

CFS Side Event 08 | What it takes: from effective data generation to use to drive better policies and programmes in food security and nutrition

Tuesday, 24 October 2023, 8.30 – 9.45 (UTC+2)

Speakers

- Renate Hahlen, Principal Administrator, European Commission
- Patricia N’Goran, SUN Focal point and President Advisor, Côte d’Ivoire
- Bidisha Barooah, Lead Technical Specialist, International Fund for Agricultural Development
- Nino Tsilosani, Chair of Agrarian Issues, Parliament of Georgia
- Sintayehu Wolka, Public Health Specialist, Ministry of Health, Ethiopia
- Laura Barrington, Coordinator, Capacity for Nutrition – National Information Platforms for Nutrition, Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit
- Vasco Molini, Program Manager, 50x2030 Initiative
- Moderation: Solange Heise, Nutrition Advisor, Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit
- Summary: Annalies Borrel, Senior Adviser, UNICEF

Summary

Data play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of food insecurity, malnutrition, and to reach the SDGs in the face of conflicts, climate change, pandemics, and other disruptions. To effectively respond to these complex issues, countries require responsive and adaptable data-systems that cross sectors. However, existing data strategies are often fragmented and are often not able to respond to country requirements for food security and nutrition.

This side-event highlighted experiences of generating and using data from three data-focused initiatives. Insights were shared from the 50x2030 initiative to Close the Agricultural Data Gap based on a partnership among IFAD, FAO, and the World Bank, aiming to strengthen the data systems in lower and lower-middle income countries to enhance decision-making for agriculture and food security as well as the experiences of two initiatives from the European Union: the European Commission-Nutrition Information System (EC-NIS) project implemented by UNICEF and WHO to strengthen the generation and use of nutrition data within the health information systems and beyond and the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) initiative supported by CATIE, GIZ and UNICEF to transform data and multisectoral nutrition information systems to influence and drive programmes and policies.

Objectives of the event were to:

1. Exchange on good practices and linkages to support countries in generating data on agriculture, food security and nutrition.
2. Introduce key concepts and discuss questions from the audience on how to improve any aspect of the data value chain (e.g. data collection, processing, analysis, use)
3. Share advice and lessons learned from governments and implementing partners on how to generate and use data effectively to drive and monitor multisectoral programmes and policies.

Existing initiatives like the 50 x 2030, EC-NIS, and NIPN make significant contributions for strengthening national data systems. Experiences from Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Georgia provided valuable insights for adapting data to local contexts and promoting the use of data.

The event underscored that cooperation efforts should be tailored and country-driven, because such efforts are responsive to evolving needs and opportunities. There was emphasis on the importance of national ownership of data systems and continuous partnership of international organisations with countries to ensure usefulness of data for policy decisions. Another crucial element is sustainability, which can only be assured by strengthening national capacities and identifying financing mechanisms at the country-level. Other key messages included aligning efforts to avoid duplication, with a focus on utilizing multisectoral platforms, like Scaling up Nutrition (SUN), and coordinating national data collection from various sources. Additionally, effective communication of sector-specific data across systems and to policymakers was noted as vital for informed decision-making as well as the early use of information for preventive action in response to shocks is necessary to prevent further deterioration. Challenges highlighted include the need for rigorous data, improved communication with policymakers, better coping with shocks using early indicators, and integrating data investment into national budgets.

In summary, the event highlighted the importance of data-driven decision-making, adaptability, collaboration, sustainability, and effective communication in addressing nutrition-related challenges and preventing crises. What gets measured, gets done.