

Proceedings of the FOLU Growing Better Report Launch in New Delhi

10th January 2020

Venue: Kamladevi Complex, India International Centre

Session 1: FOLU Report – Growing Better Report 2019 Launch

Mr. S. Vijay Kumar (FOLU India country Advisor) gave a welcome speech. Along with welcoming the chief guest and others, he also provided an introduction to land use, rainfed agriculture, livestock and nutrition in India with facts and figures. Mr. S. Vijay Kumar also provided an introduction to FOLU India, its composition and vision.

Ms. Melissa Pinfield (FOLU Global Director) made a brief presentation on the Growing Better Report 2019 for the chief guest and others.

Dr. Jayahari KM requested the Chief Guest – Prof Ramesh Chand (Member, NITI Ayog) to release the Growing Better report. He also requested Ms. Melissa Pinfield, Dr. OP Agarwal, Mr. S. Vijay Kumar, Dr. Manish Anand, Dr. Ruchika Singh, Mr. Abhishek Jain, Prof. Ranjan Ghosh, Dr. Chandan Jha and Ms. Vartika Singh to join the chief guest on the stage.



Following the release of the report, Prof. Ramesh Chand delivered his speech. An abstract of his speech is below -

The content of the report is highly relevant to the Indian scenarios – both national and sub-national. India as a country is initiating a lot of support to natural farming at sub-national level, and states like Andhra Pradesh are far ahead in this case. Obviously, when there are different sorts of costs associated with the present way of doing agriculture there is nothing wrong – rather the need of the hour – is to think about alternative practices. In the past, the government had to ask people to skip one meal a day

to address food shortages. The Green Revolution or the present mainstream method of farming using chemical fertilisers, irrigation, etc has had a great role in managing those scenarios. This was required since India was continuing with traditional farming until the Green Revolution. Given this background, we need to be very careful in experimenting with newly emerging methods that deviate from the present practices. The country's current population growth rate is about 1.2%, which means that every year 15 million people are added to the population, and that necessitates increases in food production. Increases in household income also changes the composition of the food we eat, and this also results in more demand. Altogether domestic food demand is supposed to grow at 2.3% each year. Although those who support organic and natural farming claim that these practices are resulting in better yields, many studies show a significant yield penalty from natural methods. A recent paper in Nature Communication concluded that if the UK adopted organic farming and discontinued chemical farming, there would be a 32-35% reduction in yields. The study concluded that for a complete conversion to organic cultivation, the country would require 50% more agricultural land just to maintain existing levels of production. This shows that we need to adopt a middle path in case of transitions of agricultural practices. As we have surpluses in production presently, we can adopt these transition experiments. We should keep the chances of production declines, and a potential social divide among people based on the type of food they eat (e.g. those who can afford to eat organic foods vs. those who cannot) in mind when adopting these measures. The transformation from existing practices to new ones should be a gradual process; we still need to have a judicious use of agrochemicals. It is absolutely appreciated that the Growing Better report is proposing exactly this kind of an approach. I am extremely impressed by ten critical transitions listed out in the report.

Dr. OP Agarwal (CEO WRI India) thanked the chief guest and all the participants at the end of the session. He also highlighted the pressing land-use problems affecting the food and agriculture sector in India, including urbanization.

Session 2: FOLU Growing Better Presentation

Ms. Melissa Pinfield – FOLU Global Director made a detailed presentation on the FOLU Growing Better report. Following the presentation, the question and answer session was moderated by Mr. S. Vijay Kumar (FOLU India Advisor). A synopsis of the Q&A session is provided below –

Q1. Mr. AK Shrivastav (Retired IFS) – National Cooperative Consumer Federation

Out of 10 critical transitions, Mr. S. Vijay Kumar said only 6 are relevant to India but it looks like all 10 are applicable. How come all 10 will not be included in the upcoming FOLU India report? How to manage these transitions and not bring about abrupt change?

Answer from Ms. Melissa Pinfield – To the second question, there are a lot of interesting examples of regenerative agriculture happening across the world. These may not work in all places, but pilots are needed to show which of these approaches work and look toward scaling those approaches that do work in a phased and careful manner. We have a policy dialogue group looking at possible approaches and what incentives are needed.

Answer from Dr. Seth Cook – The soil health division of SYSTEMIQ is assisting farmers in several European countries to make a longer-term transition (8 years) to regenerative agricultural practices while ensuring that there is no loss of productivity. Another example is a 30-year study by the Rodale Institute which showed no difference in yields between conventional and organic corn and soybeans rotations.

Answer from Mr. S. Vijay Kumar – If we have the phasing over a longer period, when the soil and natural resources will themselves undergo change, productivity will be achieved. For the first question, our

decision to focus on 6 transitions was not to challenge the existing 10 transitions, but rather we looked at those that are critical for India and what we could research with the available resources – e.g. we will focus on terrestrial ecosystem for now (marine are left out for now); we have also clubbed together some transitions – e.g. gender, equality and livelihoods and those related to technology – because these are cross-cutting and need to be seen cohesively. In moving forward, if we see these are inadequate, we will adjust accordingly.



Q 2. Mr. Jitendre – Social and Political Research Centre

Question on promoting healthier and plant-based diets and what subsidies need to be re-oriented – e.g. subsidies for rice and wheat compared to coarse cereals. How to go about reorienting MSP incentives or go through the community like encouraging farmers to grow coarse cereals?

Answer from Mr. S Vijay Kumar – This is an important issue – one part is MSP which is on the procurement side, but there are other subsidies in the water, fertilizer front that also need to be looked into. FOLU will look into this; there is already a lot of research on this but there has not been much change. We need to examine the hidden reasons and look at the barriers – what is disincentivizing people from taking up coarse cereals. Legislative intention is clear, and also pricing is also there, part of the barrier is structural, vested interests – we need to uncover some of these issues and help policymakers at centre and state levels take preliminary steps to address these barriers – understand

the right long-term direction. Another reason – rainfed areas produce about 80% of the coarse cereals but they get a bad deal – irrigated areas get the better subsidies – so we need to see how to reorient our priorities and incentives.

Q 3 Mr. Minhaj Ameen – Revitalizing Rainfed Agriculture Network

Question regarding the study cited by Prof. Chand from England (which showed that converting production to organic agriculture would require more land). I would like to know whether there are successful examples of transitions.

Answer from Ms. Melissa Pinfield – Good case studies are not in huge supply. When we find these examples, we need to compile them because there is a lot of demand for them in the FOLU countries.

Response from Mr. Minhaj Ameen - Adding to that, doesn't this mean that we need more pilots and research – so this must be the logical first step?

Answer from Mr. S. Vijay Kumar – FOLU at the country level is not well equipped to do primary research – in most countries, especially India, existing examples and pilots are there, such as ICAR has several pilots going on – we would therefore leverage these results and see what can be scaled and then look at access to public funds.

Response from Ms. Melissa Pinfield – There is a section on finance for these transitions in the report – so we do see finance for research/pilots as a FOLU advocacy priority.

Response from Dr. Seth Cook – Clearly more good case studies/pilots are needed. Unfortunately, research funds are overwhelmingly directed towards conventional approaches. Moreover, the examples that are available are piecemeal and not systematized – e.g. SRI in certain parts of India like Bihar has achieved phenomenal rice yields; there are other examples which demonstrate that sustainable agricultural practices do not necessarily require larger tracts of land.

Q 4. Ms. Devashree – ICRAF

I am looking at agroforestry in India. There are two points – a) reduction in agricultural land using better growth scenario which is freed up for restoration. Is this scenario applicable to India as well? Second, does the report look at degraded land as well, or only forest and agriculture?

Answer from Mr. S. Vijay Kumar – The Indian context needs to be addressed specifically under the FOLU India platform. The global report is global in nature and hence more general, such as the fact that urbanization is one of the major pressures on agriculture lands. Additionally, research shows that second tier towns are the largest sector that are growing and taking over agricultural land, especially in peri-urban areas. It is therefore difficult to say whether reductions in land needed for agriculture will happen due to sustainable practices leading to higher productivity or due to urbanization and other pressures. However, there is going to be continued increases in demand which needs to be taken account of. For our report, we may do deep-dives into 2 states – looking at different elements such as rates of urbanization, large forest cover, etc.

Session 3: Panel discussion on diversifying agriculture and “nutritioning” the food value chains

Moderator: Mr. Subhomoy Bhattacharjee – Consulting Editor, Business Standard

Panel Members

1. Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar - Chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj

2. Dr. Kalyani Ragunathan – Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute
3. Mr. Nekram Sharma– Farmer from Karsog, Himachal Pradesh
4. Mr. Minhaj Ameen – Revitalizing Rainfed Agriculture Network
5. Mr. Sachid Madan, CEO - Fresh F&V and Frozen Foods Business, ITC India



Moderator: Let me begin by asking you what are the first points each of the panelists wants to make during the initial two minutes.

Farming in India is considered as risky as being a soldier. What are the first couple of points coming into your mind when thinking about farming in India?

Mr. Nekram Sharma: (Mr. Nekram Sharma preferred to speak in Hindi). I want to start by saying that I am son of a farmer and farming is my job right from childhood. A farmer used to produce everything that a human being needs to live as nutrients and food. Traditional practices have been lost due to monocultures and farmers started to produce what would help him to get a market and the rest he started buying from the market. Talking about land use, farmer also needs forest for his survival as a farmer.

My start was from my own village. My beginning was with afforestation and of course there was resistance from government officials since they were the custodians of the forest. Enrichment of the forest resulted in better water availability. Then we moved on to subsistence agriculture.

Moderator: Mr. Nekram Ji has told how farming that has to happen is not happening. I would like to ask Ajay Vir Jakhar to comment on the nutritional aspects of farming.

Ajay Vir Jakhar: Farmers produce based on demand. Government policies have nothing to do with more than 30% of Indian agriculture. We don't value what we lose rather we value what we grow. What is happening now is that there is a demand for agriculture stakeholders like government departments, seed suppliers, extension support systems, subsidies are demanding farmers to move away from the present status or repurpose the subsidies etc. According to me this is not going to happen since a lot of business is involved in the way we do things now.

Moderator: Before we go to the details let us discuss a bit on nutrition which has been mentioned by both of the previous panel members who spoke. I want to ask Dr. Kalyani Raghunathan to talk on nutrition.

Dr. Kalyani Raghunathan: I would like to mention some statistics which will highlight the present status of the country on the nutrition front. India has very high rates of maternal and child malnutrition. Children under five – 35% are still stunted, 60% are anaemic. Traditionally we had undernutrition problems, whereas now we have a double burden problem that 16% of women are overweight, in urban areas it's one in three women who are overweight. The need of the hour is actions which address undernutrition but at least don't exacerbate over-nutrition as well – traditional problems and newly emerging problems.

Moderator: Let's look at – is the farm to fork change being created by the corporate sector – or is what people demand the driving factor?

Mr. Sachidanand Madan: Westernization of our diet is a problem. As a company, we have tried to look at nutrition – for instance, we have healthy alternatives (e.g. ragi atta, and so on) which unfortunately do not have much takers. But there are some super foods (like quinoa) that become fashionable through western influences. We need to be ahead and create a space for these super foods and make them fashionable. Demand should come from consumers. It is not the government but the consumers who are going to make the change. Companies like us would love to provide these (healthy) products in the market.

Moderator: Rainfed farming background of Minhaj Ameen is a different perspective. Can we know the key problems from the sector?

Minhaj Ameen: I am talking about my daughter who has access to millet at home which is a nutritious food, but she likes to go for heavily processed and colorfully packaged food. Density of nutrition is important, rather than just having carbs on the plate that will not serve the purpose of nutrition.

Moderator: Do we need to relook at the entire food chain or are there bright spots already there that just need to be scaled?

Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar – Modeling based on past experience is not the correct way. 40% food loss for instance does not seem to be true for India and seems more from western side. The government as well is confused – not sure if we are food surplus or food sufficient. With regard to value chains, there are subsidy models everywhere (e.g. the US has USD 28 billion subsidy for 2.1 million farmers). We cannot adopt the foreign models; rather we need to localize the developments. FOLU needs to see all aspects of the problem – need to get away from working on changes only on the farm and look at consumers. It is not “farm to fork” rather it is from “fork to farm” – farmers will produce only what the consumer demands.

Moderator: Most of the changes happen through agriculture research institutes. What must be changed? For a revised model, who are the agencies we need to look at for support to initiate desirable signals?

Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar – We need to look at consumers and increase awareness of consumers. We need economic policies so that people have money to buy better food. There are more economic supports given to corporates whereas the need to increase purchasing power is not given much attention by government.

Dr. Kalyani Raghunathan – It is about consumer awareness – social and behavior change communication - which is currently being funded by the World Bank and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. There is increasing focus on this. With regard to affordability, the notion that demand controls supply, more than 60% people buy what is available in the market. Nutritious food is expensive and not available to the average consumer. Need to think about what we should do to make nutritious food more affordable. Since 60% of the food consumed are reaching consumers through the market – we need to think about how markets can become more responsible.

Mr. Nekram Sharma: I would draw some experience. We always speak about awareness creation. The farm practices and health have some direct connections like pesticide use etc. In my experience when doctor says this to affected patients in my area they come back and tell me that I used to say the same thing. We need awareness creation among farmers and consumers. Many of the traditional medical or nutritional practices which are farm oriented were now being confirmed by medical science as well. We also had a tradition of eating food suitable to different seasons. These kinds of traditional knowledge have also been eroded.

Moderator: Price difference and consumer awareness are existing in the food market – where is the missing link?

Mr. Sachidanand Madan – There is an increase in consumption of millets among the rich but poor/average consumer still uses refined foods. Why can't the government say that general food should be fortified with millets or so on – compulsion or incentive – could be a way out. When we talk to consumers, everyone wants nutritious food but in reality, they go for healthier options. We need to come up with innovation to change this. Everyone wants healthy food but when we produce a healthy nontraditional food item in the market it is not working well. This shows a lack of awareness. ITC is committed to bring more and more better healthy food to the market.

Moderator: Is the value chain doing more harm than good for consumers? For instance, horsetail millet goes directly to consumers and does not need processing. Is this better?

Mr. Sachidanand Madan – When a processing unit is set up, they are set up near farmlands and the farmers are guaranteed to sell their produce. They will grow what the processing units want. Any farmer who is associated with a processing company makes more money than others. That way the value chain is working. Only if consumer demands change, then no doubt that the focus of processing unit will change.

Mr. Minhaj Ameen – Value chain concepts available in other countries may not be applicable in India. The malnourishment problem could be addressed through local produce instead of national value chains. There is also the problem that farmers who used to consume the millets they produce are moving towards refined foods instead. Could we have a huge campaign around nutritious food to increase awareness? Can we get our celebrities to be brand ambassadors of nutritious food? That's how it works in other parts of the world.

Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar – I am very scared of philanthropies / donors or private sector making policy. We need the government to do it. Today in India, farmers associated with processing units are more profitable. However, with growth of Walmart, Amazon and so on, they will change their practices.

During the last budget discussion, to the finance minister, we said we need payment of farm ecosystem services. When research organization do this work, they take a long time and may come back to say that this does not work. FOLU should involve farmer organizations and the private sector in the effort.

Moderator – if NGOs, bilaterals and government research can't do, who will? Producer companies or cooperatives can seem to do either.

Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar – Don't have an answer for that because even cooperatives don't have an answer. Changes in subsidies will have a huge impact and may be painful for farmers.

Moderator – Given our country's status, where income decides what a family eats, is it right to focus on nutritional issues before bringing food to the table?

Dr. Kalyani Raghunathan – Saying that let us fix the agriculture problem before looking at nutrition, is wrong – the two need to be looked at simultaneously. To counter Mr. Ajay, big philanthropic organizations fund because they see the importance of behavior change communication.

Moderator – Should we continue with the piecemeal efforts of different agencies or look at the gold on the plate and move forward – i.e. bring all agencies to the table and see what interventions could be done? And what is the role of rainfed agriculture?

Mr. Minhaj Ameen – Nutrition comes before what can be done in farming and agriculture. We need to see what needs to be done to fix nutrition and then go back and see what changes need to be made in agriculture / farms. More than 50% of India's farmland is rainfed. Our policies give input subsidies – there is no evidence to show that if rainfed farmers get all the support they need, in multiple terms that it will lead to nutritional improvement. But when looking at climate stress, or water stress, we need to look at rainfed systems to find systemic changes. Unless we look at dryland farming in a big way we won't be able to answer the question of how much it can support nutritional challenges.

Q9 Moderator – What price signal are needed for improving nutrition? We can't ask farmers to change. We need nutritional awareness – and this should look at what is available in this country. Without a value chain, price signal does not go the farmers.

Mr. Sachidanand Madan: We don't have a clear answer as to how to address the nutrition crisis. Farmer's concern is to feed his family. We need to look for solutions to address the nutritional issues in India. Different efforts are being done to do this. We have all the resources within the country, whereas the value chain guys are kept grey about what to do. Certainly we need investment in value chains, without which the products are not going to reach the consumer. As a big market player, I should say that we are doing good, but we need to do more.

Moderator: If the subsidies are stopped nationally how will it impact the sector?

Mr. Nekram Sharma: Where are subsidies going? As far as Himachal Pradesh is concerned, subsidy is needed to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, on which there is not much investment happening. Similarly, for rainfed areas we need better redefined subsidies for improving farmers' livelihoods. I am seeing watershed programmes in India for a long time – but what is needed is investment in protection of forest which is the source of water – this is not happening.

Moderator – Are we producing too much wheat and rice?

Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar– Surplus wheat and rice is a recent phenomenon. A couple of years with bad rains will put us on the back foot. I am also against fortification because we need to get nutrition from fresh fruits, vegetables and produce rather than through fortifying foods . For mid-day meals for children,

should use local produce (eggs, poultry, etc). This was raised at the budget discussion because many depts are involved in this. They said there are policies and even practices – but the food given was milk powder. They meant processed food from local areas.

Questions from the Audience

Q1. Indigenous food systems and modern agriculture but did not talk about migration, are we losing cooking culture? Also, should we target hotels and restaurants?

Q2. Do corporates dictate what consumers eat (e.g. with Maggi and so on? Can't corporates create the demand for nutritious food?

Q3. Diversification of food in north and south – has demand for rice increased?

Comments from panel

Dr. Kalyani Raghunathan – behavior change, or consumer awareness is not the only way to increase nutrition. There need to be more changes, including from the corporates.

Mr. Minhaj Ameen – Corporates will play a huge role in the short to medium term. We need to encourage the private sector to see nutrition as a target rather than just profits. We need to make nutritious food fashionable.

Mr. Sachidanand Madan – corporates do have a role to play and ITC is at the forefront of nutrition. We have never tried to take an imported ingredient and make it fashionable. But other companies do it and the urban rich want these imported ingredients. We need to start bringing our traditional recipes back.

Dr. Jayahari KM – FOLU India Country Coordinator did the final Vote of Thanks.

Annex I: Meeting Agenda

FOLU Global report launch in India

Date: 10th January 2020

Venue: Kamladevi Complex, India International Centre

12:30PM – 1:30PM Lunch

1:30PM – 2:15PM: FOLU Global Report Launch

- Welcome and Introduction of FOLU India Platform: Mr. S Vijay Kumar (FOLU India Advisor)
- Introduction to Growing Better Report 2019: Melissa Pinfield (Programme Director, FOLU)
- Report Launch and Address - Chief Guest - Prof. Ramesh Chand (Member NITI Ayog)
- Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks -Dr. OP Agarwal (CEO, WRI India – FOLU India Secretariat)

2:15 PM to 3:15PM: Presentation and discussion on FOLU Global Report – Growing Better 2019: Melissa Pinfield (Programme Director, FOLU)

3:15 PM – 3:30 PM: Tea Break

3:30 PM – 5:30 PM: Panel Discussion: Diversifying agriculture and “nutritioning” the food value chains

Moderator: Subhomoy Bhattacharjee – Consulting Editor, Business Standard

Panel Members

1. Mr. Ajay Vir Jakhar - Chairman, Bharat Krishak Samaj
2. Dr. Kalyani Ragunathan – Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute
3. Mr. Nekram Sharma – Farmer from Karsog, Himachal Pradesh
4. Mr. Minhaj Ameen – Revitalizing Rainfed Area Network
5. Mr. Sachid Madan, CEO - Fresh F&V and Frozen Foods Business, ITC India

5:30 PM onwards: Networking Tea

Annex II: List of participants

Participant	Organization
Mr A K Srivastava	NCCF
Ms Aanal Trivedi	WRI India
Mr Abhijit Sharan	GICIA India Private Limited
Mr Abhishek Jain	CEEW
Mr Abinash Mohanty	CEEW
Mr Ajay Vir Jakhar	BICS
Mr Alok Gupta	Envecologic
Mr Alok Sikka	IWMI
Dr Ambika Sharma	WWF India
Mr Areendran Gopala	WWF India
Mr Arpit Deomurari	WWF India
Mr Arvind Kumar	TERI
Mr Ashumali Dwivedi	Sacred River Mgmt.
Mr Ayush Tyagi	Sacred River Mgmt.
Mr. Chandan Jha	Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad
Ms Devashree Nayak	ICRAF
Ms Dnyanada Deshpande	WRI India
Ms Gitika Goswami	Development Alternatives
Mr DrIndu Dwivedi	Network for Certification and Conservation of Forest
Mr Mrishwar NM	IUCN
Dr Jayahari KM	WRI India
Mr Jitendra Bisht	SPRF
Ms Jyoti Sharma	WRI India
Ms Kalyani Raghunathan	IFPRI
Ms Kavneet Kaur	WRI India
Dr Kinsuk Mitra	Forest PLUS 2.0
Ms Kritika Mathur	Envecologic

Dr Laxmi Unnithan	Agricultural World
Dr Madhu Khetan	WRI India
Mr Manish Anand	TERI
Ms Meena Bhatia	
Ms Meena Sehgal	TERI
Ms Meenakshi Kakar	WRI India
Ms Melissa Pinfield	Food and Land Use Coalition
Mr Minhaj Ameen	Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network, RRA
Dr Monalisa Sen	ICLEI South Asia
Ms Muzna Alvi	IFPRI
Ms Nansel	UNDP
Ms Neha Kumar	CBI
Ms Neha Simlai	IDH
Mr Nekram Sharma	RTDC
Ms Niti Gupta	CEEW
Mr Nilanjan Gupta	ILI/ Media
Ms Nitya Kaushik	WRI India
Ms Nitya Nanda	CSD
Mr Omar Ahmed	The Third Pole
Ms Pradnya Pathankar	WFP
Mr Ramesh Chand	Niti Ayog
Ms Rashmi Mahajan	ATREE
Dr. Ranjan K Ghosh	Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad
Dr Rohini Chaturvedi	
Dr Ruchi Pant	United Nations Development Program
Dr Ruchika Singh	WRI India
Ms S Vijay Kumar	TERI
Ms Sangeeta Agarwal	KFW
Dr Sangita Ladha	Jain Irrigation Systems Limited (JISL)
Dr Sarvit D	

Mr Seth Cook	Food and Land Use Coalition
Mr Shambhu Ghatak	Inclusive Media for Change Project
Ms Shanal Pradhan	CEEW
Mr Shantanu Gotmare	GGGI
Ms Sharmistha Bose	Oxfam
Dr Shruti	WFP
Mr Sony R K	ICLEI South Asia
Mr Soumitri Das	USAID
Ms Sunpreet Kaur	The Nature Conservancy
Mr Suresh Mathew	Norway Embassy
Dr Sushil Saigal	The Nature Conservancy
Ms Tanuka Mukerjee	WRI India
Mr Tom Williams	WBSCD
Mr Tomio Shichiri	FAO Representative in India
Ms Trauna Singh	GICIA India Private Limited
Ms Tripta Gupta	NCCF
Ms Varsha Mehta	IDH
Mr Vivek Saxena	IUCN
Mr Vivek Vats	IAMAI
Ms. Vartika Singh	IFPRI / Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad