
The role of Agricultural Research on food systems transformation

Agrinatura, FARA and COLEACP UNFSS science days side-event 6 July 2021 15h00-17h00 CEST

The side event had 110 registrations with a peak of 41 participants actively contributing to the discussion with a strong participation of Both European and African researchers and other stakeholders. From the presentations and discussions held, the following highlights have been identified.

Key points / Policy recommendations

In addition to Agrinatura position paper on [research and innovation in food systems](#), this side-event recommends the following actions to put transdisciplinary research more to the forefront of science for food system transformations in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- 1) Academia and research funders need to establish a common education reference framework to avoid food systems transformation becomes an empty concept.
- 2) National and international funders of research should put a higher emphasis on transdisciplinary research to support co-creation of actionable knowledge. Research for scientific knowledge is needed, but also to feed evidence-informed policy dialogue for food systems transformation.
- 3) Diverse knowledge holders (academics, representatives of private and public sectors, civil society) should participate in foresight studies to analyse scenarios and help navigate plausible futures, focused on strengthening innovation capacities within food systems.
- 4) Academia needs to get involved in transdisciplinary multi-stakeholder arrangements. Research and Education need to support innovation and learning processes within food systems.
- 5) Academia needs to use participatory approaches, which link academia with the rest of society (farmers, consumers, entrepreneurs, policy makers) to support effective transformation of food systems.
- 6) Academia and research funders should increase the appreciation and incentive structure for transdisciplinary research addressing societal dimensions within their priority setting, academic performance targets and career tracks, and higher education.
- 7) Higher education should re-purpose curricula (at various levels) to train future scientists, entrepreneurs, practitioners, and decision makers in systems thinking, multi-stakeholder collaborative approaches, educational innovation, adaptive management, and soft skills to strengthen the innovation capacity within the food systems.
- 8) Agricultural innovation systems and agricultural extension services are key for the food system transformation. Extension services must be strengthened to achieve food systems transformation both by international funders and national governments.
- 9) Advocacy at national level as well as south-south cooperation has a key role to play to change the political agenda by strengthen the influence of the societal demand for food systems transformation.