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What are the Key Priority Areas of Agrifood Systems Transformation? A Participatory Science Study for Research and Action from the Farmers' Perspective

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Abstract

Agrifood systems transformation has been called on by agricultural development agenda setters across the industry; however, questions arise regarding areas in the agrifood system worthy of research prioritization. While farmers are the primary drivers of agrifood systems, they are often uninvolved in co-creating the research and policy agendas governing the transformation of the very industry they lead. Our study applied community-engaged research principles to identify priority areas for transforming agrifood systems from farmers' perspectives. Farmers (*n* = 86) from rural El Salvador participated in a multistep, iterative data collection process, which included an initial individual collection of up to 10 key questions relevant to agrifood systems transformation, followed by a researcher-driven analysis/organization/ranking of themes, and a final participant review and validation. 376 questions, condensed to 89, were identified and categorized into nine themes: Environment and Sustainability, Productivity, Economy and Finances, Technical Assistance and Support, Supply Chain, Social and Cultural Shifts, Workforce, Innovation and Technology, and Governance and Regulation. We recommend using these priorities to facilitate inclusive and equitable agrifood systems transformation in El Salvador, which considers the needs of all stakeholders, particularly farmers, through participatory methodologies. Future research should expand to additional geographic regions, as agrifood systems transformations should follow a place-based approach.

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Introduction and Problem Statement

As the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) calls for the transformation of agrifood systems as a part of their global agenda to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agriculturists must tackle equitable food and humanitarian solutions (AbouAssi & Trent, 2016; FAO, n.d.-a). The agrifood system is defined as the value chain and complex system that drives food production all the way to consumption, representing the interconnectedness between various sector actors, such as government stakeholders, consumers, retailers, producers, and more (Peters et al., 2026; Westengen et al., 2025; Woodhill et al., 2025). Agrifood systems evolution coincides with SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, and remains influential in meeting solutions for poverty, quality education, nutrition, gender equity and resilience, and additional SDGs guiding the sustainable progression of global communities (FAO, n.d.-a; Niewoehner-Green et al., 2025). Therefore, efforts to appropriately transform agrifood systems must involve collaborative investments between farmers and ranchers alongside researchers, practitioners, and other actors to promote a mutually beneficial, collaborative, and sustainable shift in agrifood systems from the bottom up, beginning with producers (Abera et al., 2024; Westengen et al., 2025; Woodhill et al., 2022).

El Salvador is the smallest country in Central America, with agricultural production accounting for 12% of gross domestic product (GDP) (Bravo-Ureta et la., 2022). Agricultural production in El Salvador primarily consists of grains such as maize, beans, sorghum, and rice, while coffee and sugarcane are major contributors to GDP (International Center for Tropical Agriculture, 2026). Salvadoran agriculture is primarily rain-fed (90%) and driven by small-scale production, generating livelihoods for at least 2 million families (Donatti et al., 2019; Teodore et al., 2024). Farmers in Salvadoran agriculture are responsible for driving change and adapting to socio-technical and environmental changes (Landaverde et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2022).

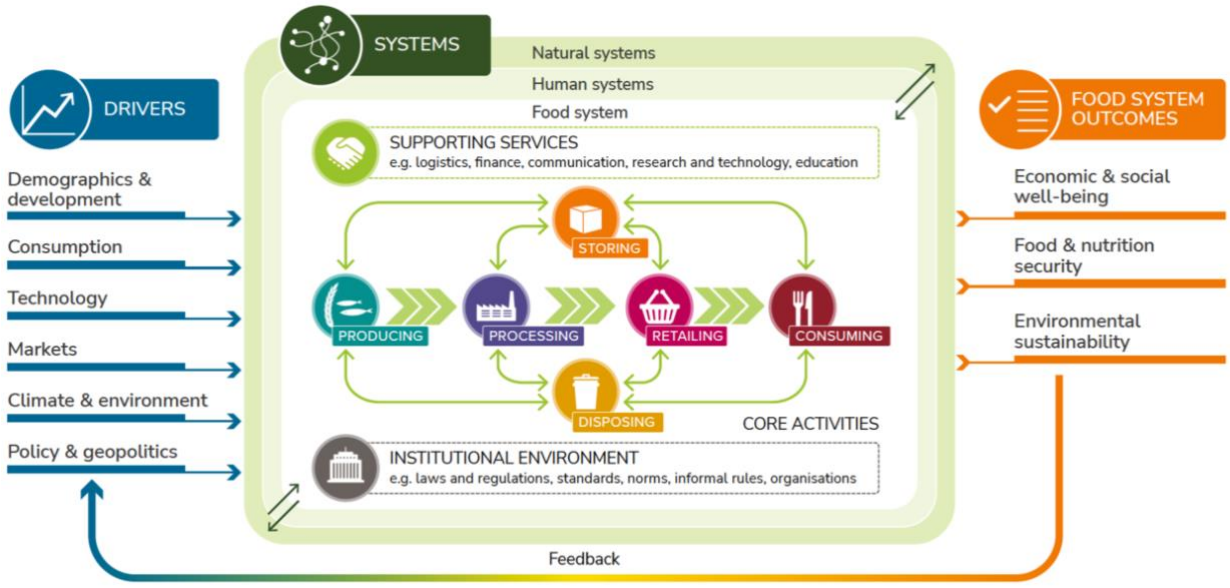
However, although farmers are the primary drivers of agrifood systems transformation, they are often excluded from co-creating the research and policy agendas which shape such global shifts (Brunori et al., 2024). As agricultural development researchers and practitioners contribute to the sustainable transformation of agrifood systems, questions arise regarding the priority areas for such transformation and who should participate to ensure an effective and responsive process (Aguilar & Paulino, 2025; Conti et al., 2024). Shared governance in agrifood systems can involve actors such as citizens, academia, non-governmental organizations, and public and private organizations (Paleologo et al., 2025). Torero (2025) suggests multiple actors at various levels of power and interest can be involved in decision-making, acting as agenda setters for agrifood systems transformation. Given the existing participatory gap between agenda setters, such as researchers and farmers (Ghirardelli & Tarolli, 2025; Landaverde, 2022), this study applied community-engaged research principles to identify priority areas for transforming agrifood systems from the perspective of farmers based in rural El Salvador.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

To contextualize the multifaceted nature of agrifood systems transformation, we used the Foresight4Food Food Systems Model, which offers a comprehensive conceptual model for understanding and interpreting the transformation process in agrifood systems (Woodhill et al., 2022, 2025). Woodhill et al.'s (2022) model posits how agrifood system transformation occurs at multiple system levels in activities such as consumption, commercialization, the switch to more sustainable and environmentally friendly production practices, and the emergence of digital innovations and advanced technologies (Béné & Abdulai, 2024; Da Silveira et al., 2026). The model specifies drivers and food systems outcomes, which are connected by the feedback they provide one another (Woodhill, 2023). Further, Woodhill's (2023) food systems model details the elements of the agrifood system requiring transformation and presents the solution outcomes for areas such as food security, socio-economic development, and environmental sustainability in agricultural production (Woodhill et al., 2022). See Figure 1 to visualize the ForeSight4Food Food Systems Model (Woodhill, 2023).

Figure 1

The Foresight4Food Food Systems Model for Agrifood Systems Transformation



Note. Figure 1 shows the complex food systems model developed by Woodhill et al. (2022, 2025).

Given farmers' primary position within a multi-actor agrifood system, their perspectives and priorities are likely to be centered on production functions. This consideration informed our application of the Foresight4Food Food Systems Model to examine the "why", "what", and "how" of agrifood-systems research and its evolving priorities across the natural, human, and food-system dimensions covered by the model (Woodhill, 2023; Woodhill et al., 2025), with particular emphasis on production-related priorities. This model for agrifood systems reform

aligns with transformation recommendations allocated by previous researchers and industry practitioners (Béné & Abdulai, 2024; Herens et al., 2022; Woodhill et al., 2022). Thus, the conceptual framework we employed to frame our study highlights the need for agrifood systems transformation to achieve SDGs while accounting for the multiple dimensions of the agrifood system (Chaudbury & Hasnain, 2021; Woodhill et al., 2022).

Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to determine specific agrifood systems transformation priorities as identified by farmers through an engaged, participatory research design. The study was informed by methodological insights from Ingram et al. (2022) and the conceptual food system model developed by Woodhill (2023). Our research was guided by the following research question: (RQ1) What key areas do farmers prioritize for agrifood systems transformation research?

Methods

Priority Research Question Exercise

Replicating the methodology developed by Ingram et al. (2022), this community-engaged project employed an iterative data collection process to identify priority research questions defined by farmers for agrifood systems transformation. This participatory exercise, commonly used across agricultural sciences to prioritize research questions at various stages of inquiry, supports rigorous iterative data collection while remaining inclusive and democratic for both research constituents and participants (Ingram et al., 2022). The methodology has been used in agricultural contexts previously to understand the most important agricultural priorities identified by participants (Ingram et al., 2022; Morris et al., 2021).

The methodology, namely, a priority research question exercise, is qualitative in nature, using a multi-step participatory approach to develop priority research questions, condense and rank these priority research questions, and then confirm that participants agree with the final set of ranked priority research questions (Ingram et al., 2022). This approach is unique as opposed to traditional methodologies because data is collected by participants, redefined and ranked by participants, and reassessed, validated, and discussed by participants (Ingram et al., 2022). Each step in the research process builds on the others to ensure the final set of ranked data exactly reflects participants' priorities and narrative with relevance to the research question (Ingram et al., 2022).

Participants

In our study, we invited farmers from rural El Salvador to participate in the priority research question exercise between January and March 2025. Participants were recruited using face-to-face methods whereby a local member of the research team outreached farmers. Participants were identified through purposive sampling. Farmers were invited to participate if agriculture

was their primary occupation, they were over 18 years of age, and they viewed agriculture as part of their future livelihoods. A total of 86 farmers were invited to participate in the study. Participants were primarily located in Chalatenango, El Salvador (*n* = 67, 77.9%). Most participants were male (*n* = 58, 67.4%), with female farmers representing a smaller proportion of the sample (*n* = 28, 32.6%). Most participants reported holding a high school diploma (*n* = 44, 51.2%). Additionally, just over one quarter of the farmers (*n* = 38, 44.2%) indicated having supplemental sources of income outside of agriculture. Vegetables and corn were identified as the primary agricultural products among participants, and most participants (*n* = 82; 95.3%) had worked in agriculture for over 5 years.

For context, the agricultural workforce in El Salvador makes up 14% of employment across the country (World Bank, 2026). In Latin America and the Caribbean, women are responsible for approximately 40% or more of the agricultural workforce and household food production efforts (Inter-American Development Bank Group, 2026; Landaverde et al., 2021). The participant sample in our study is reflective of the demographics in comparison to Salvadorian agriculture (FAO, n.d.-b; Landaverde et al., 2021).

Data Collection & Trustworthiness

The first stage of the priority research question exercise happened in rural El Salvador in January 2025. Participants independently completed an initial paper-based questionnaire, which was delivered to their home and collected five days later. The questionnaire included demographic questions and a single open-ended item asking respondents to list up to 10 key research and practice priorities, framed as questions for agrifood systems transformation over the next five years. The questionnaire was in Spanish, given the location and local language of study participants; limitations and positionality will be discussed in the following sections. Responses from this first stage were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis, during which submitted questions were reviewed and grouped into thematic clusters (Creswell, 2007).

Next, participants ranked these themes, which were determined based on their priority questions submitted using the questionnaire. Farmers ranked themes by perceived priority in collaborative group rankings. In March 2025, participants gathered in a privately reserved space at a local school classroom where question themes were shared and the ranking of themes was complete. Participants were divided evenly into group tables where each table was given a theme and asked to rank the hierarchy of prioritized questions in that theme. Each table group had one theme to complete ranking for. This process was led face to face by a research team member who offered instructions and guidance on the ranking process. Steps were not recorded as the final receipt of data in this process was the ranked priority research questions.

Participants ranked themes according to a three-tiered importance framework which was provided to participants prior to the ranking activity for a cohesive group ranking process (Ingram et al., 2022). Tiers in the ranking process included gold, indicating the highest priority, followed sequentially by silver and bronze tiers (Ingram et al., 2022). Gold rank indicates questions which should be researched significantly, underscoring the need for a strong research

base, with silver and bronze following respectively in lower prioritization and significance identified by participants (Ingram et al., 2022).

Finally, immediately following the ranking stage, three in-person discussion sessions were conducted with farmers to further explore farmers' rankings and to unpack the most frequently mentioned questions within each thematic cluster (Ingram et al., 2022; Sutherland et al., 2011). This stage of the data collection process was comparative to focus groups to develop a supporting narrative from farmers after the completion of the priority question ranking process (Creswell, 2007). Discussion sessions were conducted immediately following question rankings onsite and were facilitated by a research team member.

Upon completion of the entire priority research question exercise including all steps (questionnaire and question development, theme and ranking development, and the discussion session), data was triangulated to review themes, observations, and discussion session notes (Creswell, 2007). Review of themes and triangulation of data followed in the weeks after completing the final stage involving participants from March 2025. While the entire approach to data collection was collaborative, we were also sure to employ qualitative principles that ensured the process was systematic and rigorous.

Trustworthiness was ensured through continuous member checking; reflective memoing by the research team; and the triangulation of data sources, including the original questions developed by participants, discussion session transcripts, and any researcher observation notes (Creswell, 2007). Validity of the data themes and ranked questions were confirmed through member checking efforts and additional reflective practices (Creswell, 2007; Ingram et al., 2022). Continuous member checking in our study involved engaging participants with the data to ensure agreement on the prioritized questions and themes extracted was achieved. This primarily occurred in the discussion section (stage three) and entailed meeting with participants to reword, review, and ensure the data was comprehensive of participants' viewpoints and perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Ingram et al., 2022).

Limitations & Researcher Positionality

Although we engaged in an incremental and detailed data collection process, we acknowledge that this study comes with limitations, considering the nature of the study being conducted with Salvadorian farmer questionnaires and findings presented throughout the study were translated from Spanish to English. While the research team's positionality stems from a bilingual background, we recognize that concepts translated from one language to another may not come with equal nuance as that of the initial statement(s) and original context.

However, we ensured steps were taken to minimize limitations, including having a sociolinguistic competent translator among the research team who was responsible for translating data from Spanish to English during the reporting of results phase (Choi et al., 2012; Squires, 2008). Sociolinguistic competence includes being able to understand, converse, and integrate cultural expressions and meanings of both languages completely (Squires, 2008; Landaverde et al., 2021). Having a sociolinguistic competent team member who was also native

to the region of El Salvador where data was collected supported the team's ability to clarify any discrepancies in the translation of data. Likewise, we acknowledge potential bias and positionality of the research team. One author of the research team, the sociolinguistic competent member, is from and has lived and worked throughout Central America and El Salvador for a number of years. Other members of the research team have professional experience in various developing countries and international contexts. Collectively, the research team has rich experience conducting studies of this nature to ensure bias is limited, and research positionality was valuable to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2025).

Findings

We present the findings of the study, which aimed to identify priority research questions from farmers to lead agrifood systems transformation in El Salvador. The thematic areas and constituent questions reflect the iterative process of priority identification (Ingram et al., 2022). Initially, 376 priority questions were identified by farmers involved in the participatory data collection process in stage one of the priority research question exercise. Following revisions, items that were unclear or not framed as questions were removed, yielding a refined list of 234. This list was further consolidated to 89 questions by eliminating repetitions and those with high similarity.

Nine thematic areas were identified by the research team and then prioritized by farmers. The following themes categorize the priority research questions developed by participants, where *n* = the number of prioritized questions for each respective theme. Priority question themes include: Environment and Sustainability (*n* = 15), Productivity (*n* = 8), Economy and Finances (*n* = 9), Technical Assistance and Support (*n* = 11), Supply Chain (*n* = 13), Social and Cultural Shifts (*n* = 10), Workforce (*n* = 6), Innovation and Technology (*n* = 14), and Governance and Regulation (*n* = 3). Each thematic priority area is described in depth below, along with the identified key research questions and coordinated ranking level either gold, silver, or bronze according to level of significant prioritization deemed by farmers (Ingram et al., 2022). See the methods section for clarification and further definition of the ranking process (Ingram et al., 202)

Priority Theme One: Environment and Sustainability

The theme Environment and Sustainability encompassed questions highlighting the increasing pressures farmers face to produce under challenging environmental conditions while safeguarding the natural resources essential to their livelihoods. The initial set of 15 questions for this theme centered on climate variability, resource management and conservation, natural disasters, and land stewardship. After undergoing proposal, ranking, voting, and prioritization, the list was refined to the following set of questions:

1. Gold: How can food systems become more adaptive and financially resilient in the face of changing climate conditions and/or extreme weather events?
2. Gold: How can food systems produce with less impact on environmental health and natural resources?

3. Silver: How to create the system/stakeholder's group that is needed to conserve and maintain the ecosystems within local food systems?
4. Bronze: What are the ideal indicators of environmental health and sustainability for local food systems?

Priority Theme Two: Productivity

Closely related to Theme one, Theme two – Productivity – identified priority research questions which concern issues related to production management and efficiency. Initially, the eight questions addressed efficiency, oversight, yields, and resilience. Farmers were predominantly focused on yields in the voting and prioritization stage, resulting in the following priority questions:

1. Gold: How can producers increase productivity and efficiency for local food systems?
2. Gold: How effective are the alternative productive models for the long-term sustainability of local food systems?
3. Gold: What are the likely effects of climate variability in productivity (quality and quantity) across sectors of local food systems?
4. Silver: What tools and resources are locally needed to ensure sustainable productivity?

Priority Theme Three: Economy and Finances

In theme three, Economy and Finances, questions farmers identified included issues surrounding investment, prices, market participation, and loans. The list of questions was grouped into investment, inputs, commercialization, and financial assistance. Following the iterative stages, farmers' priorities are reflected in the questions:

1. Gold: How can food systems remain financially viable for the provision of local livelihoods?
2. Gold: What local agencies should address the lack of investment and financial assistance for local food systems?
3. Silver: How can local food systems' stakeholders remain competitive in broader agricultural markets?
4. Bronze: What financial tools help food systems adapt and recover from environmental hazards?

Priority Theme Four: Technical Assistance and Support

This theme, Technical Assistance and Support, gathered farmers' priorities as they related to access to credible, reliable, and responsive technical assistance and support. Farmer 12 reflected, "Agriculture is not the same anymore as it used to be 25 years ago when I started working on it by myself… There is so much that I don't know and that I would like to get adequate help on." This reflection insinuates the evolution of the agrifood system, highlighting farmers' need for proper support and technical assistance in the 21st century. Intrinsically connected with other themes, theme four's original 23 questions focused on: participation barriers, farmers' trust, cultural relevance, and inclusiveness in participation. These overarching areas were subsequently refined by participants, resulting in the following questions:

1. Gold: What are the primary benefits (return of investment) attributed to technical assistance and support in local food systems?

2. Gold: What are the priorities for technical assistance and support among local food systems' stakeholders?
3. Silver: How effective are current public and privately funded technical assistance and support models for local food systems?
4. Bronze: How does technical assistance support women, youth, and marginalized groups?

Priority Theme Five: Supply Chain

As Farmer 23 explained, the supply chain is locally understood as "everything that happens for a food item to reach someone's table." Theme five, Supply Chain, identified questions primarily addressing market access, postharvest losses, intermediaries, and competitiveness. Through iterative revisions and prioritization by farmers, the following refined set of questions emerged:

1. Gold: How can food systems improve production handling for reducing waste and loss?
2. Gold: What is the adequate regulatory structure for intermediaries' participation in local food systems?
3. Silver: How can supply chains' resilience in local food systems be increased?
4. Bronze: What are the primary areas of infrastructure and transportation that must be addressed in local food systems to prevent disruptions and improve overall performance?

Priority Theme Six: Social and Cultural Shifts

In theme six, farmers proposed issues related to the long-term sustainability of agriculture, particularly rooted in generational change, and with that, a growing separation between cultural practices and scientific knowledge. Similarly, participants expressed a growing interest in participatory and collaborative agricultural production, with a particular interest for younger generations to engage in family production, while addressing a continuous shift in the perspectives which youth and kids have regarding agriculture. Key questions representative of theme six, Social and Cultural Shifts, include:

1. Gold: How could the public and private institutional interest in local food systems be elevated?
2. Gold: What strategies could ensure a successful multigenerational transition in local food systems?
3. Silver: How could local knowledge be preserved, while adding intentional and relevant scientific knowledge?
4. Bronze: How can local food systems be more responsive to cultural and demographic shifts?

Priority Theme Seven: Workforce

Driven by an excitement regarding labor and workforce development, farmers proposed a set of questions focused on the capacity of agricultural livelihoods. Theme seven, Workforce, highlights farmers' desire to provide decent living income and conditions for agrifood systems-dependent communities. Alongside these valuations, farmers suggested a growing need for opportunities that could address deficiencies in training and capacity building, especially as technology continues to emerge as a tool for agricultural development. Key questions developed relating to this theme are:

1. Gold: How can labor stability and fairness be incentivized in local food systems?

2. Gold: How can safety and fulfillment for labor groups in local agrifood systems be improved?
3. Silver: What strategies could be implemented to ensure a sustainable labor force?
4. Bronze: How can beliefs and misconceptions shift regarding labor and workforce opportunities in production for agrifood systems?

Theme Eight: Innovation and Technology

Continuously, questions in theme eight highlighted farmers' urgent call for more responsive innovation and for integrating local needs into the development process. The questions grouped within this theme also pointed to the factors that shape and support technology adoption, including those that either enable or hinder farmers' ability to use digital tools effectively. Several questions emphasized the importance of support and engagement from both public and private entities in driving innovation across local food systems, including:

1. Gold: What are the tangible benefits (return on investment) of innovation and technologies for local food systems stakeholders?
2. Gold: How could innovation and technological advancements integrate local needs and preferences to ensure long-term sustainability?
3. Silver: What are the individual and collective features that could aid the adoption and utilization of innovation and technological advancements?
4. Bronze: How could innovation and technological progress become a democratic and inclusive process?

Theme Nine: Governance and Regulation

Theme nine aggregates questions underscoring the need for governance structures and regulatory frameworks grounded in community realities. The questions clustered here also highlighted the institutional conditions that shape farmers' ability to participate in and benefit from agricultural policies, including regulations that can either facilitate or constrain the adoption of new practices and technologies. Questions pointed to the critical role of coordinated action among government agencies, producer organizations, and private-sector actors in ensuring the effectiveness of procedures and resources in local food systems. Key questions to prioritize for this theme included:

1. Gold: How can public and private organizations promote active participation of food systems' stakeholders in governance?
2. Gold: How can the system/community that is needed to regulate and govern local food systems be created?
3. Silver: What regulatory measures should be implemented for an ethical and sustainable management of local food systems?
4. Bronze: How can organizations build trust with local agrifood systems' stakeholders?

Collectively, the analysis of the rankings and proposed questions reveal a wide range of perspectives across multiple topic areas and needs. Farmers emphasized the interconnectedness of emerging themes and recognized the potential to address several of them through coordinated, single-initiative efforts. This collective distribution of themes offers

novel insights to guide future research, public policy, and investment decisions. Most importantly, the identified research themes bring farmers' priorities and needs to the forefront of discussions regarding local food systems in El Salvador.

Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations

Agrifood systems transformation is a complex, multisectoral, and interdisciplinary process that requires the active involvement of industry, academia, government, and most importantly, farmers, who lead day-to-day production activities (Paleologo et al., 2025). As farmers are often unincluded in the research prioritization and development of agendas relevant to their daily operations (Brunori et al., 2024), this study aimed to pinpoint key research questions for agrifood systems transformation from farmers in El Salvador. Results from this study indicated that farmers' priority research questions were majorly within the themes Environment and Sustainability (*n* = 15), Innovation and Technology (*n* = 14), and Supply Chain (*n* = 13), as these were the themes with the most questions per theme. These categorizations make sense given the timeliness and context of the study location (Zimerman, 2024). The agrifood system in El Salvador currently faces roller-coaster environmental shocks, competing demands for the digitalization of the industry with the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (Da Silveira et al., 2026), and concerns with supply chain gaps given ongoing geopolitical and economic conflict (Dull, 2008; Zimerman, 2024).

Bravo-Ureta et al. (2022) completed a study in 2022, which found that agricultural productivity efforts in El Salvador should focus on the improvement of technological efficiency and progress. Findings from Bravo-Ureta et al. (2022) align with that of the voices from farmers in our study who contend that prioritizing research on the adoption of technology for agriculture in El Salvador could reward more efficient agrifood systems transformation. This agreement in farmers' call to adopt technological innovation is positive and suggests farmers and researchers may have aligned priorities for digital innovation for agrifood systems transformation in El Salvador (Aguilar & Paulino, 2025; Ghiradelli & Taralli, 2025; Da Silveira et al., 2026). However, this is just one area requiring the attention of agrifood systems stakeholders for collective transformation, and the results of coordinated efforts from researchers or other actors may not be immediately visible to farmers. Bravo-Ureta et al.'s (2022) research provides just one example of potential alignment in farmer agendas, where other studies may not address farmers' concerns, needs, or priorities. Additional themes for prioritization from farmers in our study included Technical Assistance and Support (*n* = 11), Social and Cultural Shifts (*n* = 10), Economy and Finances (*n* = 9), Productivity (*n* = 8), Workforce (*n* = 6), and Governance and Regulation (*n* = 3).

Our results highlight farmers' ranking of gold, or high prioritization, for more than two research questions for each theme. This result indicates that while themes have resulting questions of varying quantities, farmers continue to place a high priority on each theme identified in our study in some capacity. We note here that the theme with the highest number of gold question rankings was Productivity, which included three gold and one silver priority questions, whereas

other themes had two gold, one silver, and one bronze ranking. High prioritization of the theme Productivity from farmers may come from the demand to meet the prevalence of food insecurity and undernourishment (more than 6% of the population) (FAO, n.d.-c) in El Salvador, or the increasing demand to feed the increase in year-over-year population growth (World Bank, n.d.). Likewise, farmers' positionality and daily careers and livelihoods being driven by production agriculture may have increased the prioritization of this theme by the farmers in this study.

Further, these findings align with the conceptual ideologies described by the Foresight4Food Food Systems Model after Woodhill (2023). By continuing to engage farmers in the research and development processes with various stakeholders, knowledge gaps between agenda setters and production agriculturists may be decreased (Bandé et al., 2024; Ghirardelli & Tarolli, 2025). We suggest that our research highlights a participatory data collection exercise which can be used to foster inclusivity and empowerment among a key population driving the agrifood system (Abera et al., 2024; Ingram et al., 2022). Aligned with previous recommendations (Landaverde et al., 2021; 2023), increasing farmer involvement in initiative planning and execution is likely to enhance overall success. In this context, our findings aim to serve as a road map for stakeholders seeking to foster an informed and responsive transformation of agrifood systems. As farmers are often left out of decision-making roles and prioritization of research objectives, our research study aimed to model what agrifood systems transformation can simulate upon beneficiary engagement between researchers and farmers.

Finally, the results of our study have implications for researchers and policymakers in El Salvador to focus on the resulting themes to drive agrifood systems transformation. While the results may have potential transferability to similar settings, we advocate for a place-based approach when addressing agrifood systems challenges and transformation (Landaverde et al., 2023). The overarching themes developed using the priority research question exercise (Ingram et al., 2022) should not be generalized for contexts outside of El Salvador or Latin America, despite that there may be overlap in the demands farmers have globally. In conclusion, we recommend future research examine the priorities of other agrifood system stakeholders, namely farmers, to address potential misalignments, thereby enabling collective action that supports sustainable development and improvement of the agrifood system.

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