

Global Open Call Submission Form

***Title:** “Fresh Greens” – An initiative providing direct-market linkage to small and marginal Vegetable Farmers

***Picture** Please forward appropriate picture

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***Idea Description**

The Challenge

Rural women agriculturists from the informal economy constitute 2/3rd of the member base of the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA). Of these, many are small and marginal farmers who grow vegetables. Their small marketable produce is highly perishable and has a short shelf-life. Due to lack of access to markets and good storage facilities, very often the farmers resort to “Distress Sell” of their harvested crop. Moreover, these marginalized farmers are commonly subjected to exploitation by a chain of middlemen - from improper weighing practices, low prices for their produce and delayed payments. All of this is augmented by the increasingly frequent climate and market shocks that has made agriculture unprofitable, unsustainable and unviable. Despite taking care of major field activities, the women have struggled to find a voice, recognition of contribution or identity as a farmer in mainstream agricultural practices. The lack of visibility has resulted in disitlement to benefits as well as lack of access to agricultural extension services; thereby reducing their overall income from agriculture. Thus the marginal rural farmers remain rooted in poverty and their families go hungry, despite agriculture being their primary occupation.

The lockdown announced by the Government of India due to Covid pandemic further added to the woes of these marginal vegetable growers. Due to the lockdown, market yards were closed down and shifted to towns around the cities. Since public transportation services were also closed down, the farmers did not have the means of transporting their highly perishable produce to the cities at affordable rates. Although limited private transportation services were available, these being very expensive were beyond the reach of the poor farmers.

The Idea

Each crisis brings with it an opportunity for change. With this thought and to address the perennial problems faced by the vegetable growers’, the members of SEWA (Self-Employed Women’s Association) came up with an innovative supply chain solution of linking the vegetable growers directly to the urban users by using the redistribution channels of two of its existing social enterprises (Kamla and RUDI).

Through this innovative supply chain, during the lockdown period, the small and marginal farmers sold their produce of vegetables to SEWA at a pre-designated area on the outskirts of their villages and thus eliminated the unscrupulous middlemen. The farmers were paid in cash by SEWA, who then aggregated the produce of several such small farmers at district level and transported the same to Ahmedabad city to be redistributed amongst :

- Street-vendor members of SEWA
- Urban customers (through door-step delivery along with products of Kamla and RUDI)

The rates paid by SEWA to the farmers are based on the whole sale market rate of the previous day, leading to the farmer's earnings increasing by around 2.5 times as compared to the rate they were receiving from the traders earlier. The selling price to customers is determined by SEWA based on the prevailing retail rate in Ahmedabad city for different vegetables, thus making the project viable and sustainable. Most importantly inventory management and all sales and marketing initiatives are handled through simple digital applications like Whatsapp which are easy, convenient, available and affordable to use by the farmers through their Smart Phones.

The Benefit

The most common challenges faced by the small vegetable farmers small rural farmers are the non-marketability of their modest produce and linkage to end consumers. By addressing these key issues together, "Fresh Greens" aims to bring maximum benefit to the small farmers and overall rural economy by :

- Ensuring a ready market and fair returns to the marginal farmers for modest and perishable produce
- Building an integrated value chain which enhances the efficiency of agricultural activities
- Internal rotation of scarce funds of the rural producers for sustained long-term benefits and strengthening of the rural economy
- Generating livelihood opportunities for small farmers, reducing their hardships and making them self-reliant and financially independent
- Strengthening production and re-distribution of locally grown fresh vegetables
- Ensuring food and livelihood security for rural households
- Eliminating of exploitative middle-men and other institutional barriers
- Using simple social media tools like Whatsapp for all marketing and sales initiatives which are easy and affordable to use by the rural women and youth through their Smart Phones

Purpose

As seen above, the most common challenges faced by the small vegetable farmers small rural farmers are the non-marketability of their modest produce and linkage to end consumers. Therefore the purpose of "Fresh Greens" is to link the vegetable growers directly to the urban users by using the redistribution channels of two of its existing social enterprises (Kamla and RUDI), ensure a ready market and fair returns to the marginal farmers, generate multiple livelihood opportunities for rural women and local youth and ensure food an livelihood security for rural households.



Basic information

In this section, please tell us who you are and what your solution is about. This will help us understand the range of solutions submitted and the breadth of the community.

Your answers to Questions 1-7 are **informational and will not be evaluated**.

Let's get started!

1. **'Bridging the Digital Divide' Ambassador:** Are you a [TFF Ambassador](#), [OpenIDEO Chapter Organizer](#), or other liaison utilizing the Bridging the Digital Divide Toolkit to apply on behalf of a team or individual? If yes, please provide your name and organization in the text box below.

Thought For Food Ambassadors and OpenIDEO Chapter Organizers engage leaders in design and innovation opportunities at a local level. They may submit solutions on behalf of teams or individuals who require assistance with digital resources. See more information [here](#).

- No

2. ***Please indicate details about you or your organization's structure** (check all that apply):
 - Non-profit organization or NGO
3. ***If you're representing a team or organization of any kind, how many people are within that team/organization? If you are an individual, choose number 1.**
 - 1000+

4. ***Location of submitter: City / Town**
Ahmedabad

5. ***Location of submitter: Country**
India

6. ***Action Track Alignment:** The UN Food Systems Summit has [5 Action Tracks](#) that support its objectives.

Which of the Action Tracks does your solution most align with?

(Please select at most 3 options)

→ **Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all:** All people at all times have access to sufficient quantities of affordable and safe food (*Action Track 1*)

- **Shift to sustainable consumption patterns:** Shift towards diets which are healthier, safer, and more climate- and nature-positive, the elimination of food waste, and circular food economies. This transformative shift must work in tandem with boosting the livelihoods, opportunities, and dignity of the most vulnerable. *(Action Track 2)*
- **Boost nature-positive production:** Food production, processing, and distribution at all scales are better stewards of the environment and contribute to regeneration *(Action Track 3)*
- **Advance equitable livelihoods:** Everyone working across the food system has equitable access to full and productive employment and entrepreneurship opportunities *(Action Track 4)*
- **Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress:** All people within a food system are empowered to prepare for, withstand, and recover from instability (including conflict, climate-related instability, and health-related instability such as pandemics) *(Action Track 5)*

7. *UNFSS Engagement

*Have you engaged with the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit in any capacity other than this submission (e.g. participated in [Summit Dialogues](#) or a discussion on the [Summit Community platform](#))?

Select option below

- Yes

7.1 Participation Detail: Briefly elaborate on your participation (**15 maximum word count**)

We are gender lead for ActionTrack 4, hosted South-Asia dialogue and participated in Africa dialogues



You! The Game Changer

Those who advance from this Global Open Call **will enter the 12-week Food Systems Game Changers Lab (FSGCL)**, which is run by Thought For Food in collaboration with an array of global partners.

The FSGCL is about coalition building, skills development, and will partner you into a Solution Cohort with others who have similar solutions to yours. Together, you will refine your solution ahead of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit.

In this section, we'd like to know more about your availability to participate and what it could unlock for you.

8. *Collaboration Availability:

*The recommended amount of time commitment for the FSGCL is 4 hours per week. Can you or someone from your team / organization commit to participating?

Selected Choice

- Yes - Someone from my team/organization or I can commit 4 or more hours per week during the 12-week FSGCL.

8.1. Collaboration Availability: Briefly elaborate on your availability to participate. (15 maximum word count)

Either one of our team members or I will be able to participate.

9. *Unlocking Your Impact: What could being part of the Food Systems Game Changers Lab unlock for you to advance your solution towards impact?

Check all that apply:

- Access to tailored mentorship and expertise
- Access to others with similar solution types (e.g., digital technology, financial innovation, behavior change)
- Access to others with similar impact goals (e.g., improved diets)
- Access to systems thinking curricula, tools, and experts
- Access to prospective investors and implementing partners like national and city-based governments, etc.



Solution Impact

In the following section, tell us more about your solution and the future food system you hope to advance. **How does your solution contribute to a better food future for everyone, everywhere?**

This section requires thinking big about the impact you might have by 2030. Take time to think about and research your answers. You may want to speak with people who may be impacted by your solution or dig into reports written by experts.

Use the 'Impact Areas' and 'Additional Resources' tabs on the OpenIDEO page for guidance. You can save this form as a draft and come back to it later. **We request that you please follow the recommended word count maximums.**

10. *Intended Impact Goal: Which of the following statements about the food system does your solution most aim to make a reality by 2030? Please select no more than 3 (think about which statements does your solution **MOST** connect with?)

- All people have enough income to secure the food they need
- All people have access to safe, nutritious food
- Power is more equitably distributed and all people's agency, rights, and dignity are respected and protected (especially those working in the food system)

11. *Intended Impact Headline: Imagine that in 2030 your solution has been implemented to its full potential. Explain the most important result caused by your solution with a news headline. (15 maximum word count)

"Fresh Greens" transforms marginal vegetable farmers into successful entrepreneurs across India!

12. *Intended Impact Elaboration. Please elaborate on the result you described above. Explain how your solution enables this future. (250 maximum word count)

The underlying premise of the solution model fits squarely within the contours of the integration of marginal women vegetable growers across the production-consumption continuum for equity and justice in food systems. By setting up an innovative supply chain, SEWA aims to ensure:

- Fair returns and direct market linkages to the marginal vegetable growers
- Internal rotation of scarce funds of the rural producers for sustained long-term benefits and strengthening of the rural economy
- Livelihood and Food Security for marginalized farmers and local youth
- Creation of an integrated value chain to enhance the efficiency of agricultural activities
- Elimination of exploitative middle-men and other institutional barriers
- Efficiency in supply of locally grown fresh vegetables to rural and urban households
- Training and capacity building of rural women and youth in agriculture and vegetable farming to optimize production and cultivation of fresh vegetables

This innovative model is driven by sustainability as a core value. It aims to build long term structures and local capacities in line with SEWA's goals of full employment and self-reliance for its members.

13. *Intended Scale: Please select that which most applies to the intended scale of your solution. Select one.

We're asking the question to better understand your solution and the impact you envision it to have. Global solutions will not necessarily be evaluated more favorably than others; solutions at all scales are desired in the Game Changers Lab.

Selected Choice

- Country-level solution (e.g., a national land access strategy)

14. *Implementation Location: Where in the world is the solution currently in action? If you haven't put your solution into action yet, where do you want to start? (15 maximum word count)

The project has been piloted in the villages around Ahmedabad city

15. *People: Name up to three types of food system stakeholders whose lives will be made better by your solution. What are their needs and how will your solution benefit them now and in 2030? (15 **maximum word count** for each box below)

Examples of potential stakeholders include: farmers, food chain workers, women, indigenous groups, schoolchildren, etc.

- Stakeholder A - Text box : Needs & benefits - Text box
 - Stakeholder B - Text box : Needs & benefits - Text box
 - Stakeholder C - Text box : Needs & benefits - Text box
1. Marginal Women Farmers : Assured market for their perishable produce, Fair Market Price, removal of exploitative middlemen
 2. Rural Youth : Generation of multiple livelihood opportunities in the food value chain
 3. Rural and Urban population : Access to fresh and affordable locally grown vegetables

16. *Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights: Briefly explain how you've considered equity, inclusion, and human rights in your solution. (150 **maximum word count**)

How does your solution reduce inequality and power imbalances at household, community, national, or global levels? Does it create more equity across genders? Does it uphold the right to feed oneself with dignity, or does it reduce the occurrence of human rights abuses? How does it foster better work opportunities or entrepreneurship? How does it help better distribute value across the food chain?

The project has a gender-inclusive approach focusing on establishing direct market linkages for the rural women vegetable growers to end consumers. The model provides multiple opportunities for equitable livelihoods and contributes to the elimination of poverty of all actors along the food value chain. It enables entrepreneurship and addresses the issue of inequitable access to resources and distribution of value. The model reduces inequalities between the rich and poor agriculturists and helps in bridging the gender and technology gaps. Additionally, it facilitates availability of locally grown fresh vegetables to rural and urban households. The model also supports the environment and reduces the carbon footprint.

The model thus achieves the triple goals of building gender equality, sustainability and healthy food systems. It aims to build an integrated value chain which enhances the efficiency of the agricultural activities.

17. *Solution Tools:

What tools does your solution most use to create a better food future? Select all that apply.

- Data
- Logistics and supply chain
- System design (e.g. circular system)
- Agroecology
- Behavior change (e.g. consumer-level, corporate-level)
- Business model innovation

17.1. How does your solution bring these tools together to achieve your intended impact?
(150 **maximum word count**)

The guiding principle of this Social Enterprise’s business model is meeting the four bottom lines - Livelihood, Sustainability, Empowerment and Environment.

- The model enables women workers to have an assured market for their perishable produce, acquire new skills and technology, eliminates the exploitative middle-men and increases the earnings, skills and visibility of the small farmers. It encourages the cultivation of fresh vegetables and assures a fair market price to the marginal farmers and generates employment opportunities for local population in the entire food processing system i.e. from the farm to the table. It trains and builds capacity of rural women and youth in agriculture and vegetable farming to optimize production and cultivation of fresh vegetables. By producing and distributing food locally, the model supports the environment and reduces the carbon footprint. The model thus achieves gender equality while building and sustaining healthy food systems and enhancing the efficiency of the agricultural activities.



Advancing your solution

This final section is about the details. We’d like to get a sense of what it will take to put your solution into action.

In questions **18-19**, we’d like to know how developed your solution is and the evidence you have that it could work. It’s okay if you’re in the early stages or have already tested or implemented—we’re looking for a diversity.

Questions **20-22** focus on a challenge you need to overcome in the next 3 years—and who you might partner with to do so—while question **23** asks you to consider what you’ll need to achieve the 2030 impact goals you described above. **We request that you please follow the recommended word count maximums.**

18. *Readiness: Indicate the current stage of “readiness” or “maturity status” of your solution. Select one.

Selected Choice

- Moving to scale - Solutions at this stage have been successfully piloted in a given setting and are starting to be adopted elsewhere or scaled. Operational use by relevant users has been demonstrated across the community.

19. *Evidence:

What evidence do you have that your solution could work? Select all that apply.

- Documentation of the solution in action (e.g. result from pilot, indigenous practice successfully implemented for generations)
- Stories / Experiences / Shared knowledge (e.g. interviews with people in your community)

19. 1. Evidence Elaboration: Please elaborate on the evidence presented above and include links to external sources if applicable. (50 maximum word count)

Within 74 days (lockdown period), SEWA sold over 100 tons of vegetables, procured from smallholder farmers and linking them to over 150 urban customers. Even after the lock-down ended, the project continues to fare well, with a sustained base of loyal customers and an average daily turnover of INR 6,000.

20. *Current Challenges: Please describe one significant barrier to making your solution work. (50 maximum word count)

The pilot project has the potential to be scaled into a social enterprise owned by women farmers and catering to a wide urban customer-base. The key challenges to the project are :

- Lack of access to innovative finance solutions to scale-up operations
- Limited sales and marketing skills of vegetable growers

21. *Overcoming Challenges: Please describe one important action that needs to happen in the next three years to overcome the barrier you described above. (150 maximum word count)

Establishment of the Social Enterprise is the first step to scale up the operations of the pilot project. There is also an urgent need for establishing a “Women’s Livelihood Stabilization Fund” which can be accessed by the vegetable growers. Access to this Fund would help them in their initiatives of cultivating fresh vegetables and redistributing these in rural and urban areas, thus making the project viable and sustainable over the years. One significant area in which this fund could be used would be in creating smart, creative, contemporary traditional and digital advertising campaigns to raise awareness of the project amongst consumers. Parallely, capacity building and strengthening the skill-sets of Kamla’s members specially in sales and marketing initiatives to be undertaken to increase the visibility of the social enterprise among its target customer-base.

22. *Partners: Who are the partners that you most need to help take the action you described above (in the next three years)? Select all that apply.

Selected Choice

- Farmers

- Consumers
- Marketers
- Other (write in): landless women workers of the informal sector engaged in the initiative and working on an integrated approach in areas like marketing, promotions and sales

23. *Long-Term Needs:

What will be needed to make your solution work long term? Think back to your 2030 headline and select all that apply.

Establishment of the Social Enterprise is the first step in scaling up operations of the successful pilot project. To further catalyze market expansion, in future there is a need to explore the possibility of launching local and regional buyer platforms to increase market access and transparency. This will require advocacy for recognition of agriculture on par with industries and treatment of farm as an enterprise. Moreover, there is a need for enabling policies to promote formation and then scaling of rural workers owned agribusiness / microenterprises. Additionally, to safeguard the farmers against climate shocks and market shocks, there is need for an integrated farm planning and management packages.

The model has a huge potential for transforming the grave agriculture situation of smallholder farmers and vegetable growers into favorable and sustainable “Fresh Greens” enterprise, providing livelihood, food and nutrition security to the rural and urban households alike.

Selected Choice

- Enabling policies
- Knowledge sharing and technical assistance
- Data and information
- True cost of food accounting
- Enabling business environment
- Access to funding
- Education and empowerment
- Equitably distributed decision making

23.1. Please elaborate on what will be needed to make your solution work long term. (150 maximum word count)

To make “Fresh Greens” a successful, sustainable, long-term, national enterprise, several measures would need to be taken :

- Establishment of “Fresh Greens” as a social enterprise
- Capacity-building of the vegetable growers to own, manage and operate a business venture successfully
- Integration of “Fresh Greens” redistribution channel with two of SEWA’s existing social enterprises (RUDI and Kamla)
- Access to innovative financing solutions to scale-up its operations nationally.
- Strengthening Advertising, Sales & Marketing and Social Media skills of the vegetable farmers
- Creating awareness campaigns of the availability of “Fresh Produce” amongst target customers.
- Access to the Women’s Livelihood Stabilisation Fund for the vegetable farmers

24. Let's make it visual!

You have shared with us important information about your solution in written form. Here's a chance for you to get creative: draw, sketch, paint, and use the tools at your disposal, to illustrate your solution and the impact you envision.

Please forward me appropriate pictures

Download the template of your preference [here](#) and complete the boxes as you wish.

I have read and agree to the T&C, and I acknowledge that I will be added to the Food Systems Game Changers Lab mailing list as a necessary part of submitting a contribution to the challenge.