



INNOVATION WEEK IN AMERICA

Montevideo, Uruguay / August 5 to 8, 2019



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

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juntos



AMERICAS INNOVATION WEEK 2019

SMART RURAL COMMUNITIES – ICT EVOLUTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

Food and agricultural systems are complex and depend largely on the interactions of socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors. Understanding this complexity requires a more effective and efficient political and institutional environment, promoting interaction among the actors involved and allowing for innovations that bring positive changes in communities and in the livelihoods of people in rural areas.

Currently, the demand for food production is increasing globally, which requires an agile response; better management of natural resources in a sustainable way and changes at the socioeconomic and climate level in communities.

In this context, the role of innovation is crucial if we consider that the current world population is 7,6 billion people and it will reach close to 8,6 billion people by 2030, from which 40% will still be living in rural areas. Global poverty will remain concentrated in these areas (United Nations, 2014), where ecosystems with a global importance present a greater environmental imbalance.

It is expected that new technologies such as 5G, Internet of Things (IoT), Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be applied in the agricultural sector, as in other industries. Although there are enormous benefits in using such technologies, most farmers, who are small family farmers, have a lack of digital education and do not always take advantage of the potential benefits of these technologies. Therefore, in order to reduce the digital divide and ensure that we are leaving no one behind, appropriate preparation and training should be used to adopt new technologies.

For this reason, the Regional Office of the International Telecommunication Union for the Americas (ITU) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have raised the importance of strengthening innovation systems as a major element towards sustainable rural development, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the relevance of stimulating the development of smart rural communities.

This is the first regional event organized jointly by FAO-ITU and, in addition, corresponds to the 5th FAO Innovation Forum called "Americas Innovation Week 2019".

Rural communities are not immune to the challenges posed by new technologies and their contribution to mobilizing local assets to take better advantage of the opportunities that arise in rural territories.

The focus of this alliance between ITU and FAO aims to empower rural communities facing the changes that social, economic, digital and environmental innovation is bringing, where ICTs can provide an effective contribution to face the challenges of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The European Union defines the concept of **smart rural communities** as rural areas and communities that take advantage of their strengths and resources, developing new opportunities, in which traditional networks and services are improved through new digital, telecommunication and innovation technologies for a better use of knowledge for the benefit of the inhabitants.

The irruption of this new concept is explained by the challenges that these territories would face today. Many of the rural areas would be trapped in what is called a "circle of decline", where the shortage of jobs and services would cause migration, especially of young people, to other sectors. This translates into a low population density, depriving the territory of critical mass to improve its services, its infrastructure and the creation of job and business opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

Raise awareness and commitment through a space of discussion and analysis to generate a favorable environment, stimulating the potential for innovation in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to foster smart rural communities more prepared to face the challenges of the 2030 Agenda.

Specific objectives

- Facilitate dialogue between relevant actors from their areas of action and the exchange of concrete experiences and knowledge among social, digital, environmental and economic innovation leaders, in which digital solutions or technologies have played a relevant role for sustainable rural development.
- Identify needs, encourage different types of innovation and connect digital ICTs and digital innovation with sustainable agricultural development in the region.
- Analyze the challenges to reduce the digital divide in rural territories for the adoption and deployment of new technologies.
- Discuss and analyze the experiences, lessons learned and results achieved in the countries of the region to improve the livelihoods and resilience of family farmers.
- Identify needs, priorities and opportunities at the policy level to strengthen innovation systems that improve multisectoral dialogue.

EXPECTED RESULTS

A report with recommendations for the ITU and FAO Agencies that will contribute to their work in the Region and in the ITU Study Commissions on the use of ICT in responsible and sustainable agricultural production.

A commitment to strengthen smart rural communities to face the challenges of the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.

TOPICS

1. Agricultural innovation systems: Towards smart rural communities
2. Global trends and new technologies for efficient and sustainable agricultural production.
3. Adaptation and resilience of family farming facing climate change.
4. Technologies for efficient agricultural value chains.
5. Sustainability of employment and adoption of new technologies.
6. Technologies for inclusion and accessibility.
7. ICTs as a tool in the agricultural production.

PARTICIPANTS

Due to its regional profile, the event will include attendees from Latin America and the Caribbean, especially from the government institutions involved in the processes of social, economic, digital and environmental innovation, where ICTs contribute to face the challenges of the 2030 agenda, as well as from the research and development institutes, and innovation development companies that include the topics of the event within their field of competence.

Likewise, non-governmental research partners, related academic and private research centers, as well as non-governmental organizations and family farming representatives will be present for the exchange of experiences in research and innovation.

PLACE

Complejo Cultural de la Torre de las Telecomunicaciones (ANTEL).

Address: Guatemala 1075, in the corner with Paraguay
Montevideo, Uruguay

CONTACT PERSON AT ITU

Pablo Palacios

Program Officer, Chile Area Office
Pablo.palacios@uit.int

CONTACT PERSON AT FAO

Katalina Moyano

International Consultant
Katalina.moyano@fao.org