

## Call for Papers

### International Journal of Innovation Studies

# **Digital Transformation, Stakeholder Engagement, and Innovation in Sustainable Food Systems**

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## **1. Special Issue Rationale**

The challenges posed by global warming have ignited a pressing need for transformative approaches in various aspects of human existence, and among these, food systems emerge as a pivotal battleground (Erickson, 2008). As our planet grapples with rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, and the looming spectre of environmental degradation, the role of food systems in mitigating these challenges has never been more pronounced (Singh et al., 2019). Food systems, from production to consumption, are inextricably intertwined with climate change, representing both a significant driver of environmental stress and a potent catalyst for sustainable solutions (Herrero et al., 2020).

Food systems are responsible for a substantial share of global greenhouse gas emissions, stemming from agricultural practices, deforestation, transportation, food waste and malnutrition (Willett et al., 2019). However, they also offer a profound opportunity for positive change. Sustainable food systems hold the promise of not only reducing their own carbon footprint but also actively contributing to the mitigation of climate change through practices that sequester carbon, conserve biodiversity, and reduce resource use (Garnett, 2011).

As the world faces the dual crises of food insecurity and global warming (Garnett, 2014), the imperative to rethink and innovate food systems becomes self-evident. It is in this context that the International Journal of Innovation Studies is pleased to announce the special issue, 'Digital Transformation, Stakeholder Engagement, and Innovation in Sustainable Food Systems'. This special issue is dedicated to exploring innovative solutions that leverage digital transformation and stakeholder

engagement to address the multifaceted challenges of global warming within food systems.

## 2. Sustainability in Food Systems

Sustainability has emerged as a fundamental pillar of food systems worldwide, encapsulating a holistic commitment to economic viability, social equity, and environmental responsibility (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). Within this paradigm, the importance of sustainability is paramount, as it transcends mere ecological considerations (De Schutter et al., 2020). Sustainable food systems aim to provide nourishing, affordable food while preserving the environment and fostering local communities' well-being.

In an era marked by digital transformation, innovative solutions are more critical than ever in achieving sustainability goals (Wang et al., 2023). Digital technologies are driving transformations across the entire food value chain, from precision agriculture that optimises resource use (Pierpaoli et al., 2013) to blockchain-enabled traceability that enhances transparency. These digital innovations empower stakeholders to make informed decisions, and they form an integral part of the sustainability equation.

In such a scenario, stakeholders' engagement plays a pivotal role in steering food systems towards sustainability (Knickel et al., 2018). Collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including small-scale farmers, consumers, policymakers, consumers, and food industry players, is central to co-creating sustainable solutions. The engagement of these actors amplifies the impact of innovation and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the collective well-being of food systems.

The concept of sustainability within food systems is multifaceted, spanning economic, social, and environmental dimensions (De Schutter et al., 2020). These dimensions are interconnected, and their harmonious coexistence is essential for a resilient and equitable global food system. Economically, sustainability necessitates practices that ensure profitability and long-term economic viability, while minimising waste and inefficiencies in food production and distribution (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019).

From a social point of view, sustainability encompasses fair labour practices, equitable distribution of benefits, and the cultivation of local food cultures. It tries to address social inequalities within the food system, ensuring that individuals involved in food production receive fair compensation and safe working conditions. Additionally, the preservation of cultural heritage is a vital aspect, as food often serves as a conduit for expressing identities and values (Cacciolatti et al., 2015), safeguarding culinary traditions, and promoting social cohesion (Brulotte & Di Giovine, 2016). All this guarantees local communities food sovereignty through a better organisation of their communities of practice (Cacciolatti et al., 2022).

Environmental sustainability remains a core pillar of food systems, putting emphasis on responsible resource management, biodiversity conservation, and mitigation of the negative impacts of climate change (Ericksen, 2008). Digital transformation plays a critical role in this dimension, enabling data-driven decision-making for sustainable resource use and emissions reduction.

Stakeholders' engagement, on the other hand, facilitates collective efforts in addressing environmental challenges and promoting eco-friendly practices through an understanding of power relationships (Brouwer et al., 2020).

### **3. The Role of Innovation**

Technological innovation, accentuated by digital transformation and stakeholders' engagement, is a driving force behind the evolution of sustainable food systems (Van Bommel & Spicer, 2011). In the context of food systems, along with technological innovation, there is social innovation, which encompasses novel ideas, practices, and partnerships that prioritise community well-being and inclusivity. These innovations catalyse collaborative efforts aimed at addressing complex challenges like food insecurity, inequality, and environmental degradation.

The advent of digital technologies has amplified the potential for social innovation within food systems. Online platforms facilitate knowledge exchange among stakeholders, enabling small-scale farmers, producers, consumers, and policymakers to share experiences and best practices (Herrero et al., 2021). The emergence of alternative Food Networks (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005) and The Slow Food Movement and Terra Madre are prime examples of social innovation, having created spaces for these exchanges, fostering community engagement, and inspiring sustainable practices (Hsu, 2015).

Stakeholders' engagement further accentuates the role of innovation, as it promotes the co-creation of sustainable solutions. Collaborative ventures, community-supported agriculture, and fair-trade initiatives empower marginalised communities, enhancing equity within food systems (Medici et al., 2021). Furthermore, the engagement of stakeholders facilitates policy advocacy, driving the development of inclusive and sustainable food policies.

The confluence of digital transformation, stakeholders' engagement, and innovation is shaping the trajectory of sustainable food systems. These dimensions highlight the importance of the interdependence of economic, social, and environmental sustainability and underpin the transformative potential of collaborative efforts (e.g., user innovation and co-creation). This special issue, 'Digital Transformation, Stakeholder Engagement, and Innovation in Sustainable Food Systems', invites contributions that explore these dimensions and their impact on the evolution of food systems towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

Technological innovation, a concept deeply explored by Von Hippel (1986), accentuated by digital transformation and stakeholders' engagement, is a driving force behind the evolution of sustainable food systems (Van Bommel & Spicer, 2011). Von Hippel (2006) emphasises the significance of user innovation, where consumers and stakeholders actively participate in the development and adaptation of products and practices to meet their specific needs. This concept aligns with Lundvall's ideas regarding the role of users and communities in innovation (Lundvall & Archibugi, 2001).

Alongside technological innovation, there is a critical dimension of user innovation and co-creation that should not be overlooked (Von Hippel, 2009) and this is true for food systems as well. Berg Jensen et al. (2007) highlight that innovation is not solely the domain of experts but can also be driven by users and communities through the creation and sharing of different forms of knowledge. Co-creation involves collaborative efforts between various actors, including users, producers, and policymakers, in generating innovative solutions through competence building (Lundvall, 2002). In the realm of sustainable food systems, user innovation and co-creation can lead to novel approaches that address specific local challenges and preferences, ultimately contributing to more sustainable and context-sensitive solutions.

Along with innovation and entrepreneurship, the link between innovation and marketing, as well as social marketing, plays a pivotal role in the advancement of sustainable food systems (Tuomi, 2002), for instance by employing applications and service robots in hospitality (Tuomi et al., 2021). Marketing strategies can be powerful tools for promoting sustainable food consumption and practices (Herrero et al., 2020). Innovative marketing approaches can raise awareness about the environmental and social impacts of food choices and encourage consumers to make more sustainable decisions (Pierpaoli et al., 2013). Additionally, social marketing, which focuses on influencing behaviour for the greater social good, can be employed to drive positive changes in food-related behaviours and attitudes (Herrero et al., 2021). This includes campaigns to reduce food waste, promote plant-based diets, preserve the cultural culinary heritage, and support local food systems by emphasising on regional development through the protection of biodiversity and local varieties of food ingredients.

Food tourism also intersects with innovation and marketing in sustainable food systems (Ellis et al., 2018), as it offers opportunities to showcase local, sustainable food products and practices while preserving regional identity (Everett & Aitchison, 2008). Digitalisation, through novel marketing strategies, innovative business models, and social marketing campaigns, can boost food tourism and local economies while also promoting sustainable food choices and practices to a broader audience, contributing to the overall sustainability of food systems.

### **Submission Instructions**

We invite scholars from diverse disciplines to submit original research papers, reviews, and meta-analyses that explore these themes and contribute to the advancement of sustainable food systems as a response to the challenges posed by global warming. Any theoretical or methodological approach is welcome as well as interdisciplinary studies and papers that reflect multidisciplinary teams. Together, we can harness innovation and collaboration to create food systems that not only nourish the world but also nurture the planet.

Submissions are open to scientific articles with a topic within the scientific areas described by the call for papers. Moreover, papers presented at the ICCMI 2024, can be entered to participate in the paper developmental workshop that will take place during ICCMI 2024.

(Non-exhaustive) List of Proposed Themes for the Papers in the Special Issue:

- **Sustainable Food Consumption**
  - This theme will address innovation in sustainable food consumption practices, including plant-based diets, reduced meat consumption, and food waste reduction, and how digital tools can promote and support sustainable behaviours.
  
- **Stakeholder Collaboration for Climate Mitigation**
  - This theme focuses on the collaborative efforts of stakeholders, including farmers, consumers, policymakers, and industry players, in mitigating the environmental impacts of food systems. Papers may explore successful models of stakeholders' engagement and the role of digital platforms in facilitating collective action.
  
- **Policy and Governance for Climate-Smart Food Systems**
  - This theme will explore the role of food policy and governance in shaping climate-smart food systems. Topics may include regulatory frameworks, incentives for sustainability, and the alignment of food policies with climate goals.
  
- **The Role of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Food Systems**
  - This theme will explore the role of innovation in fostering resilient and sustainable food systems, how innovation can contribute to the success of regional innovation systems through multi-stakeholder collaboration and co-creation, the creation of supporting narratives and artefacts and the development of more equitable and inclusive food systems, education, and advocacy in promoting sustainable food systems and reducing food waste, the role of entrepreneurship in fostering sustainable food systems.
  
- **Digital Traceability and Transparency**
  - This theme will investigate the use of digital technologies, such as blockchain and AI, in enhancing traceability and transparency within food supply chains. Topics may include case studies of blockchain adoption, its impact on consumer trust, and its potential to reduce food fraud and waste.
  
- **Reducing Food System Emissions**
  - This theme will delve into strategies and technologies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions throughout the food supply chain. Papers may also explore the role of digital tools in measuring and mitigating emissions, as well as the potential for stakeholder engagement in implementing emission-reduction initiatives.
  
- **Cultural and Social Dimensions of Sustainable Food Practices**
  - This theme could explore digital transformation in relation to the cultural and social aspects of sustainable food systems, including how traditional food practices and culinary heritage can be integrated into

modern, sustainable food economies. Research in this area might explore the role of digitalisation and technological advancements in supporting cultural preservation, food tourism, and community engagement while promoting sustainable food practices. Additionally, papers in this category could examine the impact of social norms, values, and identity on food consumption behaviours and their implications for sustainability when citizens interact with new technologies.

- **Consumer Behaviour and Sustainable Food Choices**

- This theme could delve into consumer behaviour and decision-making processes related to sustainable food choices. Research in this area might investigate digital transformation in relation to the influence of marketing campaigns, labelling schemes (e.g., eco-labels, organic certifications), and information dissemination on consumer preferences for sustainable food products. Technologies to better understand consumer motivations and barriers to consumption, so as to inform effective marketing strategies.

- **Sustainable Food Marketing Strategies**

- This theme could focus on digital transformation in the context of innovative marketing strategies that promote sustainable food consumption and production. Papers in this category might explore how new technologies and digital marketing, social media, and e-commerce can be leveraged to raise awareness about sustainable food choices, connect consumers with sustainable food producers, and drive demand for eco-friendly food products.

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## Important Deadlines

Submission deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## Submission Instructions

Please read the [Guide for Authors](#) before submitting. All articles should be [submitted online](#); please select SI: **Digital Transformation, Stakeholder Engagement, and Innovation in Sustainable Food Systems** on submission. Authors should specify that they are submitting to the special issue in their cover letter. If the manuscript is accepted, the article will be published open access with no fee payable by the author.



## Guest Editors' Short Biographies

**Dr Luca Cacciolatti** is a Reader in Marketing at Westminster Business School, University of Westminster, London. His research interests are in the areas of innovation, marketing, and entrepreneurship and the leading conduct of his research focuses on sociological institutionalism. He has published in journals deemed as excellent at the international level and he has served on the editorial board of high-impact factor journals. Luca covers the role of European Expert as evaluator and rapporteur for the European Commission on Horizon2020 calls related to sustainable and healthy food manufacturing value chains. ([Luca's LinkedIn](#))

**Prof. Soo Hee Lee** is a Professor in Organization Studies at Kent Business School, University of Kent. He is a vice-president of the Korean Association for Cultural Economics and the Director of the Creative City Forum in Korea. His research focuses on institutional underpinnings and behavioural dynamics of creativity and innovation in a variety of contexts. More recently, he has explored digital transformation in the arts, design and creative industries. He has published over 50 papers in leading journals including the Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of World Business, Journal of Management Studies, Organization Studies, and Research Policy.

**Prof. Xiaoyu Yu** is Professor and Chair in Entrepreneurship and innovation at the School of Management at Shanghai University. He is the founding director of Shanghai Center for Enterprise Innovation and High-quality Development (SCEI&HD), and vice dean of School of Management of Shanghai University. His research interests lie at the nexus of entrepreneurship, innovation and strategy. He is best known for his development of entrepreneurial failure research and his insights on the AI-Driven growth and scaling. His work has been published in leading journals, including Long Range Planning, Journal of Organizational Behavior, International Journal of Production Economics, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, and Small Business Economics. He is co-editor of Entrepreneurship Research Journal, and served on the editorial boards of Journal of Management Studies, Human Relations, Academy of Management Perspectives, and JIIM: Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

**Dr Markos Kourgiantakis** is an assistant professor at the Department of Business Administration and Tourism, Hellenic Mediterranean University. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Crete, a M.Sc. in Operational Research from the Technical University of Crete and a M.Sc. in Economics and Management from the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania. He is an instructor in many undergraduate and postgraduate courses in management, marketing, IT and Innovation management, e-business, computer training. Today, through its academic role, he still connects with the real economy as a consultant/mentor of local companies. Recently, he became an academic coordinator for the Liaison & Career Support Office of the Hellenic Mediterranean University.