



Nepal Food Forum -2024

An Overview of discussions, insights, and outcomes

Organized by FAO Nepal in coordination with Government of Nepal

Date: 10th September 2024, Location: Hotel Yak and Yeti



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Introduction and Purpose

On the 10th of September 2024 **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Nepal** and the **Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MOALD)**, Nepal jointly organized the Nepal food Forum. Nepal Food Forum which reflects FAO's flagship event World Food Forum focused on the three key pillars of food system transformation, Investments, Innovations and Youth.

The event saw an active engagement from different government representatives, development partners, Private sectors, UN entities, Farmers, Youths, Academia, media and others. Other strategic collaborators like, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Youth Council, FNCCI, CNI, and Investment Board Nepal also contributed to the resounding success of the event.

The event endeavored to initiate multisectoral and multidisciplinary dialogues to address key challenges of Nepal's agri-food sector and drive innovations and investment for the long-term sustainability of the sector to spearhead Nepal's agrifood transformation to make it sustainable, resilient, innovative, and investment-friendly. Prioritizing youth-centered actions and youth-focused strategies, the event aimed at building a sustainable food future. The event was launched with the ambition to be at the forefront of advancing innovations, initiating contemporary dialogues and actions to transform Nepal's agrifood system. NFF was inspired by WFF's goals of *"Good food for all, for today and tomorrow"*.

The event focused on engagements, partnerships and matchmaking initiatives which incorporated high level panel discussions on food system transformation through strategic investments. Further exhibitions from 30+ exhibitors showcased their innovations and products to the 800+ participants. AI Panelists (Himani), Bilateral meetings, Shark Tank themed Pitch Sessions, Hand in Hand themed food menus, drone showcase, youth cultural show were

some of the prominent activities outlined in the first Nepal Food Forum 2024.

Different thematic sessions were also held which highlighted several issues, challenges and most importantly the opportunities for Nepalese agri-food. Experts reflecting both global trends and unique national circumstances that can be leveraged through strategic investments. Nepal's economy is still dependent on agriculture with 62% of its population engaged in the sector, contributing 24.1% to GDP. In attempts to improve the floundering Nepal's agri-food system, the government of Nepal has initiated multiple long-term strategic programs like a declaration of "Decade of Agriculture Investment" (2024-2034) with strategic fiscal allocations for HIH commodities like large cardamom, Timur (Sichuan Pepper), and citrus, emphasizing sustainable development. Notwithstanding the challenges, the experts emphasized the substantial potential of Nepal's agri-food system due to its rich natural resources and changing policy dynamics on sustainable and inclusive development in the food system.



Inauguration of Nepal Food Forum 2024.



Key Sessions and Topics Discussed

The event was inaugurated by Mr Ram Sahaya Yadav, Rt. Honorable Vice President of Nepal, with Mr Ram Nath Adhikari, Honorable Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development leading the inaugural session. Mr Ken Shimizu, FAO Representative for Bhutan and Nepal warmly welcomed all attendees. The event also had keynote speeches by the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Dr. Deepak Kumar Kharel, and Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce Mr. Krishna Bahadur Raut, Chairperson of FNCCI Mr. Chandra Dhakal.

The Nepal Food Forum's three main themes were designed to focus discussions on:

1. *Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum:* To evaluate the investment trend, and policies, and understand modalities to galvanize investment in the agri-food system.
2. *Science and Innovation Forum:* To understand advancements in science, innovation, and technology and its paramount role in the context of challenging scenarios of Nepal's agri-food system.
3. *Nepal Youth Action:* To integrate youths in Nepal's agrifood systems for better outcomes.

Thematic Sessions

The first thematic session on hand-in-hand investment focused on prioritizing policy and financial instruments to create a conducive business environment and attract potential investments for the rapid transformation of the agri-food system. The provision of alternative finance medium and security for private sector investors was also discussed during the event, where the private sector firmly advocated for increased public sector investment to encourage more enthusiastic participation of the private sector with stability in policies, and governance to ensure

transformation of the field. In the subsequent thematic session on science, technology, and innovation, the role of data, machine learning, robotics, and AI, and its growing scope of application in the Nepalese agri-food system was discussed with some demonstrations of its functionality. Similarly, in the face of the climate crisis, the technical discussions also delved into innovative agriculture practices and solutions such as climate-resilient varieties, regenerative farming practices, and climate financing to encourage scaling up sustainable agriculture solutions were brought into the discussion. Finally, the third phase of the event comprised a discussion on youth engagement in agri-food system transformation. The technical sessions foregrounded the valuable role youths play in agri-food systems embracing and scaling innovations.



HIH Commodities Showcasing

Panel Discussion on Activating Innovative Investments for Agrifood System Transformation



Token of Appreciation to Private Sector



Key Highlights

The Nepal Food Forum 2024 provided a platform for insightful discussions and defining collaborative problem-solving approaches in Nepal's food system. Some of the key highlights from the events besides the thematic sessions were:

Hand in Hand Investment Presentation by Government

The government of Nepal during the Nepal Food Forum presented its comprehensive HiH Investment plan which focused on the opportunities available and prioritised to accelerate investments.



HiH Investment Plan Presentation by Government

Private Sector Exhibition

Over 30 exhibitors came together during the Nepal Food Forum to showcase their technologies products and innovations to the wide range of audience leading to extensive engagement and interests.



NFF- Private Sector Exhibition

Bilateral Meetings

Dedicated bilateral meeting space were allocated for exhibitors and interested participants to talk on prospect collaboration and coordination. The bilateral spaces were regularly occupied which saw over 36 potential partnerships linked.

Shark Tank Themed Pitch Sessions

4 Companies presented their investment plan to 8 prospective investors in a closed room shark tank themed pitch session. Tentative investment interest was shown in 2 companies pending due diligence.



Presentation by Mandala to Investors Networks

Open Business Pitch Sessions

4 companies showcased their Business to a wider audience of over 300. These presentations focused on potential collaboration and coordination to expedite the solutions each are providing to agrifood system transformation.



Business Pitch by Nechon Global from ROK



Investment Announcement

6 Companies during the Nepal Food Forum Opening Ceremony announced a total of 29.1 million USD investment commitment for priority commodities of Nepal for Agri food system transformation.



Investment Announcement

Hand In Hand Themed Food Menu

During the Nepal Food Forum 2024 the food served were themed to reflect the government of Nepal's Hand in Hand priorities. Showcasing traditional and local foods

AI Himani

During one of the plenary sessions AI Himani participated as one of the panelists and discussed the prospect of AI for food system transformation. AI Himani showcased her knowledge and gave ideas on how innovation can lead to investments for change.



AI Himani during the panel discussion

FAO Metaverse

One of the key aspects was the launch of FAO Nepal metaverse. The Metaverse represented the digital space for the Nepal Food Forum and was joined by 100s of digital participants. The Participants could from the multiverse engage with other participants and communicate with the exhibitors and observe the live sessions.



FAO Nepal Metaverse

Innovation in Agricultural Practices

Emerging science, technology, and adhering to sustainable farming practices were presented as solutions for improving overall agricultural productivity and fostering resilience in the agri-food system.

Fostering public-private partnership in accelerating investments in agri-food system

The dialogues in the event highlighted public-private partnerships in attracting investments, enhancing innovations, and improving market structure. This strategic collaboration can help farmers and other private agribusiness owners to have confidence and de-risk their investments.

Developing policy and financial instruments for youths

To empower youths in agriculture and multiply their participation, financial tools, and policies need to be targeted to them. Facilitating access to credits, training, and market-related opportunities can stimulate entrepreneurship and create a competent workforce to work for the transformation of the agri-food system in the future.



Specific Outcomes

The forum leads to significant private sector and infrastructure bank commitments to invest in Nepal's agri-food system synchronizing with the government's priorities sector like Cardamom, Timur, and Highland Potatoes. The representatives from the private sector, infrastructure banks, and fund managers all decided to join hands in government focus and pledged to invest **\$29.1 million** in the commercialization and modernization of Nepal's agriculture. The investments devoted by the private sector will be distributed in different aspects of the value chain like production, marketing, processing, and infrastructure development. This is a great achievement of the event as the funds dedicated by the private sector, and fund managers will be instrumental in catalyzing Nepal's agri-food system and the larger transformation changes it will induce in the sector.

The successful completion of the Nepal Food Forum (NFF) has the potential to drive inspiring change in Nepal's agri-food system. The insights delivered during the thematic session and forums have attempted to impart knowledge to the audiences and other stakeholders in attendance of fundamental knowledge on sustainable agriculture practices and strengthen collaboration between actors. Youth participants from the private sector and academia were motivated to work on innovative practices and shaping the resilient future of the food system. The farmers and youths engaged in agriculture were also oriented to different scientific advancements, and digital technologies that can simplify the process of farming and provide advisory services intending for its wider applicability and optimizing inputs and diseases. These interactive engagements and insightful sessions contribute to the cultivation of innovative thinking among future generations and current practitioners in the agrifood system to scale the development of the agrifood system.



NFF Group Photo captures the enthusiasm and collaborative spirit of the forum

Conclusion and Way Forward

In conclusion, the Nepal Food Forum 2024 marked a significant milestone in advancing the agri-food system through multisectoral and transdisciplinary participation and engagement. With encouraging partnerships of public, private, and other stakeholders virtually and onsite, the forum cultivated a shared passion for envisaging a sustainable, resilient, inclusive, and transformative future of agriculture in Nepal. The conclusion of the event laid a solid foundation for strategic partnership and a promising commitment to long-term change in Nepalese agriculture.

To keep track of the event outcomes, efforts will be made to build youth capacity, advocate for policies, and continue stakeholder engagement. Next year's event will provide an opportunity to monitor and discuss progress, assess the impacts on the prioritized sector on innovation and investment, and redraw long-term strategies for impactful transformation of the Nepalese agri-food sector.

