Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation

2024/10/08

Recommendation to all APEC Economies Workshop on Addressing Food Security Challenges by Promoting Data Driven Policymaking

1. Introduction

Data-driven policies and consumer trust in the food system could be goals and foundations for a more resilient and sustainable food supply chain. To build a foundation for a resilient and sustainable food supply chain, it is critical to strengthening the linkage between stakeholders in food supply chain, and having the shared targets and goals that help them to be on the same page. To do so, one of the most important things would be to share accurate and harmonized measuring methods of GHG emission among the stakeholders from upper to lower level (raw material supplier, producer, and transporter to retails). Then it enables to provide sustainable choice with accurate GHG emission or reduction to consumers.

To this end, the Recommendation provides a roadmap aimed at harnessing APEC solidarity and proposes possible actions that APEC can take to achieve the goals. It is noted that APEC's efforts complement the work of the other organization and initiatives, such as Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA) and the CGIAR's Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) to create collective impacts.

2. Rationales

（1）Data-driven policy action: Why we need to share a more accurate measuring method and how?

"Data-driven policy action" is based on clear policy targets with quantified indicators. GHG emissions from the supply chain are often used as an indicator, with a variety of measuring methods and tools. While most tools follow the GHG Protocol scope 3 standard, it is technical, complex, and designed for all industries, so further guidance is required to create greater consistency across the agri-food sector. In fact, the GHG Protocol's "Land Sector and Removals Guidance" is still under development and is expected to be released in 2025[1].

For instance, at farm level, farmers are required to use one of several calculators to quantify GHG emissions. As different calculators have different methodologies and requirements for quantifying GHG emissions, there may be differences in the results. In other words, a farmer could enter the same data into two different calculators but see different results.

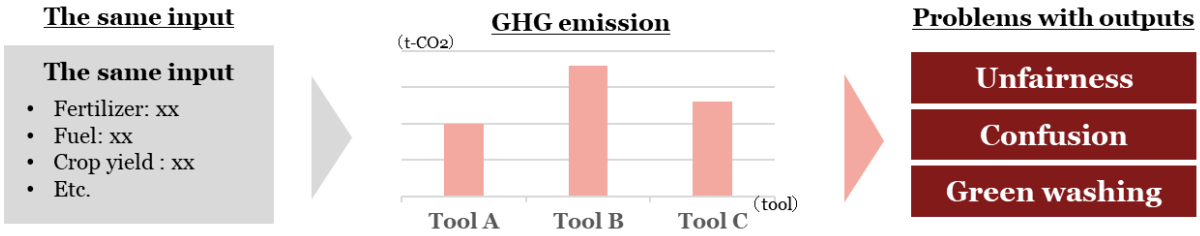
This situation can lead to the following problems:

- Unfairness: Users and developers might feel it unfair as GHG emissions are overestimated or underestimated compared to the others.

[1] https://ghgprotocol.org/land-sector-and-removals-guidance

- Confusion: It might drive confusion that users can not decide which tool to use.
- Green washing: It might be regarded as greenwashing by using a tool with less emissions.

Graph 1. Potential problems caused by inconsistency among tools[2] and methods



In addition to GHG protocol and such tools made by service providers, IPCC guidelines still have margins to be updated. For instance, emission factors for organic and chemical fertilizer, or emission factors for different type of livestock can be refined as it applies the same emission factors in each category. Therefore, measuring methods are needed to be continuously developed.

To this end, APEC can contribute to harmonization of measuring method for more accurate data and capacity development for date-driven policymaking by continuously providing opportunities for sharing good practices, exchanging opinions among economies. It also has the potential to promote international discussion on refinement to measuring method of GHG and other indicators. Furthermore, outputs of the discussion in APEC encourage economies to actively participate in international discussions such as COP 29.

（2）Consumer trust in the food system: How we build consumer trust?

"Consumer trust in the food system", on the other hand, depends on clear and easy to understand green claims and ecolabels with evidence, so that consumers can access to them to know why and how the products are environmentally friendly. Showing such evidence to consumer, accurate measurement should be necessary as background of green claims and ecolabels. However, there are currently numbers of labels and each certification body has its own criteria. This makes it difficult for consumers to compare labels and they do not know which label (which rank) is better for their choice. This confusion and ambiguity can undermine consumer trust in the labels (and thus in the food system). In fact, EU proposed to adopt the Green Claims Directive which aims to require company to use clear criteria and the latest scientific evidence to verify their green claims and ecolabels[3].

As mentioned above, measuring method are required to be refined which also enables consumers to access the accurate data related to risks and opportunities of products to change their behavior to be more sustainable.

In addition, even if claims and labelling are properly implemented, this alone will not necessarily lead to a change in consumer behavior. Other actions are needed to change consumer behavior, depending on the context of each economy.

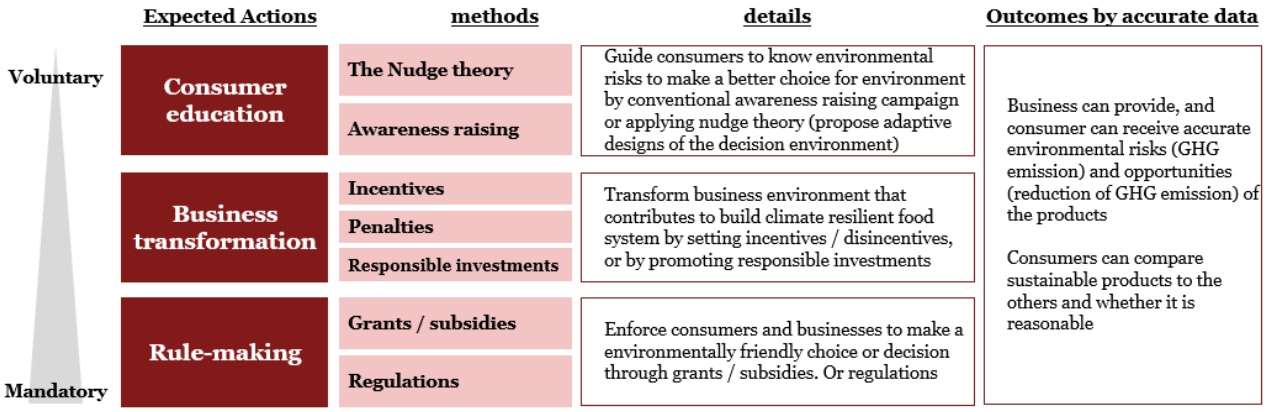
These actions could be ranging from:

- Consumer education,
- Business transformation, to
- Rule-making.

[2] This illustration is not based on actual figure.

[3] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/06/17/green-claims-directive-council-ready-to-start-talks-with-the-european-parliament/

Graph 2. Possible actions for changing consumer behavior



3. Recommendation

Towards these goals, this Recommendation describes outputs to be achieved, with possible actions to be taken by APEC, and categorizes them into short-, and long-term activities as follows.

① Short-term

- Establishment of working groups or initiatives:

It is recommended to establish APEC working groups or initiatives among various stakeholders including government, academia, civil society and private companies to develop detailed action plans for data-driven policies and consumer trust in the food system that will help monitor and manage progress towards the goals.

- Capacity development:

As policy and technology on climate or environmental data as well as green claims or ecolabel update and evolve, opportunities for capacity development must be important for mutual learning and exchanging opinions among economies for further collaboration.

- Sharing the result of research projects:

It is recommended to share existing and on-going research projects to identify effective actions to change consumer behavior in the different contexts of each economy. It also helps APEC to consider actions for developing consumer trust in the food system in long-term.

- Awareness-raising towards COP29

As an output of the workshop, it is important to promote data-driven policymaking in the APEC agri-food system at COP29.

② Long-term

- Proposal for harmonization of measurement method for GHG emission:

In addition to applying internationally recognized guidelines and protocol for greenhouse gas emission, APEC can consider to contribute harmonization of the measuring method for more accurate data measuring and monitoring which also helps economies to have qualified primary data and data-driven policy.

- Proposal for data-driven policymaking

In addition to data on GHG emission and reduction, it is also critical that wider range of data, such as soil data, to be FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Retrievable) for data-driven policymaking addressing food security challenges.

To prevent green washing in the activities and policies, it is important to keep transparency in policy making process. While open data is an opportunity to enhance transparency, it might place risks related to data privacy. In this sense, APEC can promote the discussion on rulemaking for open data and data privacy among economies.

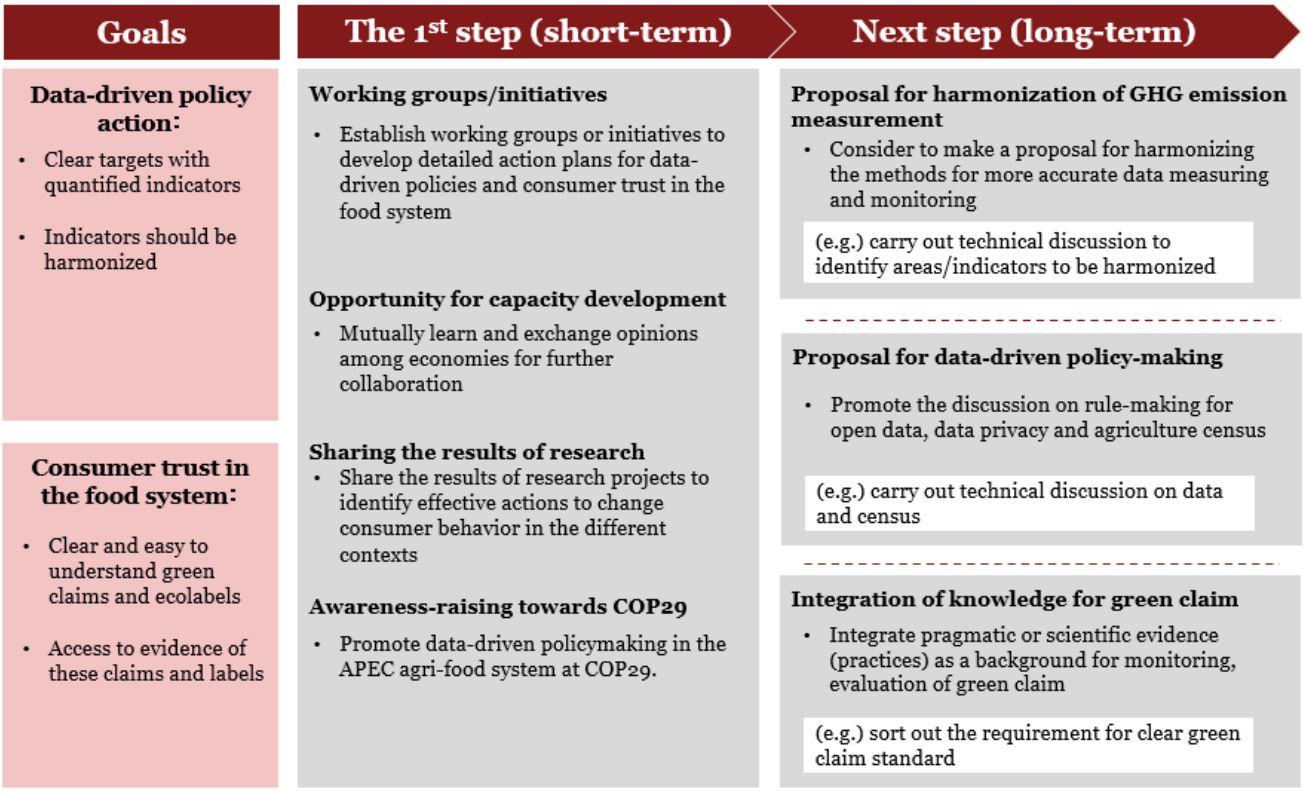
Since data accumulation is essential and critical for data-driven policy making, APEC also

can provide opportunity to develop proposal or recommendation for agriculture census as fundamentals. Accumulated data would be utilized by various research and tools to lead further actions for climate actions.

- Integration of practical knowledge for green claim:

For the monitoring and evaluation, and potential application of green claim standard depending on the context of economies, there should be pragmatic or scientific evidence as a background of such green claim. It will also help to reduce potential confusion among economies when it comes to importing and exporting products particularly foods and beverages.

Graph 3. Roadmap to "data-driven policy action" and "consumer trust in the food system"



APEC PERU 2024

Workshop on Addressing Food Security Challenges by Promoting Data Driven Policymaking
Trujillo, Peru
Aug 17, 2024