



INSIGHTS SUMMARY

HOW CAN WE CREATE FOOD SECURITY AND ENSURE STRONG FARMER LIVELIHOODS?

FARMER-CENTRED FOOD SECURITY / ONLINE WRITTEN DISCUSSION / 25 OCT 2023

WITH THANKS TO OUR EXPERT PANEL – we are very grateful to each member of the panel and to other members of the Business Fights Poverty community for their contributions:

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Moderator: Katie Hyson, Director, Thought Leadership & COO, **Business Fights Poverty**

The climate crisis is having severe consequences for the production of food crops, threatening both global food security and individual farmers' livelihoods. More than ever, putting farmers at the centre of food security is imperative for both humanitarian and economic reasons.

Despite producing enough food to feed 1.5 times the current global population, a staggering 800 million people go hungry, with women constituting 60% of this demographic. Moreover, one-third of the global population suffers from nutrient deficiencies, indicating that quantity does not necessarily translate to quality in food distribution.

The majority of our food production comes from smallholdings, with 84% of farms falling into this category. Farmers are custodians of much of our land and have generational knowledge of what works – and yet the average income per day of a smallholder farmer is just £1.50. This stark reality underscores the need for a farmer-centric approach.

This Insights Summary is developed from the Business Fights Poverty [Forum Discussion which took place here](#) on 25 October 2023. The aim was to bring together leading thinking and best practice on how business can help accelerate progress on farmer-centred food security. We are grateful to all who contributed.

During the discussion, four key areas were discussed. Each of these has been summarised. Please refer to the full written conversation for nuances and background.

A FARMER-FIRST APPROACH TO FOOD SECURITY

The current global food security challenge necessitates a paradigm shift towards a farmer-first approach. Historically, food security strategies have often overlooked the critical role of farmers, particularly those in hard-to-reach and marginalised groups. This report examines the immense benefits of placing farmers at the centre of food security decision-making, emphasising the need for inclusive and gender-sensitive policies.

KEY INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES

STRENGTHEN LOCAL FOOD ECONOMIES

- Advocate for policies supporting local sourcing in food programmes and create market opportunities for smallholder farmers, enhancing regional food security and economic growth.

EMPOWER FARMERS AS DECISION-MAKERS

- Develop strategies that respect farmers' local expertise, enabling informed decision-making on practices to build resilience and adaptability.

INVEST IN SUPPORT STRUCTURES

- Provide farmers with access to quality training and real-time data.
- Enable farmers to be central in decision-making processes.

PRIORITISE GENDER AND EQUALITY IN FARMING

- Implement gender-sensitive policies ensuring women's land tenure and access to agricultural resources.
- Fully integrate women, young people and those of marginalised groups in agricultural productivity and decision-making to mitigate gender disparities.

INTEGRATE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL EXPERTISE

- Collaborate with local communities to infuse indigenous knowledge into agricultural initiatives, enhancing project relevance and effectiveness.

DEVELOPING FOOD SECURITY THROUGH CLIMATE-RESILIENT AND SHOCK-RESISTANT FARMING PRACTICES

The global food security landscape faces unprecedented threats from various sources such as conflicts, contagious diseases and climate change-induced extreme weather events. These challenges underscore the urgent need for enhanced resilience in agricultural practices, particularly for smallholder farmers who are most vulnerable to these shocks.

KEY INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES

ACCELERATE CLIMATE- RESILIENT FARMING

- Implementing climate-smart agriculture is vital for enhancing smallholder farmers' resilience and productivity.
- This involves adopting practices that improve soil health, water conservation and overall climate resilience, thus supporting sustainable community-level food supplies.

INCENTIVISE SUSTAINABLE AND DIVERSE FARMING

- Shifting agricultural policies towards regenerative practices creates diversity in farming products, increasing resilience to shocks.
- Encouraging methods that promote biodiversity and reduce carbon footprints, while aligning with local climatic and environmental conditions, is crucial.

PROMOTE AGROECOLOGICAL PRACTICES

- Transitioning to regenerative and agroecological farming systems minimises reliance on external inputs, improves soil health, increases biodiversity and enhances resilience to climate change and market volatility.

EMPOWER FARMERS WITH WEATHER AND MARKET DATA

- Ensuring farmers have access to information technology is key for informed decision-making.
- This encompasses knowledge about weather, markets, transportation and other factors, coupled with necessary training for effective utilisation.

FOSTER LOCALISED CLIMATE-SMART PRACTICES AND INNOVATION

- Implementing and scaling Climate-Smart Agriculture tailored to local contexts is essential.
- Innovative strategies, like rent-to-own schemes for essential farming equipment, can empower smallholder farmers – especially women, reducing post-harvest losses and enhancing sustainability.

ENHANCING FINANCIAL AND MARKET ACCESS FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

Addressing the financial and market access challenges of smallholder farmers, particularly women, requires a multifaceted approach involving fair wages, inclusive financial services, resilience to shocks, policy support and cooperative structures. By implementing these strategies, we can enhance the financial stability and agricultural productivity of smallholder farmers, contributing to sustainable agricultural practices and improved livelihoods.

KEY INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES

FAIR COMPENSATION AND MARKET CONNECTIVITY

- It is crucial to ensure smallholder farmers, especially women, receive fair compensation for their products.
- This involves not only fair pricing but also facilitating their access to both local and global markets.
- Enhancing market connectivity enables farmers to tap into premium pricing opportunities and increases consumer awareness of sustainable agriculture.

DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE FINANCIAL SERVICES

- Expansion of financial services tailored to the unique needs of rural communities, particularly women farmers, is essential.
- Inclusive financial mechanisms should address traditional barriers, such as high collateral requirements, and provide fair interest rates.

SHOCK-RESILIENT FINANCE

- Strengthening farmers' resilience to shocks, particularly climate-induced risks, is vital.

- This can be achieved through financial support mechanisms like parametric insurance and credit facilities, which are specifically tailored to the challenges faced by smallholder farmers.

EXPAND ACCESS TO INSURANCE SERVICES

- Ensuring that farmers have improved access to a broad range of insurance and micro-insurance products is necessary to mitigate risks and adapt to changing climate conditions.
- This includes developing innovative instruments like parametric insurance and working with state insurance as well as private providers.

POLICY, PUBLIC AND COOPERATIVE SUPPORT

- Collaborating with policymakers, donors, development banks and others to expand financing options and facilitate the use of moveable collateral can provide more inclusive support for small-scale farmers.
- Additionally, assisting farmers with integrating into markets through cooperative structures and partnerships ensures equitable distribution of resources and safeguards against marginalising practices.

IMPROVING SMALLHOLDER FARMER OUTCOMES THROUGH POLICY AND PUBLIC SUPPORT

Smallholder farmers face considerable barriers to increasing yields, accessing markets and developing their incomes, due to insufficient policy, regulatory frameworks and inadequate public support. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving their economic viability and sustainability.

KEY INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES

REGULATORY AND POLICY REFORM

- Strengthening regulatory oversight and creating farmer-supportive policy frameworks are essential.
- This involves comprehensive disclosure requirements for commodity traders to improve market transparency, and also implementing governance measures to mitigate harmful practices in agricultural supply and value chains.

SMALLHOLDER MARKET ACCESS AND INCLUSIVE REGULATION

- Promoting market integration and access for smallholder farmers through smallholder-focused regulation that is inclusive is vital.
- This ensures stable demand for agroecologically produced goods and removes barriers, whilst reassuring buyers of traceability limitations.

DIVERSIFIED REGULATION SURROUNDING AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

- Encouraging crop diversification and livestock integration offers multiple income streams.
- Regulation supporting local markets and value chains for these products enhances economic viability and food security.

SUBSIDIES AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ADOPTION OF CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

- Public-supported barrier reduction to implementing climate-smart techniques, such as rainwater harvesting and drought-resistant crops, is crucial in the face of climate change.
- These practices not only secure food production but also lead to better environmental outcomes.

DATA-DRIVEN AND COMMUNITY-CENTRIC APPROACHES

- Expanding research on the socio-economic and environmental impacts of agriculture, with a focus on women farmers, is key.
- Strengthening community and market linkages through partnerships for regenerative and organic agriculture can significantly enhance productivity and income opportunities.

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