A4NH Consultation on Equity Research Priorities with the Rome-Based Agencies

CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH)

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Abitart Hotel, Rome, Italy
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Abbreviations and acronyms

A4NH  CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health
CFS   Committee on World Food Security
CGIAR Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CRP   CGIAR Research Program
FAO   Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAAP2 Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project, Phase 2
GEE   Gender, Equity, and Empowerment
GNIE  Gender-Nutrition Idea Exchange
IFAD  International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI International Food Policy Research Institute
IHH   Improving human health
LANSA Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia
RBA   Rome-Based Agency
RBE   Reach, benefit, empower
SBCC  Social and behavior change communication
SCN   United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition
SPEAR Supporting Policies, Programs, and Enabling Action through Research
TN    Transform Nutrition
UN    United Nations
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
VGGT  Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure
WEAI  Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WEIF  Women’s empowerment in food systems
WFP   World Food Programme
Goals and objectives of the workshop

1. Learn about equity work at the Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs).
2. Inform RBAs about A4NH equity work and understand how to better engage the RBAs in A4NH’s equity work.
3. Identify RBAs’ research and information needs to inform the A4NH flagships’ research priorities in equity.

Introductions

Welcome

As attendees had coffee and breakfast, A4NH Director John McDermott welcomed everyone to the workshop and facilitator Stephan Dohrn led the group in a participatory introductions exercise. John McDermott then gave a short introduction of A4NH’s program structure, partnerships, objectives, and flagship research areas.

Introduction to A4NH’s GEE unit

Hazel Malapit introduced A4NH’s Gender, Equity, and Empowerment (GEE) unit. During phase I of A4NH (2012-16), A4NH’s gender unit mainly provided capacity building and technical advice, as well as launching the Gender-Nutrition Idea Exchange (GNIE) blog and starting the second phase of the Gender, Agriculture, and Assets Project (GAAP2). The external evaluation of A4NH phase I provided positive feedback on A4NH’s gender work but highlighted the need to strengthen work on other areas of social equity. In phase II (2017-22), A4NH has created the GEE unit and has operationalized definitions of equity, equality, and empowerment. In 2016, the GEE unit held a consultation workshop with equity experts to get initial guidance on equity work.

In 2017, A4NH commissioned Jody Harris and Becky Mitchell of the Institute of Development Studies to carry out an external review of equity work in A4NH and created a plan for equity work in the remainder of phase II based on this review. Part of this plan is to hold a series of consultations with key stakeholders – including the RBAs and stakeholders in A4NH’s focus countries – on priorities for equity research. These consultations will inform A4NH’s equity strategy and work in Phase II.

Keynote on equity and equality

Jody Harris gave a keynote on equity and equality in agriculture and nutrition research. Agriculture and nutrition research concerns itself with various aspects of marginalization, including women’s empowerment, income, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, and geography, among others. An individual may be marginalized in multiple ways, and different dimensions of marginalization can intersect and interact, so equity and equality analyses require comparison within different dimensions.

Equity and equality are both underpinned by the concept of moral equality: people should be treated as equal. Equity is a process to achieve just and fair distribution of resources; equality is an outcome in which the final distribution is the same for each group. These terms are commonly used interchangeably and are closely related. For example, inequitable distribution of resources can lead to unequal outcomes.

There are a variety of approaches to incorporating equity and equality into research. Some research is blind to equity and equality; some work highlights unequal outcomes by using disaggregated data. Research can also look at how inequity affects the processes that lead to unequal outcomes. Participatory and action research works to understand how people experience inequity and how different groups use goods and services.
The external evaluation of equity in A4NH suggested that more explicit work on equity could strengthen A4NH’s work. This could be achieved through ‘quick wins,’ such as analyzing existing data across different categories of marginalization, or through longer-term efforts, such as starting projects that address existing social structures.

Group discussion

- Challenges in equity research
  - Language: Equity and equality are related, and these terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, they are distinct, and we should include both in our work.
  - Lack of comparators: Comparators are important but often missing in our work. For example, much ‘gender research’ only looks at women; we also need to consider men. A lot of research on poverty only looks at poor communities; we need to compare to other income groups, not just quintiles within a poor community. When we do not include comparators, we should be clear that our research does not reflect the whole country or region.
  - Intersectionality: We need to do qualitative work (or consider existing literature) to understand populations before designing interventions to help us understand which aspects of marginalization are important. For example, women are not homogeneous; they vary in age, ethnicity, etc., and these differences affect their ability to interact with interventions.
  - Target populations: Most of our work targets the poorest of the poor. Does it matter if we are not decreasing the inequality gap?

- How do the RBAs define and operationalize equity and equality?
  - WFP has invested significantly in gender mainstreaming, from global, regional, and country perspectives, by integrating it into their language, work, and approaches. They target the hardest-to-reach people but are not yet framing equity as presented here.
  - FAO’s policies focus on gender equality rather than equity. It is difficult to define and operationalize equity because we need to determine what is fair; equal is easier to define.
  - IFAD focuses more on gender equality and recently created a division for mainstreaming gender, social inclusion, climate change, youth, and nutrition.
  - SCN tries to tackle equity and equality through its member organizations. For example, UNICEF helps us to focus differently on women, children, men, etc., because these players interact differently in food systems.

Session 1: Equity at the Rome-based agencies

The first session focused on addressing Objective 1 of the workshop, learning about equity work at the RBAs. Representatives from the RBAs were asked to come prepared to answer the following questions:

- How does your organization take equity considerations into account (in terms of goals, activities, organizational structure, staffing, strategy, activities, and investments)?
- In the near term, what are the priorities for work on equity issues in your organization?
- What resources and knowledge (including tools) does your organization need to effectively address these priorities? Do you see any resource or knowledge gaps that need to be addressed?
Representatives from IFAD, FAO, WFP, and SCN gave brief summaries of how equity is incorporated into work and processes at their agency for the large group. Then, in small groups by agency, representatives and other attendees discussed these questions further and prepared a summary.

**IFAD**
IFAD focuses on finding evidence for which investments achieve greater equality. They have policies related to equality, equity, gender, women’s empowerment, and engagement with indigenous people, and have created a division dedicated to mainstreaming. They target populations based on income, poverty, and gender, and focus specifically on indigenous people, youth, and disabled people. IFAD believes that we are still missing evidence on equity that can be translated to programming. Specifically, we need economic and financial evidence to support economic and financial programs.

Useful resources, knowledge, and tools for equity research include the reach, benefit, empower (RBE) framework\(^1\), estimates of the cost of hunger, and household methodologies. IFAD is looking to build evidence on targeting to prioritize certain people, the benefits of programming, and unintended consequences of programming. They also work to translate evidence into operations at the project, country, and portfolio levels.

**FAO**
FAO works on equity already and equity is part of the organization’s mandate, but they do not talk explicitly about it. The organizational strategy includes gender equality, a focus on age groups (including youth, children, and the elderly), a focus on poor and vulnerable people (through food insecurity, climate change, and conflicts), and a focus on indigenous peoples. FAO has five objectives around gender equality: participation, access to resources, access to goods and services, decreased work burden, and increased share of aid. They also focus on nutrition-sensitive food systems, capacity development, agrobiodiversity, food sovereignty, indigenous food systems, child labor, and youth employment.

Useful resources, knowledge, and tools related to equity include the Technical Gender Network, Sustainable Development Goals (including disaggregated indicators), sex-disaggregated data, the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGTs). FAO suggests annual consultations with indigenous groups, developing food systems frameworks, and convening partnerships around equity.

**WFP**
Equity is embedded in WFP. Currently, gender equity and equality are operationalized through the gender policy and through targeting the most vulnerable people and the poorest of the poor. WFP prioritizes gender by mainstreaming it in processes, systems, operations, and programs. They carry out gender targeting and analysis.

WFP focuses on social protection systems, which are an important area for equity discussions. Cash transfers, which target equitable distribution of resources, make up about 30 to 40 percent of their transfers. They work to strengthen social protection and social safety nets and look at the intersection between social protection and equity.

WFP needs resources, knowledge, and tools in the areas of equity and emergency contexts; the role of cash in decision-making and power dynamics; creating equity indicators; the intersection between

\(^1\) [http://a4nh.cgiar.org/2016/11/29/reach-benefit-or-empower-clarifying-gender-strategies-of-development-projects/]
equity and social protection; and combining equity and social and behavior change communication (SBCC).

**SCN**

SCN advocates for evidence-based processes and rights-based objectives. The SCN membership is diverse and includes marginalized people. They focus on advocacy work to leave no one behind and address emerging issues.

SNC focuses implicitly on equity. Without an explicit focus on equity, it is easy to forget or be unclear. They are interested in engaging with the CGIAR and others on equity research to encourage coherent policy.

**Session 2: Equity in A4NH**

After learning about how the RBAs incorporate equity and equality into their organizational structure and research, the second session focused on the first part of **Objective 2** of the workshop, informing the RBAs about A4NH’s equity work.

Representatives from each of A4NH’s flagships² prepared posters of their impact pathways and presented to the group about (1) their main research questions, cluster of activities, and locations of work, (2) their impact pathways and how equity issues fit in them, and (3) specific examples of current and/or future plans for equity research. During and after the presentations, other participants noted questions, ongoing areas of work that overlap with the flagships’ research areas, and organizational needs related to their research. Participants wrote these questions and comments on post-it notes and added them to the impact pathway posters.

**Flagship 1: Food systems for healthier diets**

*Inge Brouwer* of Wageningen University presented about flagship 1, food systems for healthier diets. This flagship focuses on the linkages between food systems changes and dietary changes; food system innovations that could lead to healthier diets; and providing evidence to policymakers to provide adequate, nutritious diets to their people. Their three clusters of activities include: (1) diet losses and foresight; (2) food system innovations; and (3) scaling up evidence and innovations.

Equity and equality are not yet incorporated into the flagship’s theory of change. In 2018, they plan to develop a food systems framework and a youth-food systems framework that consider equity; update their theory of change to incorporate equity; and create a women’s empowerment in food systems (WEIF) index based on the WEAI.

**Flagship 2: Biofortification**

*Keith Lividini* of HarvestPlus presented about flagship 2, biofortification. HarvestPlus uses biofortification to develop crops with higher micronutrient content. They work to increase the micronutrient supply in food systems by using economics, marketing, advocacy, and education to increase demand for biofortified crops. They have released biofortified crops in 60 countries and are currently prioritizing 30 countries in their strategic plan. The flagship’s three clusters of activities include: (1) building nutrition evidence about the efficacy and effectiveness of biofortified crop varieties; (2) building economic evidence about willingness to pay and crop targeting; and (3) monitoring and evaluation of biofortified crops.

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² Representatives from flagship 1-4 attended this workshop. A4NH director John McDermott presented and led discussions about flagship 5.
Keith presented HarvestPlus’ theory of change that spans from crop release to impact. This theory of change presents several areas of potential equity research:

- Look at access to and dissemination of biofortified crops through an equity lens. Should HarvestPlus target poor, small-scale farmers or larger-scale farmers? Who are the first adopters of biofortified crops?
- Use nationally representative adoption studies to look at inequalities in farmer access, disaggregating by gender of the household head, farm size, wealth, status, and geographic location.
- Assess farmer training to ensure high yield. Who has access to training? Are the trainings equitably targeted? Low literacy can also hinder farmer trainings, so trainings are given through in-person demonstrations at community gatherings.
- Assess efforts on multiplication. Where is this conducted? Does it lead to access across the country? How are farmers selected for multiplication?
- Is planting material ultimately affordable and accessible?
- Are marketing campaigns equitably targeted? Does HarvestPlus consider specific groups, such as older mothers, younger mothers, grandmothers, etc.?
- Do intrahousehold decision-making and food allocation change the nutritional impact of biofortified crops?

Flagship 3: Food safety

Nicoline de Haan of the International Livestock Research Institute presented about flagship 3, food safety. Many health issues arise from eating animal source foods, and they are a large contributor to human illness. Flagship 3 includes three clusters of activities: (1) evidence that counts; (2) safe, fresh foods; and (3) aflatoxin mitigation.

Gender is already integrated into much of flagship 3’s work. Other areas of equity are not yet integrated formally, but the flagship does consider several important equity-related questions:

- Who do we exclude if we formalize markets? Are informal markets always worse for food safety?
- Does food safety improve if we increase the proportion of women involved at different nodes in the production systems?
- Which food safety risks are currently being mitigated? What are the costs of current mitigation practices?
- Are different groups inequitably exposed to food safety risks? Do food safety risks have different impact on different groups? Do different groups have different knowledge about food safety risks?
- How can we work with marginalized populations? How can we implement food safety innovations in resource restricted areas? For example, water to clean stall is not available at many informal wet markets.

In 2018, flagship 3 will launch three to five small studies on equity and food safety in Malawi, Kenya, and Vietnam based on work that is already in process.

Flagship 4: Supporting policies, programs, and enabling action through research (SPEAR)

James Garrett of Bioversity International presented on flagship 4, SPEAR. This flagship conducts cross-cutting research around three clusters of activities: (1) nutrition-sensitive agricultural
programs; (2) supporting countries through research on enabling environments; and (3) capacity, collaboration, and convening. Cluster two and three focus on understanding the enabling environment and engaging in policy at the country and global levels.

Flagship 4 does not yet have a framework for equity research. However, some of their projects, including Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia (LANSA) and Transform Nutrition (TN), highlight key equity issues. The flagship will use disaggregated data to assess inequalities and marginalization in their programs and policies and will consider the power and conditions needed to produce equal outcomes.

Flagship 5: Improving human health (IHH)
John McDermott presented on behalf of flagship 5, IHH. IHH focuses strongly on One Health, and works to strengthen partnerships between public health and agriculture professionals. Their research foci include malaria, zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and insecticide resistance. Some equity issues within these areas include:

- As rice production increases in Africa, habitat for mosquitoes that can carry malaria also increases. If farmers have money to buy bed nets, disease incidence may not increase. Will this change be equitably distributed? What other diseases may these mosquitoes start to transmit (e.g., dengue, chikungunya, zika, etc.)?
- Zoonoses risk increases as livestock production intensifies. Some diseases, like cysticercosis, are easy to control but persist in poor populations.

Group discussion
After the presentations, the group asked specific questions about each of the flagships and general questions about A4NH to compare practices and experiences between A4NH and the RBAs.

- How do A4NH’s flagships work together?
  - The integration between flagships happens mainly at the national level in A4NH’s focus countries. For example, in Vietnam, the food systems and food safety flagships are already well integrated. The Vietnam country team recently convened a stakeholder workshop in Hanoi to hear from local stakeholders in both food systems and food safety.
- How do A4NH’s flagships engage local UN agencies?
  - A4NH’s country team representative often invite representatives from local UN agencies, but it is sometimes difficult to engage them. James Garrett’s role as RBA coordinator can help engage with them and balance the different needs and objectives of A4NH and the RBAs. High-level agreements can also facilitate specific project collaborations.
- How does A4NH engage contact persons at government agencies at the national level?
  - In our focus countries, we have a formal process for mapping networks called NetMapping. We start at the country level and then work down to regional or local level or up to global level.

Session 3: Strengthening partnerships between A4NH and the RBAs
The final session focused on the second part of Objective 2 of the workshop, understanding how to better engage the RBAs in A4NH’s equity work, as well as Objective 3, identifying the RBAs research and information needs related to equity. In this session, participants aimed to identify specific knowledge gaps, needs, and strategies to guide future partnerships between A4NH and the RBAs.
The participants split into three mixed groups to discuss specific issues around strengthening the partnerships between A4NH and the RBAs for equity research:

- What are the priority knowledge gaps around equity and agriculture, nutrition, and health research? These could come from A4NH and/or the RBAs.
- What resources and tools on equity in agriculture, nutrition, and health research do we have already? What is missing?
- How can A4NH and the RBAs work better together?

Priority knowledge gaps

Important knowledge gaps related to equity include:

- Disability
- Youth
- How to use tools such as household methodologies, which can help us to address disability, youth, and other equity themes
- How to identify the economic value (i.e., the “business case” for making interventions more equitable), consequences, and temporal aspects of interventions

Both quantitative and qualitative work is needed to fill these gaps. These knowledge gaps are important, though donor requests and timelines often drive our research agenda.

Resources and tools

Tools for equity research, such as the SDGs and the WEAI, do exist. However, these tools but need a sharper focus. In addition, we need to combine the tools that exist in a meaningful way. Understanding equity is challenging because marginalized groups and types of marginalization vary by context.

In the future, we need to:

- Collect, share, and analyze more disaggregated data.
- Create guidelines for analyzing data with an equity lens.
- Develop indicators of various aspects of equity.
- Create explicit organizational priorities related to equity.

Working better together

A4NH and the RBAs have different organizational structures but have much in common. To facilitate partnerships between these organizations, we should:

- Match common themes, outputs, and needs. This workshop was useful to help the organizations to understand each other.
- Actively facilitate partnerships between the organizations. James Garrett, the facilitator for RBA-A4NH relations, can help the organizations communicate and collaborate effectively.
- Link the work that A4NH and the RBAs do in A4NH’s focus countries (and, where possible, other countries where A4NH and the RBAs have activities) and raise awareness of potential partnerships among local staff.
- Identify specific workplans and focal points for each partnership to facilitate outputs, organizational support, research, and events.
- Explore collaborating with other CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) and CGIAR centers.
- Engage together in regular events, such as an RBA seminar or webinar series.
• Learn from the collaboration experiences of existing partnerships between the RBAs and A4NH.

Conclusions and recommendations

Next steps for strengthening partnerships between A4NH and the RBAs

These discussions helped to identify research and information needs related to equity and generated ideas for how to better engage the RBAs in A4NH’s equity work and vice versa:

• **Identify current partnerships** between A4NH and the RBAs and learn about why they have been successful.
• **Identify RBA offices in A4NH’s focal countries** and connect A4NH’s country teams with the organizations’ local staff to arrange potential partnerships around common themes, outputs, and needs.
• **Identify regular events** such as seminars and webinars that through which A4NH and the RBAs can interact.
• **Focus new partnerships on themes of common interest**, such as income, gender, ethnicity, youth, disability, and social protection.
• **Leverage the organizations’ combined expertise to develop and refine tools** such as guidelines for analyzing data with an equity lens, indicators for various aspects of equity, and household methodologies.
• **Consider the organizations’ combined research portfolios to address at bigger-picture issues** such as making the “business case” for making interventions more equitable; understanding the unintended consequences of interventions; and building evidence to target or prioritize specific groups.

Recommendations for the A4NH equity strategy

Several recommendations for A4NH’s equity strategy emerged from these discussions:

• **An explicit focus on equity is needed.** The discussions at this workshop reinforced the idea that it will be important to develop an equity strategy for A4NH that explicitly lays out strategies and priorities for including equity in the research portfolio.
• **Qualitative work is useful for equity research.** For example, formative qualitative work can help to understand which areas of equity are important in a certain context or geographical area and how they intersect before planning programs or interventions.
• **Specific areas of equity that are important for both A4NH and the RBAs include** income/poverty, gender, ethnicity/indigenous peoples, youth, and disability.
• **There are opportunities for A4NH to develop tools and metrics for research and development work in equity.** Potential tools include guidelines for analyzing data with an equity lens; theoretical frameworks for how equity intersects with research in agriculture, nutrition, and health (e.g., a framework for how equity issues intersect with food systems); indicators for monitoring various aspects of equity; and a list of existing tools and methods relevant for answering equity-related research questions.
• **A4NH should encourage projects to collect comparators in their data.** For example, when possible, projects should collect information about both men and women, rich and poor people, old and young people, etc.
• **There are opportunities for equity analyses of existing A4NH datasets.** For example, HarvestPlus can look at equity-related research questions using existing datasets related to farmer training, nutrition, marketing, and dissemination.
• Creating and strengthening partnerships will help to make A4NH’s equity work successful. A4NH should continue to engage local representatives of the RBAs in the five focus countries. The RBA coordinator can help to facilitate and strengthen these relationships.

• In the longer term, A4NH and partners should build the “business case” for incorporating equity. This work includes understanding the economic value of making interventions more equitable, as well as the economic consequences of not considering equity.

Lessons on workshop implementation
This experience of planning and executing this meeting provided lessons for future A4NH workshops and consultations:

• Hire a facilitator. For this workshop, A4NH hired Stephan Dohrn of Radical Inclusion as a facilitator. Stephan helped to develop the agenda, plan logistics, facilitate the meeting and logistics on site, and document the results. This improved the content and process of the meeting and allowed the A4NH staff to actively participate rather than facilitating or monitoring other participants.

• Document the results as you go. Stephan prepared templates (see Appendix 3) to record the results of group discussions. These templates encouraged participants to summarize their discussion in an interpretable and useful way and helped to prepare this report.

• Work with an in-country liaison. James Garrett connected A4NH with the appropriate representatives from each RBA and helped the planning team to anticipate discussion topics that would be useful and interesting to them. His team also helped to scout the location for the meeting.

• Keep the group to a manageable size. The medium-sized group (25 attendees) allowed for productive discussions in both small and large groups. Attendees from different organizations mingled and made new connections, even among those based in the same city.

• Ask participants to prepare in advance. The workshop organizers sent attendees questions about their organization’s equity work in advance and asked them to share the answers during one of the sessions. This encouraged participants to be prepared to discuss their work and actively participate in the discussions.
Appendix 1: Agenda

8:30-10:00 AM INTRODUCTION

Coffee and light breakfast will be available.

Welcome and introduction to A4NH: John McDermott, Director, A4NH

Gender and equity in A4NH: Hazel Malapit, Coordinator, Gender, Equity and Empowerment (GEE) Unit, A4NH

Introductions of attendees

Keynote: Equity and equality concepts: Jody Harris, Institute of Development Studies

10:00-11:15 AM SESSION 1: EQUITY AT THE ROME-BASED AGENCIES

Discussion of how equity considerations fit into the work and operations at the Rome-based agencies

Representatives should come prepared to answer the following questions:

- Briefly, how does your organization take equity considerations into account (in terms of goals, activities, organizational structure, staffing, strategy, activities, and investments)?
- In the near term, what are the priorities for work on equity issues in your organization?
- What resources and knowledge (including tools) does your organization need to effectively address these priorities? Do you see any resource or knowledge gaps that need to be addressed?

11:15-11:30 AM COFFEE BREAK

11:30-1:00 PM SESSION 2: MAPPING EQUITY WORK AT A4NH

Representatives from A4NH’s flagships present an overview of their work, how equity fits into their impact pathways, and examples of current and future equity research. RBA and A4NH representatives identify and discuss overlaps between their work in equity.

1:00-2:00 PM LUNCH

2:00-3:30 PM SESSION 3: STRENGTHENING OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Discussion of how to strengthen collaboration and partnerships around equity issues between A4NH and the RBAs

3:30 PM CLOSING

4:00 PM END OF CONSULTATION
Appendix 2: List of participants

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Stineke Oenema</td>
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<td>Agnes Quisumbing</td>
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<td>Noemi Renzetti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Rosenzweig</td>
<td>Head, Knowledge Management, Nutrition Division</td>
<td>WFP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cristina Scarpocchi</td>
<td>Nutrition and Food Systems Division</td>
<td>FAO</td>
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Appendix 3: Discussion templates