Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FAO e-conference on "The Role of Small Farms Within a Larger Context of Food Security": A Synthesis

Executive Summary

Between 19 March and 9 April 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) hosted a moderated e-mail conference on behalf of the EU-funded 'Small Farms, Small Food Businesses and Sustainable Food Security' project – SALSA.

This was the second e-conference of the SALSA project and focused on The Role of Small Farms Within a Larger Context of Food Security. A short Background Document was distributed to participants before the e-conference to help guide and contextualize the discussions. The intent was to provide further feedback on what has been learned so far from the work in the SALSA project, and to identify key knowledge gaps as well as to share examples that will contribute to build the SALSA empirical base.

A total of 855 people subscribed to the e-conference. The 124 unique contributors responded to specific questions under six overarching topics. Participants shared specific examples and lessons from their own work, experience or region, as well as engaging with each other, posting and responding to their own related questions.

In Topic 1 (Cooperation among small farms), forms of both informal and formal cooperation were discussed. The benefits, challenges and innovations of formal cooperation resulted in a lively conversation. The economic and social benefits of cooperation were consistently recognized; however, many challenges were also pointed out. These factors, including poor leadership and governance; inadequate communication and transparency, and insufficient or misplaced technical and/or financial support all pointed to a major constraint being lack of trust and hence unsuccessful cooperative initiatives. Innovations to overcome these challenges were suggested and demonstrate that cooperation among small farms is possible, and successful, under the right conditions.

The second topic explored the idea on how small farms contribute to the resilience of the food system. Participants shared examples of where the diverse range of products produced by small farms and informal distribution systems have been significant contributors to the resilience of the food system.

Topic 3 and 4 were grouped together as it dealt with current, and future, challenges faced by small farms and the strategies used to overcome the challenges. The two most critical challenges, both now and in the future were (i) access to good markets, and (ii) supply of inputs (seeds, fertilizer, labour, land, energy). Other key challenges were fluctuations in markets (including the absence of a guarantee in pricing); access to technology (including post harvest) and knowledge/skills (including 'soft skills'); financing, and climate change. It was interesting to note that development of formal, well-functioning cooperation (producer associations as an example), was consistently raised as one way for small farms to meet the challenges.

In Topic 5, the importance of food businesses to small farms was explored. It was universally acknowledged that (local) food businesses were beneficial to small farms, and important to the food

system both economically (sales, employment) but also socially in increasing knowledge, strengthening community activities, and improving food security and nutrition.

The SALSA project is particularly interested in policy measures that can improve the contribution of small farms to making the food system more resilient, and to meeting food security challenges (Topic 6). Most of the contributions focused on national policies both beneficial and detrimental to small farms. The responses to the questions in this topic all pointed to the fact that policies are pivotal to small farms. Contributors were generous in suggesting what policy actions are required to support small farm development and their role in increasing food security and improved nutrition.

The results, both from the original emails and from the synthesis of the e-conference, are directly relevant to the SALSA project and will be used to shape further discussions and empirical analyses. Diverse means to engage with SALSA are included in Part IV of this paper.

Part I: Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

Over three weeks in March and April 2018, FAO hosted the second e-conference for the EU-funded Horizon 2020 research project "Small Farms, Small Food Businesses and Sustainable Food Security" – SALSA. The SALSA project is coalition of 16 European and African partners collaborating in assessing the role of small farms and small food businesses in delivering a sustainable and secure supply of affordable, nutritious and culturally adequate food. The project aims to provide a better understanding of the current and potential contribution of small farms and food businesses to sustainable food security and improved nutrition.

The four-year SALSA project began in April 2016. The project partners have adopted a novel, transdisciplinary, multi-scale approach across 30 regions in Europe and Africa that builds on, and connects, relevant theoretical and analytic frameworks within a food systems framework. Using this perspective, the project is looking beyond production capacity, and investigating food security in terms of the availability of nutritious and safe food, food access and control (including affordability), food utilisation, and food stability.

1.2 Background of the e-conference and its aims

SALSA is paying particular attention to effectively fostering stakeholder involvement, knowledge exchange and joint learning at local, regional, national and international levels. To raise awareness of the issues of small farms, small farm businesses and food security and improved nutrition requires joint knowledge-sharing and learning. SALSA has taken a reflective research approach and the use of feedback loops with national and international stakeholder groups. Among several communication channels (SALSA website and Twitter account, FAO's TECA platform, European and African platforms, workshops, and other events), SALSA is using e-conferences as a key strategy to engage stakeholders in dialogue and information sharing.

FAO hosted the first SALSA e-conference on "Exploring the contribution of small farms to achieving food security and improved nutrition" in October 2016. In March and April 2018, FAO hosted the second SALSA e-conference on "The Role of Small Farms Within a Larger Context of Food Security". The conference was intended to focus the attention of researchers, educators and a wide spectrum of food chain/food system actors and entrepreneurs, as well as policy makers and administrators at multiple levels, on the role of small farms within a larger context of food security. A short Background Document was distributed to participants to provide information to help guide and contextualize the discussions.

Six overarching topics were covered in this e-conference, each with specific questions posed for discussion. The intent was to provide further feedback on what has been learned so far from the work in the SALSA project, and to identify key knowledge gaps as well as to share examples that will contribute to build the SALSA empirical base. Participants were encouraged to discuss specific examples from their own work, experience or region, as well as any lessons learned.

This document represents a synthesis of the second e-conference email discussions over the three-week period 19 March to 9 April 2018.

1.3 E-conference logistics and statistics

A total of 855 people subscribed to the e-conference, with 124 unique contributors of whom 54% submitted more than one input message, answering one or more of the topic questions. There were 294 input email messages which were distributed to the conference participants via 73 aggregation emails posted daily. Weekly summaries of the discussions were posted to all participants to recap main points and stimulate further dialogue. There were an additional 545 support emails (registrations and questions) processed.

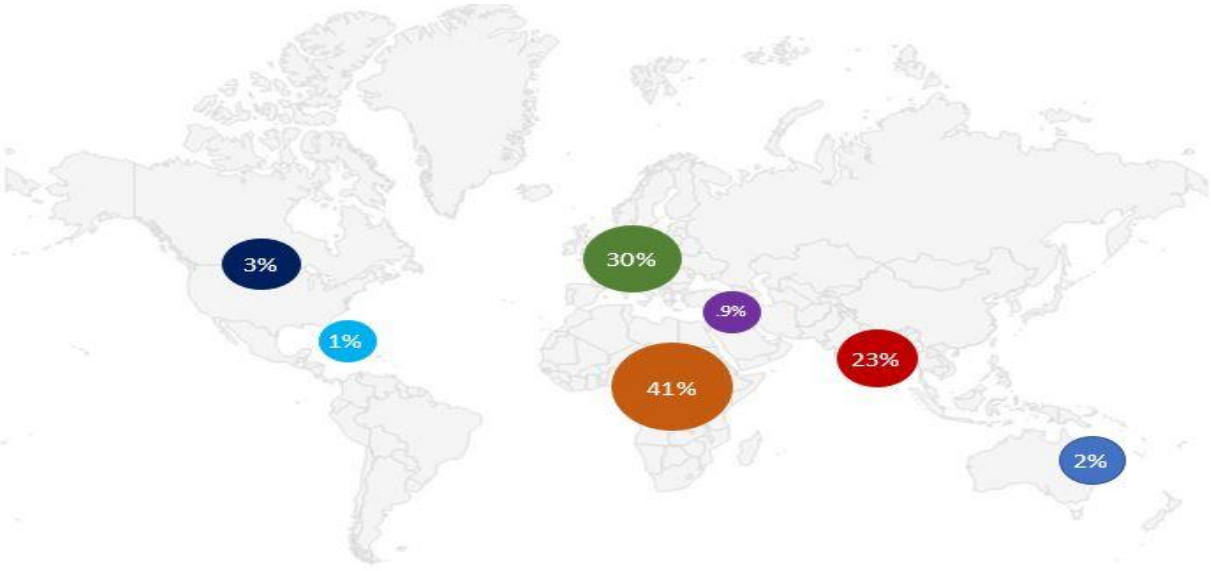

Figure 1: Regional distribution of e-conference contributions

In the messages to the e-conference, participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves. Based on this, the organizers have been able to analyse the geographic diversity of the contributors.
The majority (65%) were posted by people in developing countries.

Of the 124 contributors, 41% were people living in Africa (West Africa 20%, East Africa 16%, Southern Africa 3% and North Africa 2%); 30% from Europe; 23% from Asia; 3% from North America; 2% from Oceania; 1% from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 0.9% from the Middle East region (Figure 1).

The messages came from people living in 47 different countries. The greatest number came from India (53 messages), Nigeria and Ghana (each 23 messages) and Italy (21 messages).

Contributions also came from a wide range of work environments (Figure 2). Of the 124 contributors, just over half were from people working in research, education and advisory services. Almost one quarter (22%) were from civil society and NGOs and the remainder from small farms/small farm businesses (8%), the general public (8%), other food chain actors such as cooperatives, retailers, input providers, processors, caterers etc. (8%) and a few policy-makers/administrators.

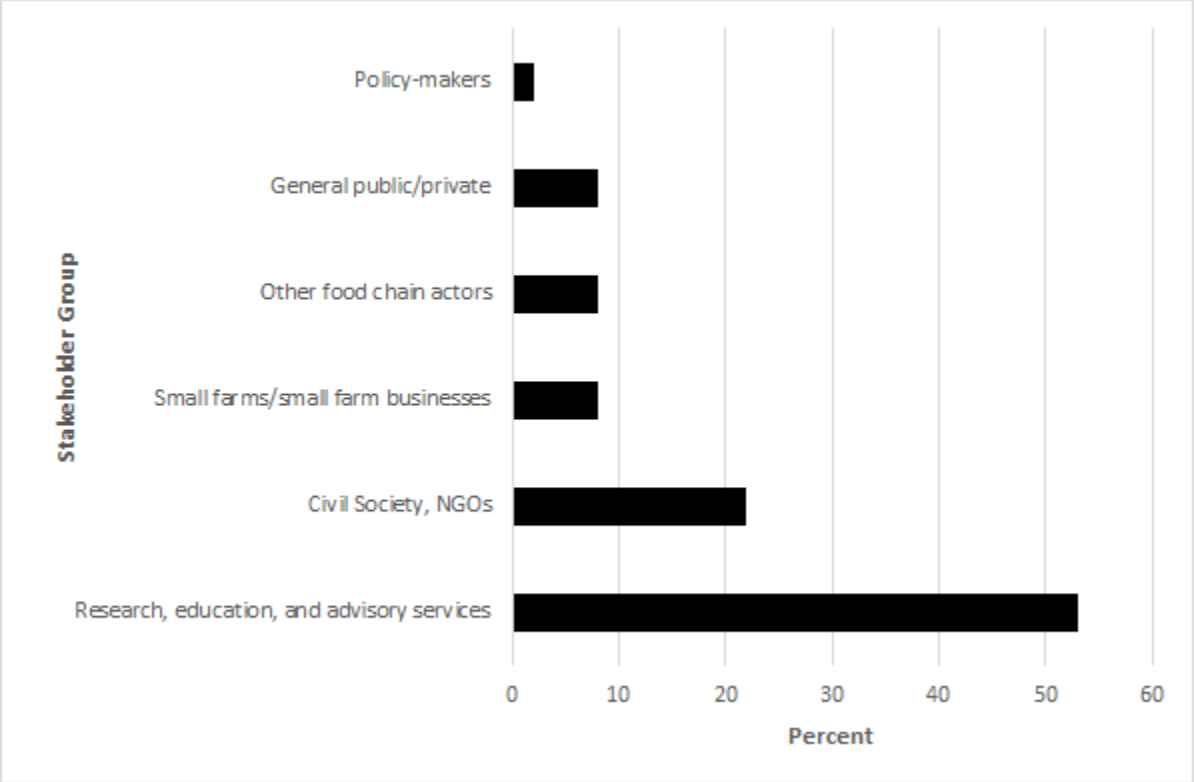

Figure 2: Stakeholder distribution

The participants not only responded to the questions posed in the e-conference but also engaged with each other, posing and responding to their own related questions. Participants (n=167) in a post e-

conference survey unanimously agreed that the e-conference was enjoyable, useful, and had been an opportunity to learn from each other.

Part II: Summary of the topics and questions in the e-conference

2.1 Main topics and questions discussed in the e-conference

The six topics in the e-conference all represented areas of investigation in the SALSA project. The context for each of these topics was described in the e-conference Background Paper. The e-conference invited participants from around the world to share and discuss their experiences, lessons learned and perspectives on specific questions arising from the six topics (further elaborated on in Part III):

Topic #1: Cooperation among small farms
Topic #2: Small farms' contribution to the resilience of the food system
Topic #3: Strategies used by small farms to overcome challenges – a view of the past
Topic #4: How small farms address future challenges
Topic #5: The importance of food businesses to small farms
Topic #6: How can policies affect small farm activities and their resilience

2.2 How to source the original input messages

For readers wishing to consult the 294 original input messages, these can be found at the following link: http://www.fao.org/3/BU620EN/bu620en.pdf. The contributions are grouped by topic. Alternatively, they are available at the FAO Small Farms listserv, with a free text search button on the right hand side of the webpage. The original messages can also be viewed in chronological order by month – March and April.

Some of the aggregated messages are referred to in this document, where the number of the aggregated message is provided within brackets after the contributor's surname. All the messages posted during the e-conference can be read in their entirety using the web links provided above.

Part III: Summary of input from the discussion questions

Topic 1: Cooperation among small farms

Cooperation is common practice among farmers. It occurs in a variety of ways, ranging from informal collaboration with relatives and neighbours at times of high workload, to farmer associations where farmers purchase inputs, process and/or market their products together. Cooperation among small farms has demonstrated manifold benefits. However, with more industrialised and commercial farming and an increasing importance of vertical cooperation, the models of cooperation among small farms face challenges. The SALSA project is looking at how small farms can adapt, and prosper, thereby paying particular attention to the potential of different forms of cooperation and possible innovations.

In this topic, participants were asked to share their experiences against four questions:

1.1. What are different experiences of small farms' cooperation in other regions? How has this changed over the past 10 years?
1.2. Could you provide specific examples of the advantages and/or disadvantages of cooperation among small farms?
1.3. Are there any forms of collaboration between small farms that work particularly well? Why? How does the size of the farm affect cooperation?
1.4. In what way does gender influence cooperation among small farms? Please share experiences from your region.

Informal cooperation

Much of the input on this topic focused on the different forms of cooperation among small farms – both informal and formal. There were numerous examples of informal cooperation that tap into kinship ties, family and friends for mutual support (Q1.1/1, Q1.1/2, Q1.1/3, Q1.1/4, Q1.1/5, Q1.2/5, Q1.3/1). This support takes the form of shared labour but also includes sharing of machinery, crops and seeds, information, input costs, financial support, management of natural resources and exchange of products (Q1.1/2, Q1.1/7, Q1.2/2, Q1.3/2). In addition, informal cooperation contributes to the farmers' social status (Q1.2/5)

It was felt that informal cooperation has weakened (Q1.1/2, Q1.1/3, Q1.1/4, Q1.2/5, Q1.3/1) and increasingly, small farms are coming together in more formal cooperation arrangements.

Formal cooperation

Several different styles of formal cooperation were raised in the e-conference. Cooperatives, farmer interest groups, self-help groups, societies, farmer producer organizations, unions, agri-business clusters, Community Supported Agriculture are all examples of formal cooperation provided by the participants (Q1.1/2, Q1.1/1, Q1.1/15, Q1.2/3).

<u>Benefits</u>

Economies of scale and scope are stated as a key benefit of formal cooperation among small farms. The strength in numbers and a greater voice of "an organization" (as opposed to an individual) has facilitated better deals on inputs, marketing, training/extension, machinery, infrastructure support, post-harvest storage, and greater employment (Q1.1/1, Q1.1/2, Q1.1/5, Q1.2/3, Q1.3/2, Q1.3.10). There have been contributions where formal cooperation among small farms has helped to defend the interests of farmers allowing for negotiation that can influence markets, credit, and prices (Q1.1/1, Q1.1/4, Q.1/5, Q.1/6, Q1.2/3, Q1.2/4, Q1.2/5, Q1.3/3, Q2.1/7).

In the example of the apple production system in South Tyrol (north-east Italy), the creation of the cooperative by the farmers themselves, finding the external support they required, and controlling the governance, were factors that led to their success (Q1.2/6 and Q1.3/6). The Mango Foundation in Bangladesh (Q1.2/8) pointed to local leadership, increasing farmer technical knowledge, providing market space and storage, as success factors in small farm collaboration. The effectiveness of the value chain approach was also mentioned (Q1.2/9, Q1.2/7). Five possible scenarios for forms of collaboration

for India were provided (Q1.3/7), all of which point to new types of partnerships and the skills required by farmers to collaborate effectively.

Another benefit noted was that cooperatives speed up innovation amongst smallholder farmers (Q1.3/3). In the example from the South Tyrol, the farmers had experience in cooperatives previously, however a key element in their success was the innovation and the evolving nature of their cooperative so that "*farmers participating could benefit immediately and see long-term advantages to the collaboration*". Innovation, as a critical success factor, was also mentioned in Q1.1/7 and Q1.3/3.

Collective organizations are also important for farmers' social networking, meeting fellow farmers and mutual moral support (Q1.2/5, Q1.3/2) and can lead to cooperation between producers and local social movements (Q1.1/7). Expanding from this, it was also suggested that there is the possibility of producers broadening their perspective to become more and better involved in the local rural development activities (Q1.2/2) from cooperation.

Challenges

The contributions also pointed out that formal cooperation doesn't always work well. Weak organizational structure in the cooperation or personal ambition in the management, corruption, unrealistic expectations, negative past experience, elite capture, "free riding", lack of monitoring and evaluation – all are factors that can lead to loss of trust – a key factor in fostering cooperation (Q1.1/2, Q1.1/3, Q1.1/12, Q1.1/13, Q1.1/15, Q1.2/3, Q1.2/5, Q1.3/2).

Other challenges in formal cooperation have resulted from the reliance on, or absence of, external technical and/or financial support; absence of quality standards and market premium, and where there has been a wide gap between policy and implementation of those policies (Q1.1/7, Q1.1/10, Q.1/11, Q1.2/5). In one contribution it was felt that formal cooperation has not nurtured an entrepreneurial mindset (Q1.1/3).

Innovations

Mechanisms to address these challenges were posed, such as (i) ensuring thorough explanation so that all actors fell they 'own' the initiative (Q1.1/12, Q1.1/14); (ii) having a well-respected champion for the collaborative activities (Q1.1/14), (iii) having trust in external agents (Q2.1/12 and Q1.1/13), and (iv) addressing illiteracy and other forms of education for farmers (Q1.1/14, Q4.1/5, Q4.2/10). Groups which the farmers form themselves seem to be more sustainable (Q1.1/12) and having a focus of activity and an organizing agent for the cooperative activity (Q1.1/14) was also recommended.

An important function for success was ensuring that formal cooperation had appropriate 'soft skills' (Q1.1/6) to foster collaboration. This certainly seemed to be a wide-spread phenomenon and confirmation of this as an issue, was raised in many contributions. The Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems (CDAIS) was cited as a project that specifically deals with soft skill development (Q1.1/8, Q1.1/15). The use of 'soft skills' was noted as being equally important for

professionals working with farmers (Q1.1/7). The Field Schools Knowledge Hub that the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services is hosting and nurturing, was provided as another example (Q4.2/7).

The final question in this topic explored how gender could influence cooperation among small farms. The input was uniformly consistent that gender can positively influence cooperation. The important role of women in small farms and in some case the very differentiated role they play was noted (Q1.4/2). These roles contribute greatly to the food security of families. In a contribution from Pakistan, it was stated that when women are involved in small farm cooperation, the benefits include better organization, better utilization of funds and a focus on outcomes (Q1.4/2). Women's role in peace-building and conflict resolution was also noted (Q1.4/3). In an example from India it was stated that "where women farmers are running the show, I have seen more harmony and cooperation in the farm work" (Q1.4/2). A further experience from India indicates women are easier to train, they are more confident and engaging and facilitate greater peer-to-peer learning (Q1.4/2). There was repeated input that small farm cooperation benefits from involving and organizing women from smallholder families, but that cultural practices, religion, literacy levels and control by men all play a role in this effectiveness (Q1.4/3, Q1.4/6).

Topic 2: Small farms contribution to resilience of the food system

In the SALSA project's Conceptual Framework (2016), the idea of the food system extends beyond the production side and considers opportunities within food system activities to attain more resource efficiency and more stability. This leads to a more balanced consideration of food supply and demand within the context of actors, institutions and governance. The project also notes that the arrangements farmers develop with other farms and with other actors shape the properties of the food systems to which they are connected. Thus, the contribution of small farms to food and nutritional security can strongly depend on the way they are connected to their surrounding food systems.

Evidence to date in the SALSA project shows that small farms contribute to the resilience of the food system by providing a more diverse product range and by using a varied range of marketing channels and exchange relations.

Participants were invited to respond to three questions under this topic:

2.1. What are the ways that small farms contribute to the resilience of the food system in your region? Please provide examples.
2.2. Have small farms been more resilient compared to large farms in your region? What were the main factors that determined their resilience? Please provide examples.
2.3. What examples can you share where having more diverse product ranges and diverse channels have contributed to the resilience of small farms.

In many of the countries mentioned in the e-conference, small farms are the main producers and suppliers of agricultural products in rural areas, and so are critically important to the food resilience of

these regions. By the very nature of growing and harvesting for themselves, small farms can retain produce and contribute to their own and the local community's food security (Q2.1/5).

The input to this topic has been interesting in further exploring how, and under what conditions, small farms contribute to the resilience of the food system.

In many contributions it was cited that the diverse range of products provided by small farms is a significant contributor to resilience of the food system (Q2.1/3, Q2.1/1, Q2.1/2, Q2.2/4). The diversification has come, in some measure because of intensification (2.1/6). However, there was a caveat to the benefit of intensification and diversification. Firstly, in an example from a study in seven countries of Eastern Europe (Q2.3/5) where it was proposed that when farms are too small the product range is limited, and the income generated doesn't meet basic needs. A second case study from Greece (Q2.1/8) illustrated that intensification and mechanization have led to the vulnerability of the citrus fruit subsystem, with a flow on effect of decreased biodiversity and tacit knowledge.

Other examples of how small farms contribute to resilience included their use of easily-accessible, simpler but effective technologies; mechanization; communal water management; common storage areas; relying on local resources and resource recycling, and their flexibility to market and consumer demand (Q2.1/1, Q2.1/2, Q2.2/4, Q2.2/6).

On one hand, informal distribution of small farm products that are readily used in the local context (either by households directly or local markets) is a way that small farms contribute to the resilience of the food system (Q2.1/3, Q2.2/2, Q2.1/4). The products can also be of high value giving small farmers access to larger market systems (Q2.3/5). Yet the informality of this system also has drawbacks and can result in local authorities not collecting appropriate taxes needed to invest in appropriate social, educational and technical services (Q2.2/6).

The e-conference also surfaced challenges that hold back small farms from contributing more to the resilience of food system – competition from private traders and lack of investment (Q2.2/4) or macroeconomic policies that affect the availability of funding and labour for small farms (Q2.1/8).

There were a couple of contributions where it seems that, in some regions, small farms are more resilient than large farms due to their greater adaptability to change and their diverse product range (Q2.2/2, Q2.3/1). In an example from Ukraine (Q2.1/7) small farms treat the natural environment better than large 'corporate holdings' as the latter tend to maximise the use of the land and environment for profit rather than environmental considerations.

Topics 3 and 4: Strategies used by small farms to overcome challenges – a view of the past and looking towards the future

Despite their significant contribution to food security and improved nutrition, small-scale farms all over the world face many common biophysical and socio-economic challenges that impede their ability to be resilient in the face of shocks. Noting that the challenges facing small farms will have a consequence on food production and food systems, the SALSA project is interested to learn not only the challenges currently being faced by small farms (Topic 3) but also views on future challenges (Topic 4).

In this topic area, participants gave their input on the following questions:

3.1. Identify the three main challenges which small farms, in your region, have faced in the recent past.
3.2. Share specific examples of what types of adaptations and innovations have helped small farms to cope with these challenges.
4.1. Within your region, what are the three main challenges that small farms face in the future? Why? Are these different from past challenges? If so, why?
4.2. To cope with these future challenges, do small farms require new innovations and adaptation techniques? And if so, which?

Across the 92 responses to the question on the key challenges faced by small farms now and in the future (Q3.1 and Q4.1), there was consistency in the top two identified (see Figure 2).

Access to good markets and pricing, and supply of inputs (seeds, fertilizer, labour, land, energy) were both considered to be the most critical challenges facing small farms both now and for the future. Currently, the third key challenge is fluctuations in markets (including the absence of a guarantee in minimum pricing). In the future, access to technology (including post harvest) and knowledge/skills (including 'soft skills') have been identified as key challenges. Ranking quite high in the current challenges was (i) access to technology, (ii) financing, (iii) lack or absence of education/skills/advice (including 'soft skills') and (iv) climate change.

It was interesting to note that development of formal, well-functioning cooperation (cooperatives as an example), was one way for small farms to meet the challenges (Q3.2/1, Q3.2/3, Q4.2/4, Q4.2/10). As pointed out, human relationships play an important role in the success of cooperative activities (Q4.2/5) and can be challenging to overcome (Q4.2/6, Q4.2/7). Trust (as noted in Topic 1) is an essential factor and this can differ when the cooperation is in very rural areas, where there are existing relationships, as opposed to urban areas, where producers can come from different backgrounds and have differing levels of knowledge. Concentrating on the benefits of collaboration, purposefully working on it and having good communication (Q4.2/7, Q4.2/2) are significant contributors.

The success story of Fadama (in Nigeria) was provided – an initiative that brings farmers together to facilitate government support and to learn from each other (Q4.2/6). A similar concept is 'Productive Alliances' (Q4.2/6), a model that facilitates the participation and interactions of producers, buyers and

public institutions (Q4.2/11). This concept has been adopted by 21 projects in 10 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Some very practical case studies were provided to demonstrate how to address the challenges identified. There was the example of "Social Modified Crops in Africa" (Q4.2/3) and sustainable intensification (Q4.1/1) to address food insecurity and environmental degradation; using native bees as pollinators and to produce honey (Q4.2/3); weather warning systems (Q4.2/11) to help small farms to adapt to climate change; more emphasis and reliance on farmer knowledge, training (on climate change agriculture) and practical on-farm demonstrations to help meet the challenges in knowledge and building capacity; tapping into certification schemes (Q4.2/10, Q3.2/4), revival of local markets (Q3.2/6) and using tourism (Q3.2/3) to improve access to markets.

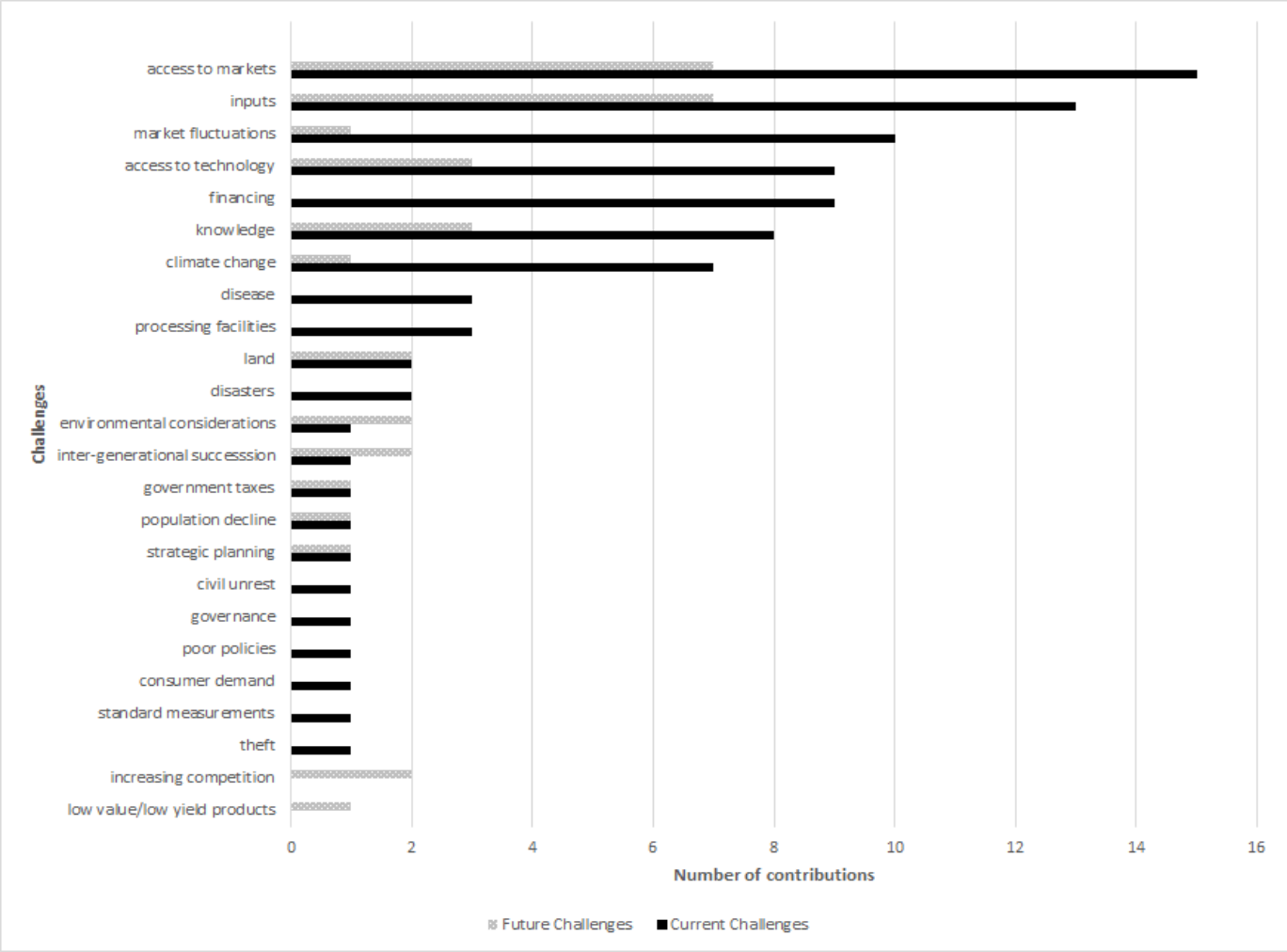

Figure 3: Current and Future Challenges to Small Farms

An example of addressing the challenge of food storage shared in the e-conference was the Purdue Improved Crop Storage (and microloans) project funded by USAID and being implemented in sub-Saharan Africa (Q4.2/1). Successes with introducing processing plants in Tanzania (Q4.2/8) have

demonstrated an increase in small farm income, led to new crops being planted (diversity), use of improved seed adapted to local conditions and more training in new techniques. And as pointed out – it can often be equally effective to explore the transfer of concepts – not transfer of technology – to overcome the challenge of technology transfer (Q4.2/9).

Topic 5: The importance of food businesses to small farms

In the SALSA Analytical Framework (2017), food businesses are defined as processors, distributors and retailers. An interest of the project is the type of relations which these businesses have with small farms and the wider regional food systems, and the role they play in the viability and development of small farms.

The data collected so far in the SALSA project shows that the role of small food businesses in regional food systems, and their contribution towards the resilience of small farms, differs between regions and products. In some regions, these small food businesses do not exist, and therefore play no role. In other regions, it is possible to observe different types of small food businesses. Some are within or alongside the farm, where farmers sell both their own raw and processed products and products obtained from other local farmers; other small farm businesses buy products directly from farms and then process and sell them; others buy through intermediaries who have already processed farm-sourced products.

The SALSA project team were interested in receiving more information on food businesses and their relationship to small farms. They posed the following questions in the e-conference:

5.1. What kind of food businesses are important to small farms in your region? Which of these are small food businesses? Please also explain how you define small food businesses.

5.2. Do food businesses in your region play an important role within the food system? How? Please provide specific examples.

Small farm businesses were defined by some participants in the e-consultation as family-run businesses and businesses that retail processed commodities selling directly from farm to market (Q5.1/2). The concept of small farm businesses was further expanded as being 'entrepreneurships' run at the level of small scale communities and food processing enterprises (Q5.1/4). In one of the SALSA study sites in Spain, the typology of small food businesses is dependent on the product(s) produced and are differentiated by their activity – these activities are rarely carried out on farm (Q5.1/5).

The importance of food businesses has been universally acknowledged as beneficial to small farms and important to the food system. Whether these be direct sales; small roadside markets; trade in raw produce; local restaurants; engaging other actors in the value chain (millers, transport, processing); links to other markets, or providing inputs and knowledge, these businesses strengthen community activities, improve food security and improved nutrition, provide additional income and create jobs (Q5.1/4, Q5.1/3, Q5.1/5, Q5.2/2, Q5.2/3, Q5.2/4).

From the food business perspective (Q5.2/2) five key success factors in implementing a food business venture with small farms were noted - appropriate products, infrastructure, post-harvest processing, branding, and investment. The 'hub-out-grower model' used in East and Central Africa (Q5.2/2) and the 'AbinBev raw material sourcing sustainability agenda' (Q5.2/4) have demonstrated results that benefit small farms and the environment. Challenges to working with large food businesses have been expressed (Q5.1/4) where reliance on larger food businesses can affect small farms, for example through delays in payments and price fluctuations.

Topic 6: How can policies affect small farms activities and their resilience

The SALSA project is addressing the influence of policies and regulations with specific regard to small farms and small farm businesses, and their role in food security and improved nutrition. The project is particularly interested in policy measures that can improve the contribution of small farms to making the food system more resilient, and to meeting food security challenges.

Based on earlier research, and current findings from SALSA in the 10 reference regions studied so far, the project team observed that there are some policy areas that affect small farms more than others. They include policies that affect the viability and development of small farms, small farms' decision making regarding the amount and type of food produced and their ambitions regarding market integration, and policies that affect their market transactions and informal non-monetary exchanges.

Participants in the e-conference gave their views and examples on the policies affecting small farm activities and their resilience by addressing three questions:

6.1. What are the policies (international, national or local) in your region that affect the viability and development of small farms, and small farms' decision making regarding the amount and type of food produced and their ambitions regarding market integration?

6.2. Can you give specific examples of how these policies have affected small-farm decision-making?

6.3. What are the most critical policies that are needed in your region to support small farm development and increase their role in food and nutrition security in the (regional) food system?

At an international level the Millennium Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity are providing guidance for national level policies (Q6.2/1). Most of the e-conference contributions focused on national policies. For example, the Nepal Biodiversity Policy, that addresses food security; the Ghanaian Food and Agricultural Sector Development Policy (FASDEP 1 and 2) and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, Preferential Procurement Policy Framework and Cooperative Incentive Support (South Africa) (6.1/3, 6.2/1, 6.2/4) which support rural development. Other examples of policies that support small farms productivity were those that sought to reduce or eliminate subsidies, tariffs or government taxes (Q6.1/8, 6.2/6, 6.2/7); improve input quality and supply (Q6.2/2, 6.2/3), and support enterprise development (Q6.2/4).

There was a mixed reaction among participants to policies regarding contract farming. Policies that support contract farming seem to have had a positive effect in India, Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania

(Q6.1/2, Q6.1/10) as it provided small farms with greater access to inputs, extension services and markets. However, it was noted that contract farming is being seen to reduce the autonomy of small farms (6.1/2) and can fail if farms sell outside the contracts (Q6.1/10).

The e-conference also brought to light policies that are detrimental to small farms. As noted, where the policy environment exists of a large bureaucracy, small farms are often overlooked (Q6.1/2) or not innovation driven (Q6.2/2). Other examples were shared illustrating conflict between agricultural policies and conservation policies. Although in one example (Q6.1/5) it seemed beneficial where conservation policies supported tourism (farmers benefit from marketing to tourists), there were several cases where conservation policies negatively affected small farms. Examples were provided on conflicts with wildlife, loss of biodiversity, extensive application of disease control (Q6.1/4, 6.1/5, 6.1/8, Q6.1/10). One contribution from Zimbabwe (Q6.1/9) demonstrated that projects undertaking research on how small farms can work with, and benefit from, conservation can inform policy that would help overcome this conflict.

The responses to the questions in this topic all point to the fact that policies are pivotal to small farms. When posed with the challenge of identifying the most critical policies needed to support small farm development and to increase food security and improved nutrition (Q6.3), there was consensus around the following policy actions needed.

1. Support for:
    a. standardized measure, feed quality standards and fair market prices and input costs
    b. farmer-producer organisations with support of both technical and soft skills that are required by farmers in these organizations
    c. processing and post-harvest facilities
    d. new production techniques
2. Provision of low interest credit
3. Protection from imports that compete with the products produced by small farms
4. Encourage youth in farming
5. Clearer rules
6. Encourage diversity of products produced by small farms

Part IV: Conclusions and follow up from the e-conference

To raise awareness of the issues of small farms, small farm businesses, and food security and improved nutrition requires joint knowledge-sharing and learning. In its reflective research approach and the use of feedback loops with national and international stakeholder groups, the SALSA project is seeking to engage stakeholders in dialogue and information sharing.

This e-consultation, hosted by FAO, for the EU funded SALSA project is the second initiative of this nature with the aim to inform the SALSA project as it moves forward. In the project's focus on small farms and small farm businesses, it was important to better understand the different forms of cooperation that foster small farms sustainability and resilience. The e-conference results pointed out

that there are economic and social benefits of cooperation; however, there are also challenges. Factors such as poor leadership and governance; inadequate communication and transparency, and insufficient or misplaced technical and/or financial support all point to a major constraint to cooperation. These lead to lack of trust and hence unsuccessful cooperative initiatives. Innovations to overcome these challenges were suggested and demonstrate that cooperation among small farms is possible, and successful, under the right conditions.

Through the e-conference it was determined that the two most critical challenges facing small farms, both now and in the future, were (i) access to good markets, and (ii) supply of inputs (seeds, fertilizer, labour, land, energy). Notwithstanding other key challenges raised (fluctuations in markets (including the absence of a guarantee in minimum pricing); access to technology (including post-harvest) and knowledge/skills (including 'soft skills'); financing, and climate change) the e-conference noted that development of formal, well-functioning cooperation (cooperatives as an example), is one way for small farms to meet these challenges.

The e-conference confirmed the evidence to date in the SALSA project that shows small farms contribute to the resilience of the food system in particular by providing a more diverse product range and by using a varied range of marketing channels and exchange relations.

It was universally acknowledged in the e-conference that food businesses were beneficial to small farms and important to the food system both economically (sales, employment) but also socially in increasing knowledge, strengthening community activities, and improving food security and nutrition.

Policies are pivotal to small farms and those examples shared in the e-conference were both beneficial and detrimental. The e-conference exposed some critical elements for supporting policy actions including: provision of low interest credit; protection from competing imports; clearer rules, and encouraging diversity of small farm production. Furthermore, policies that support standardized measures; forming and maintaining effective farmer organisations and processing and post harvest technologies and facilities are also required.

The SALSA project covers 30 regions in Europe and Africa and has reached, through this e-conference, a global audience. Participants from 47 countries engaged with the e-conference and the SALSA team are grateful for the insights and case studies that have been presented over the course of the e-conference. The results, both from the original emails and from this synthesis, are directly relevant to the SALSA project and will be used to shape further discussions and research questions. The SALSA project plans to continue interaction with the wider stakeholder group and will be hosting a follow up webinar on 7 May 2018 for participants of the e-conference (more details to follow). Participants, and others who didn't engage with the e-consultation, are encouraged to register on the SALSA Project Communication and Learning Platform hosted on the FAO TECA platform and join in discussions posted there. To stay informed on SALSA news register on the SALSA website and follow SALSA's Twitter account.

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Appendix A: Full list of questions and responses

The full list of responses to the e-conference have been compiled. These are tabulated by question and provide the contributor's name, their country, the source aggregation email and the comment as posted in the email aggregation to all registered in the e-conference. This list of responses is included as a separate pdf document at the following link: http://www.fao.org/3/BU620EN/bu620en.pdf.

Appendix B: Additional resources provided by contributors

Topic 1: Cooperation among small farms

Q1.2/3

Example of a successful agricultural cooperative - HANSALIM
Cooperative farming in India - features, benefits, limitations

Q1.2/6

EU funded SOLINSA project - a case study on agriculture innovation about the production system in South Tyrol

Q1.1/5

Results and views on household cooperation in Mexico

- Gurri, F. D. (2010) Smallholder land-use in the southern Yucatán: How culture and history matter; Regional Environmental Change; Vol. 10(3): 219- 231; DOI:10.1007/s10113-010-0114-8.
- Gurri, F. D. and Ortega-Muñoz, A. (2015), Impact of commercial farming on household reproductive strategies in Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico. Am. J. Hum. Biol.. doi: 10.1002/ajhb.22753.

Q1.1/8

Soft skills are often neglected in formal documents. Regional studies conducted in 2013 by FAO, highlighted that capacity development interventions are frequently not coordinated and do not address key institutional and organizational dimensions. At this regard, the Tropical Agriculture Platform (TAP) developed a framework (on Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems) which addresses specifically soft skills, defined as functional capacities, needed for an individual or groups to work effectively in an innovation system.

Q1.1/10

Early experiences of small farmers' cooperative in one region of Bangladesh. In 1959, a cooperative rural development program was launched by the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development in Comilla, a South Eastern district of Bangladesh. Which was later known as Comilla Model of cooperative. For various reasons the Comilla Model was unable to achieve its goal, mostly due to lack of 'soft skills' of smallholder farmers.

Q1.1/11

it is important to strengthen the functional capacity of local innovation networks or partnerships, and not just farmer groups or cooperatives per se. At ICRA (Netherlands), a number of capacity strengthening modules have been developed for this purpose as used in a number of value chain partnerships across Africa, within the 2SCALE Project. These modules, and many success stories from the project, are available here.

Q1.3/8

A collaboration between small farmers that has worked well in Ghana is the Cocoa Abrabopa, a strong farmer-led cooperation.

Topic 2: Small farms' contribution to resilience of the food system

Q2.2/5

Small farms and agricultural productivity in India. The various aspects of small farm holdings, their strengths, the challenges faced by them and the opportunities available for their future growth.

Diversification of small farms is often suggested as a means for rapid rural development in India. Problems and prospects of diversification of small farms in India.

Q2.2/6

In order to build an inclusive knowledge base, thus respond effectively to the needs, challenges and constraints for smallholders and family farmers and increase the impact to the greatest extent, FAO has within the framework of a regional project (TCP/RER/3601) conducted country studies on the needs and constraints of smallholders and family farms in Albania, Armenia, FYR Macedonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tajikistan. Synthesis Report presented to the Regional Consultation Workshop – Smallholders and Family Farms in March 2018.

Topic 3: Strategies used by small farms to overcome challenges – a view of the past

Q3.2/4

Coldiretti, the most important farmers' association in Italy, has introduced, for the first time, the system of farmers' market to support small and medium farms."Campagna Amica" is formed by farmer markets, farmers shops, farmers restaurants, Purchasing and Selling Groups, and urban vegetable gardens, in all the national territory to sell directly to consumers only 100% made in Italy agricultural products.

Topic 4: How small farms address future challenges

Q4.1/2

Magnitude of the problems facing rural households with small farms. The analysis covers sub-Saharan Africa but is pertinent to other areas where land is a limiting factor.

Q4.1/4

"Small Farmers in India: Challenges and Opportunities". A paper discussing the trends in agricultural growth, cultivation patterns, participation of small holding agriculture, productivity performance of small holders, linking smallholders with markets including value chains, role of small holders in enhancing food security and employment generation, differential policies and institutional support for small holders and, challenges and future options for small holding agriculture including information needs

Q4.1/8

Initiatives from other parts of Europe that aim to INTEGRATE the involvement of these different stakeholders. These initiatives include:

- Strategic planning to develop more competitive and resilient supply chains for smallholders in the Basque Country of Spain (including the allocation of over 50 million EUR of funding in the 2014-2020 rural development programme for the Basque region);
- Using public procurement to create opportunities for local, small-scale producers to supply school kitchens with fresh produce in the east of Scotland;
- Using the so-called LEADER rural development funding mechanism to create a network of over 100 small farmers in Slovenia to supply a newly established public food market;
- Working with agricultural advisers to develop an 'urban food strategy' and short supply chain for linking local smallholders with urban consumers and school kitchens in Latvia.

Q4.2/1

Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags technology

Q4.2/3

Socially Modified Crops - Socially Modified Organisms in Multifunctional Agriculture - "Addressing the Needs of Smallholder Farmers in Africa". Published in *Archives of Crop Science*

Q4.2/6

Linking Farmers to Markets through Productive Alliances : An Assessment of the World Bank Experience in Latin America

Topic 5: The importance of food businesses to small farms

Q5.1/2

India's export of organic products is worth about 300 Million USD and has been contributed by mostly small scale producers.

Q5.1/3

In India, big retailers are trying to reach directly to the small farmers through collectives and bring them into the system. Examples are Mother Dairy' SAFAL, spread over 20 states in India, comprising nearly 8000 farmer members from 93 Safal growers associations. Another is RELIANCE FRESH , which has gone

beyond direct purchase from farmers to assisting farmers to grow commodities like papaya and banana which helps in better yield and end-consumer pricing.

Q5.2/2

SilverStreet aims to achieve a significant and positive social impact through its hub-out-grower model. It works with small-scale farmers and local communities to provide markets for their produce and technical support to improve their crop yields.

Q5.2/4

Zambian Breweries is working with up to 5,000 smallholder farmers to ensure a sustained market for their cassava.

Topic 6: How can policies affect small farm activities and their resilience?

Q6.1/8

Negative impact of large carnivores upon livestock and the economic burden this places on small farms. There is an EU Platform on coexistence between large carnivores and people.

Q6.1/9

Community based natural management project (CAMPFIRE) which allow farmers to utilise wildlife in their areas for development projects.

Dream Project - contributes to sustainable development, nature conservation and improved rural livelihood in southern Africa, through strengthening national research capacities, multi- disciplinary approaches and institutional partnerships. The focus is on protected and neighboring production areas, with the ambition to improve the co-existence of agricultural productions and conservation of natural resources for the benefit of rural communities.

Q6.2/1

Agrobiodiversity conservation - making a good business case for investments.
Specific examples of local/national policies translated these global strategies:

- Ecosystem based decentralized land management policies for ensuring food security was discussed with the Kurichya community. Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property rights (TRIPs) extensively discussed in this discourse.
- CBD (ed: Convention on Biological Diversity) identified data gaps and methodological problems [including effects of trade liberalization on agrobiodiversity] - although the focus on issues at small scale remain less.
- Nepal Biodiversity Policy 2007- addressing food security- although generic- farm size and scale not defined with clarity-the focus on indigenous communities is set clear.

Q6.2/5

"Pursuing sustainable productivity with millions of smallholder farmers" - the outcome of nationally coordinated efforts over a 10-year period that encouraged 20.9 million smallholders to adopt enhanced management technologies for greater yield and reduced environmental pollution in China.

The Farmer FIRST Programme (FFP) - an ICAR initiative to move beyond the production and productivity, to privilege the smallholder agriculture and complex, diverse and risk prone realities of majority of the farmers through enhancing farmers-scientists interface.

Q6.3/2

The Indian Government is committed to doubling Farmers' income by the year 2022, for which government is working on measures including policy changes. For instance, the Indian Prime Minister said, "We are working for farmers who rent agricultural land to do farming. To ensure that such farmers get easy agriculture credit we are in talks with state governments".