

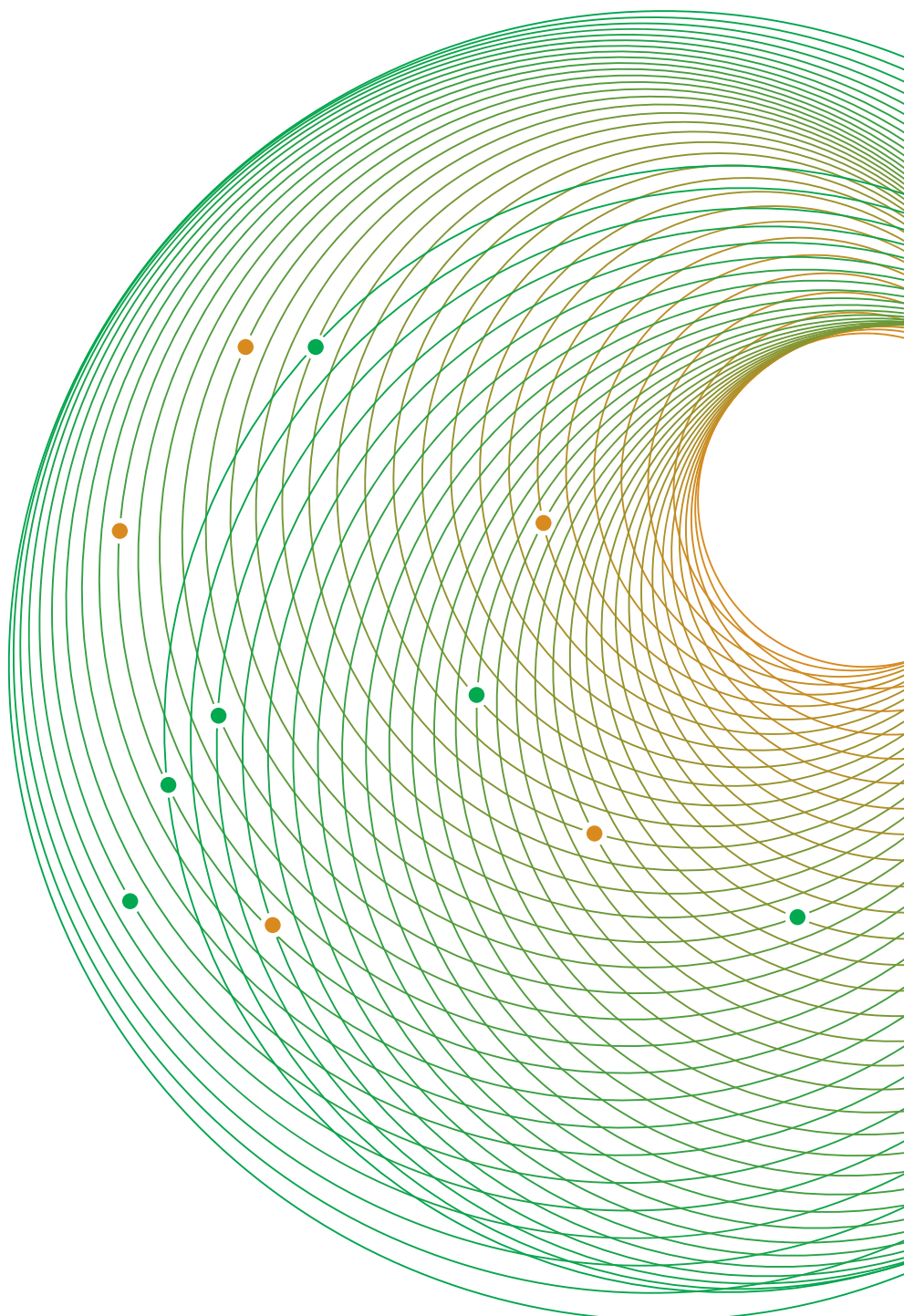


CONNECTING THE DOTS: Creating an Enabling Environment for SDG12 in ASEM

Stream 2: Inclusive Food Value Chains in Sustainable Production and Consumption | **POLICY BRIEF**

---

# Inclusive Food Value Chains in Sustainable Production and Consumption



## 1. Introduction

The concept of supply-demands drives the global economy through production and consumption mechanism. However, we continue to engage in unsustainable practices and extraction of natural resources this could endanger the planet. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 12, discussed explicitly on the issue of responsible consumption and production. Recent SDG Progress Report shows that this target is regressing, and we need to reverse the trend. Food loss and food waste in the value chain are one of the biggest contributors. The UN stated that there are 13.8% food loss along the value chain. Further, the unsustainable use of resources posts many challenges on food safety issue as well as environmental condition, especially to the vulnerable groups. Therefore, it is essential to enhance the sustainable practices and inclusiveness of food production and consumption.

Inclusive food value chains are food production and processing systems that generate value for all actors along the chain – from farmers, processors, transporters, manufacturers, down to the wholesalers and retailers. It needs to also usher in benefits for marginalised groups in the value chain, including women, poor, and vulnerable. Food value chains, apart from being inclusive, can also be deemed sustainable if the environmental burden on resources, such as land, water, energy, and air, is reduced and mitigated equally among stakeholders. Examples of steps towards inclusive and sustainable food value chains include, but are not limited to, reduction of post-harvest losses and food waste, transparency in supply chains, Participatory Guarantee Systems, sustainable production (e.g., agroecology), and recognition of the farmer as a provider of an ecosystem and climate services.

Industrial food production consumes more energy and resources but produces less food. According to Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2018), industrial food systems require 70% of resources and produce only 30% of global food production. In contrast, smallholder systems are more efficient, using 30% of resources and yield 70% of the world's food. Today, food systems drive environmental degradation and biodiversity loss and are responsible for 37% of greenhouse gas emissions (Stockholm Environment Institute, 2020). To avoid scarcity of natural resources and to threaten future food security, food systems must adhere to sustainable, ecological and inclusive principles.

One way to promote inclusivity, food security, and food resilience are through promoting sustainable production and consumption in food systems through smallholder and family farming. Globally, approximately 500 out of a total of 570 million farms are characterised as family farms (FAO, 2014; Lowder, Skoet, & Raney, 2016). However, current global food value chains disadvantage local farms in favour of large-scale industrial food systems.

“ Inclusive food value chains are food production and processing systems that generate value for all actors along the chain— from farmers, processors, transporters, manufacturers, down to the wholesalers and retailers.

In Asia, the agricultural sector is dominated by family farmers (85%), who are typically poor, marginalised, remote and underserved. The low production value, as compared to Europe, is compounded with limited access to modern farming technology, services and information. SEI Research has shown that a large proportion of women participate as producers, labourers traders, processors, retailers, or consumers. Nonetheless, they do not have equal access to farm inputs, resources, services and opportunities as men. As a result, they are prone to a higher risk of poverty and more vulnerable to climate uncertainties, which economic empowerment in Asian agriculture does not necessarily link to gender equality.

In Europe, family farms are also by far the most common type, although the European food system has undergone significant changes in the past century (Eurostat, 2016). The transformation from local to global food systems has shifted toward large scale agro-food processing, which amplifies the challenges of future food security and environmental impact due to its unsustainable practices such as intensification and concentration of food production. Additionally, farming continues to be a predominantly rural profession in Europe, where female farmers have significantly less access to the capital and resources, and men manage 70% of farms. Further, women farmers are likely to tend farms that are approximately 7 hectares smaller than male-managed farms.

In rural areas, issues of poverty and food security are interrelated, with around 821 million people reported to be food-insecure worldwide. These people are also vulnerable to climate change which may force farmers to migrate out of their farmlands, exacerbating inequality of food access. Marginalised communities are most affected in all dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilisation and stability.



# FAMILY FARMING AND THE SDGS

**Family farmers are powerful agents of change** in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Compared to industrial counterparts, smallholder **family farms prove to be better at protecting biodiversity, more inclusive and more productive** per unit of land.

Developing food systems that promote this kind of farming is needed to achieve key goals in the 2030 Agenda:

**1** NO POVERTY



## NO POVERTY

**Improved livelihoods** among family farmers flow to wider communities and beyond the agriculture sector where they create opportunities to reduce poverty

**2** ZERO HUNGER



## ZERO HUNGER

Family farmers play a major role in **promoting healthy nutrition, prioritizing sustainable food production systems and maintaining agricultural biodiversity**

**5** GENDER EQUALITY



## GENDER EQUALITY

By addressing the gender-based inequalities faced by women farmers, **more inclusive** and sustainable growth can be achieved

**6** CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



**15** LIFE ON LAND



## CLEAN WATER & SANITATION | LIFE ON LAND

Family farmers in rural communities have local knowledge on how to **responsibly use and manage natural resources**

**8** DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



**10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES



## DECENT WORK & ECONOMIC GROWTH | REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Given its labour intensive nature, family farms can be a **source of livelihood and employment** for people living in rural communities

**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



## SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES

There is a significant **nutritional and local economic benefits of creating stronger links** between growing cities with family farmers operating in surrounding rural areas

**12** RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



## RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION

Family farmers play a crucial role in achieving **resilient food system** by encouraging sustainable consumption and production patterns

**13** CLIMATE ACTION



## CLIMATE ACTION

Family farming systems, which often **employs sustainable agricultural techniques**, can be part of the solution to reducing emissions coming from food production systems

**17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



## PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

By recognising their skill, knowledge, and voice, family farmers can act as **agents of change** to foster collaboration and inclusion in policy development

Note: The contribution of family farmers to SDGs.  
Source: Adapted from FAO (2019)

## 2. How to implement Inclusive Food Value Chains in Sustainable Production and Consumption at the national and global level

### WHAT TO KEEP

It is essential to continue the protection and development of rural and indigenous agriculture and local production. This includes the promotion of local markets to ensure local food supply and short supply chain. To uphold the local market and agriculture, awareness and demand of consumers for local and organic products play a crucial role and thus be improved. Besides, there is a need to keep up sustainable food consumption practices such as food waste minimisation. Finally, we must support policies that help to secure tenure for small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples.

### WHAT TO DISCARD

There is an urgent need to shift from the dominant food systems model that relies heavily on chemical input, monoculture, and large industrial systems. These dominant food production systems contributed to climate change, GHG emission, and a threat to biodiversity loss. We need to stop exploit natural resources and practising unsustainable farming practices. Smallholder farmers, and especially women farmers' knowledge, need to be acknowledged and recognised. Furthermore, in the name of food security, agriculture practices often impose new crops or new resources that would have been made locally or already available traditionally. This practice could be unsustainable in the long term and have the potency to neglect what is culturally appropriate food for indigenous and local communities.

### WHAT NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED

Smallholder farmers are not merely food producers but also repository for culture. They are maintaining ecosystem critical ecosystem services and provide climate services through climate sequestration. As a custodian of the landscapes, we need to acknowledge their role, especially women farmers, beyond food systems and include multi-functional land use. Building their capacities through training and other activities that lead to their empowerment needs to be further developed. Moreover, it is essential to improve any mechanisms that would enable smallholder farmers to better leverage the market. The capacity is not only about agriculture or food production techniques but also on innovation and finance technology so that farmers can play a larger role in the value chain. An inclusive supply chain will bring more equity and stronger bargaining power for farmers at local, national, and global levels.

Promoting responsible production could not be done without encouraging sustainable consumption. Most companies are driven by market pressure; thus, if consumers demand sustainable food products, there will be more incentives to transform the food systems. Improving certifications systems could be one way to influence the consumer to change their consumption behaviour and enhance communication between producers and consumers in the market.

### WHAT NEEDS TO BE SCALED UP

Multi stakeholders and multi-rights holder platform is crucial if we aim to shift to a more sustainable and equitable food value chain. Public, private partnerships need to be strengthened and scaled up if we want to achieve these goals, especially aligning it with Agenda 2030. Private and business sectors have the responsibility to ensure that they engaged in a supply and value chains that improve farmer livelihoods. Transparent and traceable value chains are innovative examples that could be scaled up to ensure a just food systems. Public policy and regulations that improve productivity and promote resilient and inclusive food systems need to be implemented on a wider scale. Innovation, methodology, and incentives that focus on environmental benefit should be scale to ensure sustainable food production and consumption.

“ Family farmers have the potential to promote social equity and community well-being by creating higher levels of social engagement

## 3. Conclusion

It is critical to support family and smallholder farmers, their localised production systems and higher resilience contribute to sustainable development across social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Family farmers have the potential to promote social equity and community wellbeing by creating higher levels of social engagement that is adapted to local culture while avoiding static gender roles and social stigma. Family farms and smallholders also generate employment and income growth, especially in rural areas, which leads to poverty reduction. Additionally, they can uphold nutritional diversity while supporting sustainable resource use. These benefits of family farming could strengthen the food value chain and future food security.

In pursuing inclusive and sustainable food value chains, there is the essential need for collaborative support from stakeholders to identify the current issues and the way forward. Sustainable production and consumption encompass several elements, including sustainable production practices, investment in consumer behavioural change and localisation of food systems through circular agriculture approaches. This way, farmers can diversify income sources and reduce their costs of cultivation, helping address both poverty and food waste. Therefore, family farmers and small-holding farmers are potent agents of change in achieving the SDGs.

**References:**

- Ellen MacArthur Foundation. (2018). CITIES AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR FOOD. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/Cities-and-the-circular-economy-for-food-1.pdf>
- European Environment Agency. (2012, November 06). Food security and environmental impacts. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/agriculture/greening-agricultural-policy/food-security-and-environmental-impacts>
- European Environment Agency. (2012, November 06). Food security and environmental impacts. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/agriculture/greening-agricultural-policy/food-security-and-environmental-impacts>
- European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development. (2016). RESEARCH FOR AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE - STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN EU FARMING: HOW CAN THE CAP SUPPORT A 21st CENTURY EUROPEAN MODEL OF AGRICULTURE? Retrieved November 3, 2020, from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/573428/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)573428\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/573428/IPOL_STU(2016)573428_EN.pdf)
- Eurostat. (2016). Agriculture statistics - family farming in the EU. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agriculture\\_statistics\\_-\\_family\\_farming\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agriculture_statistics_-_family_farming_in_the_EU)
- FAO. (2014). Developing sustainable food value chains: Guiding principle. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3953e.pdf>
- FAO. (2014). Family Farmers: Feeding the world, caring for the earth. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/230925/>
- FAO. (2014). Family Farming Knowledge Platform. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/281544/>
- FAO. (2017). Strategic work of FAO for STRATEGIC PROGRAMME TO ENABLE INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEMS INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT FOOD SYSTEMS. Retrieved November 3, 2020, from <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6627e.pdf>
- FAO. (2019). Putting family farmers at the centre to achieve the SDGs. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4532en/CA4532EN.pdf>
- Lowder, S., Skoet, J., & Raney, T. (2016, February 09). The Number, Size, and Distribution of Farms, Smallholder Farms, and Family Farms Worldwide. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X15002703>
- Oxfam. (2019). Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity: Ten years after the food price crisis, why are women farmers still food-insecure? - World. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/gender-inequalities-and-food-insecurity-ten-years-after-food-price-crisis-why-are-women>
- Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs. (2019). The professional status of rural women in the EU. Retrieved November 3, 2020, from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608868/IPOL\\_STU\(2019\)608868\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608868/IPOL_STU(2019)608868_EN.pdf)
- Sorrentino, A., Russo, C., & Cacchiarelli, L. (2018, December 04). Food value chain in the EU - How to improve it and strengthen the bargaining power of farmers. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <https://research4committees.blog/2016/03/15/food-value-chain-in-the-eu-how-to-improve-it-and-strengthen-the-bargaining-power-of-farmers/>
- Stockholm Environment Institute. (2020, October 20). 5 ways to revive our food systems you haven't thought about. Retrieved November 03, 2020, from <https://www.sei.org/featured/5-ways-to-revive-our-food-systems-you-havent-thought-about/>
- UNESCAP. (2020, March 25). Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020. Retrieved October 20, 2020, from [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/ESCAP\\_Asia\\_and\\_the\\_Pacific\\_SDG\\_Progress\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/ESCAP_Asia_and_the_Pacific_SDG_Progress_Report_2020.pdf)

## About the Stockholm Environment Institute

Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia, based in Bangkok, has a diverse team of multinational experts that integrates scientific research with participatory approaches to co-develop and share knowledge, build partnerships, and influence policy for resilient development. It focuses on gender and social equity, climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, water insecurity and integrated water resource management, transitional agriculture, renewable energy and urbanisation.

SEI Asia's research teams work in a number of thematic areas, in addition to driving several initiatives and programmes. This work covers climate change, disasters and development, gender, environment and development (GED), water resources management, energy futures, city health and wellbeing, capacity development for research in the Mekong Region, and regional collaboration. SEI Asia additionally provides policy support that reaches across all of our research areas.

## About the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum)

Established in 2003, the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) is a partnership of: [Asia-Europe Foundation \(ASEF\)](#), Government of Sweden through the Regional Asia Environment Conference Support Programme administered by [Stockholm Environment Institute \(SEI\)](#), [Hanns Seidel Foundation \(HSF\)](#), [ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Center \(ASEIC\)](#) and the [Institute for Global Environmental Strategies \(IGES\)](#).

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” presents multiple challenges for countries to implement SDGs. One of the central issues impeding the success of the 2030 Agenda is unsustainable consumption and production pattern.

Consumption and production are the building blocks of the economy, and thus essential to economic growth and development. However, with the projected world population to reach 9.8 billion by 2050, current consumption and production pattern is detrimental to our environment. At this rate, the magnitude of natural resources required to meet the demand of the projected population is equivalent to almost three planets. As the shortage of natural resources looms, it is imperative to achieve SDG 12 “Ensuring Sustainable Consumption and Production” and transition from linear to a circular economy.

The ENVforum Annual Conference 2020, took place amidst a global pandemic. The conference titled “[Connecting](#)

[the dots: Creating an enabling environment for SDG12 in ASEM](#)” took place 9-11 November 2020 virtually, brought new perspectives on the topics of antimicrobial resistance (AMR); inclusive food value chains; sustainable garments; and single-use plastics, all with special consideration to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The 3-day conference provided a platform for representatives from various stakeholders including civil society organisations, governments, and businesses from Asia and Europe to exchange experiences, including challenges and best practices, on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) and the transition into the circular economy. The conference was designed to promote exchanges on regional and international levels and highlight different multi-stakeholder initiatives or partnerships, including from the private sector, in promoting the adoption of SCP practices.

These were the thematic streams explored during the conference:

- » [Stream 1: Health Agenda Post COVID-19— Example of AMR and “mindful eaters”](#)
- » [Stream 2: Inclusive Food Value Chains as a Way of Transition to Circular Economy](#)
- » [Stream 3: Sustainable Garment](#)
- » [Stream 4: The Plastic Initiatives – 3R in action](#)

**ASIA-EUROPE**  
**ENVIRONMENT FORUM**



Consortium Partners:

