

Fr Andrea Ciucci – Pontifical Academy for Life

The experiences we heard today show an articulate and complex panorama of how technological innovation impacts food production in Africa.

Thank you for your stories and more for your work.

With these stories in the background, I would like with you to read a text by Pope Francis, number 129 of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*:

In order to continue providing employment, it is imperative to promote an economy which favours productive diversity and business creativity. For example, there is a great variety of small-scale food production systems which feed the greater part of the world's peoples, using a modest amount of land and producing less waste, be it in small agricultural parcels, in orchards and gardens, hunting and wild harvesting or local fishing. Economies of scale, especially in the agricultural sector, end up forcing smallholders to sell their land or to abandon their traditional crops. Their attempts to move to other, more diversified, means of production prove fruitless because of the difficulty of linkage with regional and global markets, or because the infrastructure for sales and transport is geared to larger businesses. Civil authorities have the right and duty to adopt clear and firm measures in support of small producers and differentiated production. To ensure economic freedom from which all can effectively benefit, restraints occasionally have to be imposed on those possessing greater resources and financial power. To claim economic freedom while real conditions bar many people from actual access to it, and while possibilities for employment continue to shrink, is to practise a doublespeak which brings politics into disrepute. Business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.

I will just highlight four points, highlighting similarities with what we heard and open issues to continue working on.

1. First, the pope says productive diversity and business creativity are imperatives for a just economy. The globalized world cannot be managed in a uniform and simplified way. Glocalism is a difficult but necessary art. While in the short term the simplification of production processes seems to reward, in reality the loss of human, cultural, entrepreneurial, biological diversity in the long run generates an unsustainable system.

2 This means that today more than ever we are called to rethink (and this is the second point underlined by the pope) the relationship between small and large economic actors. Too many times," the pope writes, "large economic actors have, in fact, supplanted small local entities. Agricultural and economic productivity is a necessary but not sufficient criteria for operating according to justice. Not in brute juxtaposition (Business is a noble vocation - pope Francis writes) but in a complex articulation between small and large, there is a fruitful key to addressing the food issue today.

3. For this - is the pope's third point - the role of policy makers is and must remain central and decisive. At the national and supranational levels. The serious crisis of multilateralism we are witnessing does not mean that multilateralism - probably to be rethought in its concrete forms - is not still one of the main ways to build peace and justice.

4. Finally, the pope concludes, the mere proclamation of economic freedom is not enough. When freedom is divorced from responsibility, it ceases to be a value and can become the law of the strongest and oppression of the weakest.

We need to rethink food systems from a solidarity perspective and overcoming the logic of exploitation of creation to ensure food security and to walk towards sufficient and healthy nutrition for all.

Regenerative agriculture is one of the more effective tools we have for moving in this direction. A tool in which technological innovation and cultural traditions work together to feed the planet and build the future.

Thank you.