

RNE INNOVATION ZOOMINAR SERIES

Zoominar X: Role of public policies in supporting innovation for sustainable agri-food system transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region

Title: Role of public policies in supporting innovation for sustainable agri-food system transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region

Date: Thursday 29 October 2020 @ 12:00 - 2:00 pm – Virtual meeting using Zoom

Co-organizers: FAO, ITU and Ministry of Saudi Environment, Water and Agriculture_in partnership with ESCWA, ICARDA, ICBA, IFAD, WB and IFPRI

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic added a considerable burden to rural livelihoods by deterring the engagement of men, women and youth in economic activities due to food systems disruptions such as weakened access to services, knowledge, strategic productive resources and markets. Evidence shows that innovation and digital agriculture is and will be at the core of the rural transformation required to improve rural livelihoods and increase resilience of rural and vulnerable rural communities.

The FAO Regional Initiative for Small-Scale Family Farming in NENA region (RI-SSFF) aims at developing new approaches, innovative technologies and public, private producer partnerships along commodity and value chains to increase the capacities to respond to and successfully address critical and prominent challenges in the region. After the postponement of the “[International Forum on innovation in agri-food systems to achieve SDGs](#)”, FAO and partners - Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MoEWA), ESCWA, ICARDA, ICBA, IFAD, ITU and WB, co-organized a series of nine Innovation Zoominar sessions addressing the role of innovation and new technologies in increasing resilience of smallholders to emerging disruptive impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on rural livelihoods.

FAO Regional office for the Near East and North Africa (RNE), MoEWA and the partners are organizing this Zoominar focusing on challenges facing the innovation processes in the agriculture sector with regards to governance and public policy aspects; also opportunities for better supporting innovation to accomplish agricultural digitalization for food security and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Zoominar will also provide an opportunity for initiating regional policy directions and guidance for enhancing the supply of digital good and services for agriculture in the NENA region.

Objective

The objectives of “Zoominar X: Role of public policies in supporting innovation for sustainable agri-food system transformation in the Near East and North Africa Region” are 1) Present main outcomes and conclude the series of nine innovation Zoominar sessions, drawing conducive recommendations emphasizing the important role of public policies and governance in supporting innovation in the agriculture sector., 2) Discuss main policy challenges hindering digital transformation in agriculture and decide on road map to enhance innovation and explore areas of cooperation and support.

The tenth Zoominar session will be dedicated to Government representatives and will emphasize at accelerate the development of innovation and digital agriculture in agri-food systems in the NENA countries. Participants will be invited to look on existing digital innovations in the NENA region with the

most potential for use by smallholders in terms of infrastructure needed, scalability, adaptability and usefulness.

The deliberation will examine the role that FAO and partners could play in facilitating the implementation and scalability of such innovations in the NENA region and guiding governments towards a robust policy plan of action to avoid the worst consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the agriculture sector and food security.

Agenda (tentative)

Moderated by Jean-Marc Faures, Regional Programme Leader - FAORNE

Co-Moderator: Rachid Serraj, RI-SSFF Delivery Manager - FAORNE

Speaker	Intervention
Ismahan ElOuafi - ICBA	
Rachid Serraj	Findings and recommendations of Innovation Zoominar series and way forward
ESCWA, ICARDA, IFAD, ITU and WB representatives	Partners vision
Representative of the authors of the 3 background papers	Policy challenges and barriers facing digital transformation in the agriculture sector in NENA Region
Distribution to group discussion into 3 breakout rooms	
Group discussion	Mashreq – facilitated by WB and AUB
	Maghreb – facilitated by FAO and ITU
	Gulf countries – facilitated by ICARDA and Navin Twarakavi
Break	Drafting of group discussions recommendations
Groups Rapporteurs -	Presentation of groups recommendations
Q&A	
IFPRI	Policy note
MoEWA	Concluding remarks – International Forum in 2021

Languages of the Zoominar: English, Arabic and French

Question addressed in group discussion: How do you see the way forward and suggested road map for enhancing innovation in the region and what support is expected from FAO and the partners to achieve that.

Participants: A list will be prepared by co-organizers and partners that includes national and regional institutions (LAS, AOAD, etc.), private sector, development organizations and academia. In addition to the Zoominar series participants.

Letters will be addressed officially to relevant ministries to nominate concerned and experts representatives to participate.