shape the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work; limit women's access to productive resources (such as land) and markets; underpin unequal bargaining positions and the gendered division of labor within households that results both in time poverty and malnutrition for women^[v] and; marginalize women from decision-making spheres at all levels.^{[vi],[vii]} Women and girls are just one of several groups whose livelihoods are impacted by inequity in food systems. Youth and indigenous peoples also face significant socially constructed and structural barriers. Intersectional vulnerability, which recognizes that individuals or communities often face compound discrimination based on multiple and intersecting identity factors, (such as ethnicity, gender, age, physical ability) is a challenge that requires more research and better practical and policy responses.

The denial of rights and entitlements, through formal and informal institutions and laws, is central to the problem of inequity in livelihoods within food systems. The widespread and systematic institutional discrimination and bias against marginalized groups in access to assets, services and information, can thus be attributed to the related challenges of harmful socio-cultural norms and practices

Finally, the shift involves transforming structures, including confronting social norms and practices that are embedded in structures that systematically privilege some groups over others, marginalizing the poor, who often work in crop and livestock production and food value chains. We must confront the structural barriers within institutions and policies, with the aim of achieving lasting change so that food systems can lead to equitable, sustainable livelihoods, rather than just temporary or seasonal increases in opportunities. Within food systems, this transformation means adjustments to regimes that regulate access to, use of and control over resources, especially those defining land distribution, labor division and decision-making power.

Central to advancing equitable livelihoods in food systems are the nearly 500 million small-scale food producers who often work in fragile and vulnerable terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Their production choices, technologies, natural resource management, and market links to value chains determine not only the sustainability and resilience of their livelihoods and their capacity to overcome poverty and food insecurity, but also the diversity of food that will be available to their communities and to consumers and the prices they will pay. Equally, the choices made by consumers and the processors, wholesalers and retailers who supply them with food, affects the oppo(t)-4(2r)-3(es)F3 11.04 Tf1 0 0 ayfqp4(r)-3(ary4(f)l)5(i)5(on)3()-4(sm)-3(al)θ] T#TQ

institutions and organizations cooperate towards responsible investment in agri-food value chains.

Barriers that hamper access to financing for the private sector also need to be addressed. Increasing investment and access to finance is critical to achieve rural transformation, especially for small-scale food producers

the capacity of institutions and communities to implement them are adequate. Ensuring that international convention and treaty obligations related to equity and rights are enshrined in national legal frameworks and that mechanisms for application of the law or dispute settlement are functioning, accountable and accessible to marginalized groups.

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References

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[iii] WFP, 2020, The power of gender equality for food security: Closing another gender data gap with a new quantitative measure

[iv] Chopra, D., and Zambelli, E., 2017, No Time to Rest: Women's Lived Experiences of Balancing Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work

[v] CFS, 2017, Forum on Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition

[vi] De Schutter, O., 2012, Women's rights and the right to food, UN Human Rights Council