CHANGING FOOD SYSTEMS

WHAT SYSTEMS THINKING MEANS FOR DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES TO CATALYSE CHANGE IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

INSIGHTS FROM A CO-INQUIRY

GREEN COMMODITIES PROGRAMME
CHANGING FOOD SYSTEMS: WHAT SYSTEMS THINKING MEANS FOR DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES TO CATALYSE CHANGE IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

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## ABOUT UNDP’S FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY SYSTEMS PRACTICE
Food and agricultural systems have a multi-dimensional impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to the centrality of food production for human diet, sustainable agricultural production and land use is also central in addressing our inter-connected soil, water, biodiversity and climate crises. In many countries, food and agricultural sectors also make up the largest part of the economy and are central in efforts to address poverty.

Yet, food systems are in crisis. Too many of the world’s food and agricultural systems are fragile and vulnerable to collapse. The production practices and consumption patterns are on an unsustainable trajectory with negative impacts on human development, the environment, and economies.

Over the next ten years, the world faces a critical need – as well as a remarkable opportunity – to transform food, agriculture and land use systems. However, while many are talking the language of transformation and systems change, few seem to have mastered the practice. Among the common action agendas and prevailing discourse on what is needed for systemic change to happen in the sector, barriers are often overlooked. A lot of the emphasis has been on standards, supply chain initiatives and technological innovations.

Despite the progress made through these approaches, there are still critical issues with misaligned incentives and weaknesses in policy and the wider enabling environment.

Understanding and managing the interdependencies in the sector requires collaborative mindsets and practices, particularly at the national and sub-national levels. However, the quality of current multi-stakeholder collaboration is inadequate to meet the scale and nature of the challenge. We need systems thinking approaches that can embrace complexity and facilitate more effective collaborative action to deliver food and agricultural commodity systems that are fit for purpose. Fostering spaces for deeper collaboration and reflection – which include marginalized groups and address asymmetries of power and information – requires patience, time, and sustained commitment and support from participants, facilitators and sponsors.

Co-inquiry Cycle 1

In order to understand these issues and challenges more deeply, in 2020 UNDP convened a co-inquiry into the question: “how can we work more systemically to accelerate progress towards a more sustainable food system”. The inquiry took place over four sessions, with participation from more than 40 practitioners, including many who have
been pioneering the application of systems thinking in an international development context over the past couple of decades. The report is available [here](#).

Co-inquiry Cycle 2

In 2021 we convened a second cycle of the co-inquiry with more than 70 participants (a list is included at the end of this report). We facilitated three parallel inquiry streams:

1. **Systems Change in Practice:** "How can we apply systems change in practice in the field of food, agriculture and commodities? What do we identify as the enablers and scale factors from positive experiences of systems change?"

2. **Systems Leadership:** "How can we support the emergence of systems leadership in the field? How can we identify, engage and uplift change agents, local to global?"

3. **Documenting Systems Change:** "How can we capture and share the results and impact of systems change approaches?"

This report provides a synthesis of insights from the discussions, particularly with regard to large, donor-funded programmes that are delivered by UN agencies, other multi-laterals and large international NGOs. The insights and recommendations from the co-inquiry have application across donor funded projects in the food and agriculture sector but also have wider application across international development programmes that are seeking to catalyse systemic change to address a range of social and environmental challenges and therefore this report captures the lessons at this level.

The 10 steps included in this report provide a critique of current programme design and implementation approaches centred around:

- **Upfront problem analysis in the design phase:**
- **The creation of logframes ('logical frameworks') with pre-planned activities and pre-defined outcomes:**
- **4-5 year implementation periods.**

The recommendations are to move away from largely ‘top down’ approaches that attempt to design and deliver change towards much more participatory, ‘emergent’ approaches that focus on enabling and facilitating stakeholders to co-create and implement solutions together. These recommendations have major implications for the design of future programmes that seek to catalyse food systems transformation.

Co-inquiry Cycle 3

A third cycle of the co-inquiry is planned for 2022, which will focus on:

1. **Programme Design for Systems Change:** "How can we design international development programmes to be more effective in accelerating systemic change in food and agriculture?"

2. **Working with Power and Conflict:** "How can we work more effectively with power and conflict in multi-stakeholder processes for changing food and agriculture systems?"

In addition, we are convening peer learning groups for international development practitioners who want to bring a more systemic approach to their work in food and agriculture. Finally, we are also looking to convene co-inquiries at the national level in producer countries.

We invite expressions of interest for participation in the co-inquiry from donors, multi-lateral agencies, the private sector, civil society organisations and representatives of governments in producer countries. Please contact [henriette.friling@undp.org](mailto:henriette.friling@undp.org).
## TEN STEPS TO INTEGRATE SYSTEMS THINKING INTO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES WORKING ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS.

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<th>WHAT’S NEEDED</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td><strong>PROGRAMME DESIGN</strong>&lt;br&gt;Activities and outcomes are pre-planned, assuming a linear logic of cause and effect.</td>
<td>Use adaptive and participatory processes that are more effective in conditions of complexity and uncertainty.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION</strong>&lt;br&gt;Stakeholders are consulted to provide input into pre-planned activities, but they typically do not drive the process.</td>
<td>Shift from telling to listening, using collaborative approaches for stakeholders to design and implement solutions.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td><strong>TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS</strong>&lt;br&gt;Limited attention is paid to actively building trust and relationships – it is assumed that they will build over time.</td>
<td>More active focus on building stronger trust and relationships as the foundation of effective collaboration.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>HEARTS AS WELL AS MINDS</strong>&lt;br&gt;Activities focus on expert-led technical interventions (e.g. tools, reports, policy recommendations).</td>
<td>Pay greater attention to the psychological and behavioural dimensions of change.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td><strong>POWER, POLITICS AND CONFLICT</strong>&lt;br&gt;Processes attempt to be neutral and the realities of power and conflict are not fully acknowledged or addressed.</td>
<td>Acknowledge and work with the realities of power, politics and conflicting perspectives.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP</strong>&lt;br&gt;The identification and support of leaders and champions of change is piecemeal rather than systematic.</td>
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<td>Put deep learning at the heart of programmes to enable improved sense-making and adaptation.</td>
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<td><strong>FACILITATION</strong>&lt;br&gt;The vital importance of high quality facilitation is not always well understood.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>MEASUREMENT</strong>&lt;br&gt;The focus of measurement is on quantitative performance in terms of the delivery of pre-planned activities and outcomes.</td>
<td>Measure the indicators and enablers of systemic change and engage stakeholders in participatory evaluation processes.</td>
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Use adaptive and participatory processes that are more effective in conditions of complexity and uncertainty.

1. PROGRAMME DESIGN

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

Donors, implementing agencies and governments are increasingly recognising the need for the adoption of more systemic approaches to development projects. This is being reflected in the adoption of much of the language of systems change. However, the practice lags behind the rhetoric.

Programmes are still being designed around ‘logframe’ approaches – following a linear logic of (1) assess (2) design (3) implement (4) monitor. This assumes that systemic problems can be adequately understood through analysis and that effective solutions can be designed and implemented with predictable results. Complexity science indicates that these assumptions do not hold true.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

- Agile and adaptive: take a ‘test and learn’ approach, iterating and adapting as you go (rather than pre-defined solutions aiming for pre-defined outcomes).
- Participatory and co-creative: on-going, collective sense-making, facilitating stakeholders to identify problems and develop and implement solutions collaboratively, rather than bringing in predefined solutions from outside.
- Longer term thinking with realistic objectives rather than looking for overly ambitious, quick fix, silver bullet solutions.

3 / BARRIERS

- Donors require projects to identify up front how funds will be spent and for what results. This leads to pre-planned projects and pre-defined outcomes that leave limited room for more participatory, emergent and iterative approaches.
- The organisational processes and practices of governments, implementing agencies and civil society organisations tend to be planning-based, and struggle to accommodate systemic approaches.
- Development organisations are generally incentivised to look for and demonstrate success – rather than learning from failure – and often lessons are not learnt.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement training and capacity building so that systems thinking is better understood by donors and implementers.
- Donors consider how they can adapt their funding requirements to encourage approaches to programme design and implementation that are more agile and adaptive.
- Governments, implementing agencies and civil society organisations evaluate what institutional practices obstruct more emergent and iterative approaches and re-design their operating procedures accordingly.
Shift from telling to listening, using collaborative approaches to design and implement solutions.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

It is a challenge to meaningfully engage a broad range of stakeholders. This can be for a variety of reasons (see ‘barriers’). Engagement in the programme design process typically focuses on consultation rather than co-design. During implementation the focus may be more on enrolling stakeholders in predefined activities and outcomes, rather than on facilitating a collective learning and relationship building process. As a result, engagement can often be superficial and proposed interventions do not take full account of different perspectives and, as a result, stakeholder commitment to proposed actions may be weak.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

Participatory approaches lead to the design of better solutions and greater stakeholder commitment to follow through. Increasing stakeholder connectivity and information flows across a system is a key way to change the system. To achieve this, projects should:

- Engage a broad range of stakeholders from across the system.
- Pay significant attention to trust and relationship building.
- Be tolerant of complexity, paradox and uncertainty and provide a safe space for working through conflict and difference.
- Facilitate co-creation; test, develop and iterate solutions; underpinned by an on-going learning and sense-making process.

3 / BARRIERS

Barriers to effective stakeholder engagement include:

- Donor pressure for pre-defined activities and outcomes may not allow for genuine co-design and co-creative approaches.
- Government and implementation agencies may have limited experience of co-creative, participatory processes.
- Government and key stakeholders may not want to surrender power to wider stakeholder groups through more participatory approaches.
- Stakeholders may perceive insufficient benefits from engagement – and the means of engagement may not fit their preferences.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve stakeholder participation in programmes we recommend:

- Increase understanding of why systemic challenges require more participatory and collaborative approaches to change.
- Improve the quality of facilitation for more constructive and value-adding stakeholder processes – moving from telling to listening.
- Offer more co-creative and collaborative engagement opportunities, which will deliver more obvious benefits to stakeholders and increase their participation.
- Offer more diverse ways of engaging so that programmes can reach more diverse stakeholder groups.
Focus on building stronger trust and relationships as the foundation of effective collaboration.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

It is widely understood that building trust and relationships is essential for effective collaboration. However, in practice ‘building trust’ is often addressed quite superficially within programme design and implementation.

Programme workplans are typically focused on the technical aspects of the work, with little attention paid to the relational aspects. These relational aspects may be addressed by a skilful and experienced facilitator, but often it is simply assumed that trust and relationships will strengthen with time and little is done specifically to nurture them.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

Building trust and relationships is foundational for effective collaboration. Building trust and relationships takes time and patience in the beginning but pays dividends later on. When trust increases, collective will for action increases, collaboration becomes easier and progress accelerates.

Strengthening relationships also improves information flows, helps stakeholders get a better understanding of alternative perspectives and leads to better decision making.

3 / BARRIERS

Barriers to building trust and relationships include:

- The value of investing time in trust and relationship building is not always fully understood.
- As there can be significant lack of trust between stakeholders, the process of building trust can be hard and takes time, skill and the willing participation of those stakeholders.
- Project teams within implementing agencies and within governments are usually more technically focused and often do not have the skillset for leading a trust and relationship building process.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

To build trust and relationships more effectively:

- Training and on-going support should be provided to project teams to build understanding and capacity for facilitating effective collaboration.
- Projects should prioritise the recruitment of highly skilled facilitators for facilitating stakeholder collaboration.
- Research should be commissioned to build the evidence base for the impact of effective trust and relationship building in the context of systemic change work.
Pay greater attention to the psychological and behavioural dimensions of change.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

The focus of programmes is typically on expert-led technical interventions (e.g. tools, reports, policy recommendations) rather than on the relational, psychological and behavioural dimensions of change.

However, psychological and behavioural science indicates that the most important drivers of behaviour (and behaviour change) are our underlying values, beliefs, narratives, mindsets, sense of identity and our worldviews—rather than more ‘rational’ or ‘cognitive’ factors. Yet, these psychological and behavioural dimensions of change are often largely ignored in projects.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

Programmes should seek to engage hearts as well as minds. This can lead to:

- Deeper insights and learning in respect of the root causes of systemic challenges and their potential solutions.
- Stronger stakeholder engagement, greater understanding between stakeholders, stronger trust and relationships, improved collaboration and greater commitment to action.
- Stakeholders who become champions and allies, leading to wider impacts beyond the immediate scope of programmes.
- Greater impact by addressing the deeper drivers of change.

3 / BARRIERS

Barriers to working more effectively on the behavioural dimensions of change include:

- Donors, governments and implementing agencies undervalue the psychological and behavioural dimensions of change.
- Lack of experience and capability within programme teams of how to work with psychological and behavioural factors.
- Limited guidance on how programmes can work at this level.
- Research on the psychological and behavioural factors of change has focused mostly on organisations and fewer studies have looked at multi-stakeholder processes.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the psychological and behavioural impact of programmes:

- Develop guidance, training and support for programme teams and implementing partners on psychological and behavioural change.
- Commission research to explore how these aspects can be applied most effectively within a multi-stakeholder context.
- Track psychological and behavioural change within programmes through enhanced M&E.
5. POWER, POLITICS AND CONFLICT

Acknowledge and work with the realities of power, politics and conflicting perspectives.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

In theory, multi-stakeholder processes should convene stakeholders from across the whole system. In practice, creating inclusive processes is challenging.

Stakeholders that have more power and more capacity to engage are often more prominent, with other voices marginalised. Some voices may even be expressly excluded, such as certain civil society organisations. Or conversely, those with power sometimes choose to stay away if they consider the process to be antithetical to their interests, confident that without their support progress will be harder – or they may even choose to obstruct from outside the process.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

To work with power, politics and conflicting perspectives, programmes should:

• Be politically aware, working with the realities of existing power dynamics while also seeking to include marginalised voices.
• Try to create spaces where stakeholders feel safe enough to be open and honest about their experiences and point of view, even when there may be significant differences in values and worldviews.
• Facilitate increased mutual understanding between different perspectives and help stakeholders find common ground and a way forward together that all, or most, key stakeholders can support.

3 / BARRIERS

Working with power, politics and conflicting perspectives is not easy. Programme elements that make it harder include:

• Programme governance may favour certain stakeholders.
• Programme staff may not have the skillset or the positional power for facilitating processes that work with power, politics and conflict.
• The need for implementing agencies to demonstrate neutrality can make it harder to work in ways that may be considered ‘political’.
• Stakeholders with power may actively block progress, overtly or covertly.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

To work more skilfully with these issues, programmes should:

• Develop strategies for working with the realities of power, politics and conflict – based on an understanding of cultural, historical and political context and including ‘power analysis’ approaches.
• Build wider stakeholder representation into programme governance.
• Build awareness that working with difference and conflict can be valuable and creative – and, when done well, leads to better outcomes that are more likely to be successful.
• Engage staff, senior advisors, facilitators and other consultants with the relevant capabilities for working with these issues.
6. INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Identify and remove institutional barriers to systemic ways of working.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

Current programme approaches (expert-led with pre-planned activities and pre-defined outcomes) are kept in place through an array of institutional policies, structures, procedures, cultures and habits.

While the language of systems thinking and systems change is now being widely adopted, less attention is being paid to how these institutional processes need to change. As a result, we are seeing limited change in the way programmes are implemented.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

To work more systemically (in ways that are more participatory, co-creative, emergent, adaptive and iterative) requires change not only in programme design and implementation methodologies but also in institutional policies, structures, procedures and cultures.

International development funders, agencies and governments need to review and adapt internal operating procedures across a range of functions – identifying and changing those aspects of their operating procedures that are constraining the effective application of more systemic approaches to change.

3 / BARRIERS

Barriers to institutional change include:

- Limited understanding that re-designing programmes to be more systemic also requires internal organisational change.
- Programme staff may be more focused on programme design challenges and may not have the remit or appetite to engage in internal organisational change work.
- There may be institutional resistance to surrendering power and control to more participatory and co-creative approaches.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

Approaches for accelerating institutional change include:

- Raise awareness of systems thinking and systemic approaches to change and the impacts on programme design and operating procedures and how institutional practices need to change.
- Engage leaders across different functional areas to explore together what the barriers and enablers are for more systemic approaches so that internal organisational change priorities can be identified and acted on.
Identify, connect and build the leadership capacity of leaders and champions from across the system.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

Successful programmes always rely on the support and leadership of key individuals from across the system who champion and lead change. Some programmes deliberately set out to identify these individuals and nurture their support, but this is not always the case. Capacity building support for these individuals is often piecemeal and focused more on technical information and tools.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

- Pay more attention to the critical role of key individual leaders and champions (from all levels of seniority and from across the system) in catalysing change.
- Identify, connect and support champions through ‘systems leadership’ training and on-going support to build understanding and skills in working with complexity.
- Build trust and relationships between champions from across the system and facilitate peer to peer support, network building and collaboration across organisational boundaries.

3 / BARRIERS

The barriers to building systems leadership include:
- Limited understanding of what ‘systems leadership’ is or the need for developing a new skillset.
- Systems leadership is a relatively small and emergent field with a limited number of skilled trainers and limited training capacity at country and regional levels.
- Systems leadership language can be inaccessible and feel removed from realities on the ground.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

- Map the ecosystem of systems leadership expertise and organisations who can support this work.
- Distil the existing systems leadership literature into content that is more easily accessible and directly relevant for the specific context of international development programmes.
- Undertake research and write up case studies of systems leadership in practice.
- Develop ‘train the trainer’ courses to increase systems leadership training capabilities at the country and regional level.
8. LEARNING

Put deep learning at the heart of programmes to enable improved sense-making and adaptation.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

Learning in international development programmes typically focuses on improving the ‘what’ of change: understanding and evaluating options between different interventions such as policies, incentives, financial mechanisms, trainings, tools, methodologies, and so on. There is often much less time dedicated to deeper reflection and learning around improving the ‘how’ of change: how to increase engagement, motivation, participation, co-creation, shared ownership, collective action, and so on.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

"Test, learn and adapt" is at the heart of systemic approaches to change. A high quality learning culture is therefore central to the success of any systems change programme. To achieve this, programmes should:

- Build conditions of ‘psychological safety’ in delivery teams and with stakeholder groups to encourage openness and honesty.
- Develop robust learning practices at multiple levels: individual, programme team and partners, stakeholders.
- Constantly test assumptions, ask hard questions and feed back into programme activities and objectives.

3 / BARRIERS

The barriers to more effective learning practices include:

- When activities and outcomes are predefined, implementation focuses on delivery rather than learning and adaptation.
- In the absence of skilled facilitation and with limited familiarity of deeper learning practices, learning typically remains superficial.
- Institutional incentives to demonstrate success prevent openness, honesty and the opportunity to learn from challenges and obstacles.
- Programme team members and stakeholders may fear repercussions if they are open and honest and therefore may self-censor.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

To build better learning cultures, programmes should:

- Establish processes that integrate learning, review and adaptation into programmes, including deeper reflection on blind spots, hard truths, invalid assumptions, and so on.
- Hire skilled facilitators who can create safe environments and processes for deep learning.
- Build internal capacity for integrating deeper learning practices into the culture and behaviours of programme teams.
- Build awareness of the importance of psychological safety for better learning and stronger programme performance.
9. FACILITATION

Build and strengthen local facilitation capacity to support effective collaborative action in the longer term.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

There can be widely different experiences of facilitation across programmes, very much dependent on the understanding and competencies of programme teams and whether or not professional facilitators are used. As a result, programmes that are following similar approaches and methodologies for multi-stakeholder collaboration can end up providing radically different experiences.

In worst case scenarios, meetings and workshops: focus purely on expert input of technical information; pay limited attention to building trust and relationships between stakeholders; lead to disengaged audiences; and fail to facilitate genuine engagement and collaboration.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

Considerable facilitation skill is needed to bring all the elements of a systemic change programme together, as per the recommendations in this document.

Skilful facilitation is therefore central to systemic change programmes. Bringing in international facilitators may be a short term fix. Longer term, it is essential that much stronger facilitation capabilities are developed in-country to support the wider adoption of systemic approaches to change.

3 / BARRIERS

Barriers to more effective facilitation in programmes include:

- A focus on implementing pre-planned activities leads to a focus on project management rather than a focus on facilitating collaboration.
- The need for skilled facilitation may not be understood by implementation agencies and governments.
- Highly capable systems change facilitators are hard to find.
- There can be limited availability of highly skilled facilitators at country level. Bringing in facilitators from elsewhere is not a long term solution.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen facilitation capability:

- Raise awareness and increase understanding of systems change methodologies and why skilled facilitation is central to it.
- Improve access to skilled systems change facilitators.
- Develop training and on-going support for in-country facilitators.
- Develop guidance and thought leadership on systems change facilitation, including cross-fertilisation of ideas from related areas such as: agile development, design thinking, lean, action learning – as well as drawing on local approaches and traditions of dialogue and collaboration.
Measure indicators and enablers of systemic change and engage stakeholders in participatory evaluation processes.

1 / CURRENT PRACTICE

The current approach to monitoring & evaluation (M&E) is largely:

- Top-down: what to measure is determined by donors and programme designers rather than by participants / stakeholders.
- Outside-in: measurement is led by specialised evaluators rather than self-evaluation by participants / stakeholders.
- The focus is on measuring quantitative performance in terms of pre-planned activities and deliverables. Consideration of more qualitative measures and broader programme effectiveness often only happens in depth in mid-term and terminal evaluations, allowing limited scope for course correction.

2 / WHAT IS NEEDED

Measures of progress should include indicators and enablers of systemic change, particularly the ability to learn and adapt. Other indicators might include: levels of trust and the strength of relationships; increases in information flows; levels of stakeholder participation and collaboration; shifts in narratives and discourse.

Stakeholders should also be involved in determining what the measures of success should be and then in self-evaluating progress on an on-going basis. This participatory approach to measurement and evaluation supports stakeholder learning and adaptation which is essential for programme effectiveness.

3 / BARRIERS

Barriers to better measurement include:

- The log-frame rationale of programmes leads to reductionist thinking and definitions of success in terms of delivery of pre-planned activities and achieving pre-defined outcomes – other indicators of progress and impact are missed.
- Donor requirements for programmes to demonstrate attribution encourage reductionist approaches to measurement.
- Many of the institutional incentives (for implementing agencies, governments and donor organisations) are to demonstrate success, rather than to enhance learning and ensure that lessons are taken from both successes and failures.

4 / RECOMMENDATIONS

To take steps to improve programme measurement:

- Develop guidance for what other indicators of change can be measured and for how to gather more qualitative data, such as stories and cases studies.
- Experiment with involving stakeholders in self-evaluation through the course of programmes, integrated into the process of learning and adaptation.
- Undertake research to build the evidence base for how enablers of systemic change support improved outcomes over the longer term.
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UNDP’s Food and Agricultural Commodity Systems (FACS) practice works to address critical challenges in food and agriculture, supporting UNDP Country Offices to support more effective collaborative action between stakeholders. During the last decade UNDP has joined forces with over 40 international organizations and NGOs to tackle challenges at the roots of unsustainable food and agricultural commodity systems. Covering more than 100 countries, and supporting close to 500 landscapes, the FACS portfolio includes initiatives that focus on increasing the resilience of agricultural systems and food security for more than 3.7 million people in more than 1,000 smallholder farming communities.

Working with FAO, UNEP and other specialist partners, UNDP aims to catalyse a shift away from business-as-usual land use and agricultural systems towards practices that restore long-term productivity, bolster livelihoods, safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services and provide climate solutions.

UNDP’s strategy for addressing these challenges is to:

• Strengthen the participatory and inclusive governance of food systems, build stakeholder alignment around a common vision, and strengthen collective action at national and sub-national levels.

• Bring systemic practices, tools, metrics and ways of working that can navigate and measure complexity.

• Work towards changing mindsets, behaviours, policies and practices, improving the enabling environment that supports sustainable production.

• Work with power and conflict.

• Promote gender balance.

• Promote transparency, accountability and good governance as drivers of success.

In this regard we have recently published a Guide to Effective Collaborative Action, a methodology built on the foundation of 10 years’ experience in transforming agricultural commodity systems by UNDP’s Green Commodities Programme. Over the decade our work has evolved from dialogue and collective action (and our methodology on National Commodity Platforms) to what we now call ‘Changing Systems through Collaborative Action’. We are broadening the application from support for sustainable commodity production towards the wider transformation of food systems.

In this critical decade for action, we welcome collaboration with other like-minded partners seeking to catalyse more effective systemic change across global food and agriculture systems. Contact henriette.frilling@undp.org to explore opportunities to work together.
CHANGING FOOD SYSTEMS

WHAT SYSTEMS THINKING MEANS FOR DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES TO CATALYSE CHANGE IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS.

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