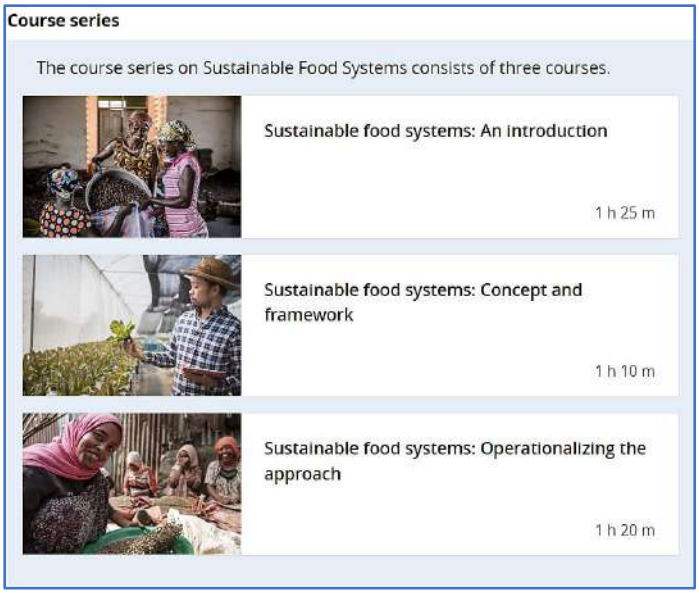
Agricultural Extension in South Asia

Sustainable Food Systems Series (3 Courses)

Platform: FAO elearning Academy
Duration: 3 hours, 55 minutes (self-paced)
Certification: Yes, it is free.

The 'Sustainable Food Systems' course series consists of three courses. The first course is an introduction to sustainable food systems. It consists of two lessons designed to provide knowledge and tools that help learners apply systems thinking to address the challenges in the complex food system. Systems thinking helps us look into the totality of the food system, considering all the elements, their interrelationships, and their effects, to achieve systemic transformational changes. The first lesson deals with the definitions, concepts, and evolution of sustainable food systems. It introduces the learner to the elements of the food system, the drivers of food system evolution, and the outcomes and risks associated with sustainability. The second lesson emphasises approaches for sustainable food systems via three main steps: problem framing through feedback loops, problem analysis using the iceberg model, and problem-solving. It highlights the benefits of systems thinking and its use to develop sustainable food systems.



The second course in the series explores the key concepts of sustainable food systems in detail. The two lessons in this course present an analytical framework to analyse the complexity and elements that constitute food systems. The first lesson explores the definitions and dimensions of sustainability in food systems in greater depth. It describes how the concept of value-added can be used to measure societal impact. The second lesson deals with the framework of the Food System Wheel to understand the complexity and elements of food systems for sustainable food system transformation. This lesson also presents the Structure-Conduct-Performance (S-C-P) and sustainable food system paradigms to explain the dynamics in the analytical framework.

The third course in the series comprises two lessons that deal with operationalising sustainable food system development and transformation. The first lesson of this course approaches how to apply systems thinking to sustainable food system development by discussing how governance influences food system actors' behaviour. Besides, it describes how to apply a systems lens to identify the root causes of food system problems, binding constraints, and leverage points to maximise the impact of development interventions. The second lesson examines and compares four current and emerging operational approaches to sustainable food systems development, specifically business models, market systems, territorial approaches, and value chains. Further, it introduces a practical guide for applying a sustainable food systems approach to policy-making and implementation.

Course 1: Sustainable Food Systems: An Introduction
Lesson 1: Definition and Evolution of Food Systems
Lesson 2: A Sustainable Food Systems Approach

Course 2: Sustainable Food Systems: Concept and Framework
Lesson 1: Key Concepts in Sustainable Food Systems
Lesson 2: An analytical framework

Course 3: Sustainable Food Systems: Operationalising the Approach
Lesson 1: Systems Thinking in Sustainable Food Systems Development
Lesson 2: Operational Approaches to Sustainable Food Systems Development

A learner can access this course series at their own pace, both online and in downloadable versions. An active internet connection is required to access the content in the online version and save each course's progress. These courses help the learner to understand the concepts and definitions at an introductory level, even if they don't have any prior knowledge.

The courses are well structured and organised with quality content, infographics, interactive elements, engaging scenarios, examining learning through midway quizzes, case studies, discussions, and YouTube videos. Additional resources are provided through hyperlinks, which navigate to PDFs and webpages. There is an option to go through the glossary, resources, and references used in the courses to provide a complete understanding of the concepts to the learner.

After completing each course, the learner can take a certification test comprising ten quizzes with multiple choices containing questions directly from the lessons and case studies. The learner can attempt the certification test multiple times; however, the questions change for each attempt. Any grade above 75 percent is considered a pass and is certified through a digital badge. The digital badge offers learners visible, verifiable, and shareable recognition of their certification. The post-course evaluation enables the learners to provide feedback for improvement.

It was a delightful learning experience with immense knowledge and happiness. The course series enhanced my knowledge and understanding of the concepts of systems thinking and sustainable food systems. This has helped me in my PhD research, which focusses on applying a system thinking approach to develop a sustainable rice food system. Thinking in systems is vital at the moment, considering the complex challenges in food systems. The courses would definitely help those who seek or pursue their research or career to become experts in understanding systems thinking and sustainable food systems.

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