

28th Session of the Committee on Agriculture

Item 2.6: Promoting more coherent and integrated Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) by strengthening national agricultural research and extension systems

National agricultural research systems (NARS) and extension and advisory services (EAS) are vital to unlock the potential of agricultural innovation and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, these systems are constantly weakened by limited investment, inadequate functional and technical capacities, institutional fragmentation and insufficient coordination among pluralistic research and extension systems. The problem is further aggravated by weak linkages between agricultural research, extension and education, and by a lack of engagement of agricultural producers, their organizations, and policy- and decision-making authorities in the development and sharing of knowledge and innovation. Failure to promote coherent and integrated approaches to NARS and EAS, and make them more relevant to address emerging issues in a changing institutional landscape, may result in the continued stagnation of innovation and obstruct the scaling up of innovative solutions to achieve the SDGs.

Strengthening NARS for agricultural research for development (AR4D) and EAS for improved access to innovations by smallholder producers requires a more coherent and integrated agricultural innovation system (AIS) approach (also referred to as agricultural knowledge and innovation systems or AKIS) to promote efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.

Efforts to strengthen NARS and EAS should start with updating policies and strategies taking into consideration needs for capacity development, institutional coordination, digitalization, infrastructure development, knowledge management, monitoring and learning at national, regional and global levels. Reorienting NARS and EAS can involve shifting their paradigm from a focus on agricultural production to a broader set of services covering value addition, market linkages, nutrition, and addressing global challenges such as climate change. The new paradigm could include a change in services from the transfer of technologies to the promotion of co-creation and learning, increasing capacities to innovate, and improving access to innovation and information. The efforts in promoting this new paradigm is closely aligned to the scope, guiding principles and outcomes of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy and work of the Office of Innovation.

The Committee is invited to:

- *encourage* Members to review and assess NARS and EAS and update relevant policies, plans and strategies to promote more coherent and integrated AIS, and increase investments in research and extension;
- *encourage* Members to participate in global and regional initiatives to review and assess NARS and EAS, strengthen their functional capacities to promote the co-creation of innovation for resilient and sustainable agrifood systems; and
- *provide* guidance for the development and promotion of multistakeholder coordination mechanisms, including research and innovation platforms and hubs subject to available resources, with the participation of AIS actors at local, national and regional levels to improve the exchange of knowledge, capacity development, co-learning and partnerships.

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