

# Multi-stakeholder collaboration for food systems transformation: From concepts to Action

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Moderated by: Nicole Metz (Netherlands Food Partnership) and Andrew Bovarnick (UN Development Programme)

## Opening remarks

Corinna Hawkes, Director Food Systems and Food Safety, FAO

The issue of bringing people together has come up as an essential factor in enabling food system change and is seemingly as crucial if not more so than the technical aspects necessary to bring about change. Stakeholders noted that it was necessary to bring people together in new ways to make progress. This sounds easy, but taking into account aspects of personalities, inclusiveness, representation and power dynamics can make it difficult. One key take-away is that stakeholders need to learn to speak each other's language.

## Panel discussion

*Question to all stakeholders: Multi-stakeholder collaboration is a hot topic: everybody needs to be included. What is your experience in putting the national food systems transformation pathways into practice, including the challenges that you meet along the way.*

Dr Truong Tuyet Mai, National Institute of Nutrition, Vietnam

The National Action Plan was approved, which puts commitments of the UN FSS 2021 into action. We have involved many stakeholders in this, e.g. the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment and more. In collaboration with multiple stakeholders we are setting up a platform to move forward on the food systems plan, where attention is paid to ensure motivation and take action. Different working groups play a role to move the National Action Plan forward. Taking action is an opportunity and important with the quickly changing food security situation. Technology is used to react quickly to these changes. The structures from central level to local level are very good, including those with cities. There is commitment for action throughout, although there is a need for capacity building.

Dr. Augustino Atillio, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, South Sudan

Our pathway forms a roadmap for farmers, pastoralists and other stakeholders. The journey for our national food systems transformation pathway started in 2021 in the run-up to the UNFSS. There were several multi-stakeholder consultations at national and subnational level, which have gone a long way to reach people. Consulting at the grassroots level has been instrumental to develop our pathways. Partners such as FAO, WFP, European Union and Wageningen University & Research have provided valuable support in developing this pathway.

The food system is more than the agricultural system, and we have engaged multiple key stakeholders during the consultation, with roles that go beyond agriculture, including consumers, private sector, universities. Together with them we are moving to transform our food systems through consultation with stakeholders. Given its complexity and interconnectedness, we have to be mindful of all people involved in the system. Pathways have also been developed at sub-national level. South Sudan is one of the countries that depends on imports, we have a food deficit, it is important to increase domestic production. Based on this fact we have reviewed and will keep reviewing all our policies, and strong governance is needed. Governance bodies that were not functional have been revived. Examples are the development of seed policies, a seed hub, and school grown food.

Alwin Kopse, Head of International Affairs and Food Systems and National Convenor, Switzerland

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is key to implementing our national food systems transformation pathway, but it is not a new approach. In Switzerland we have a stakeholder collaboration system existing more than 70 years already. This extra-parliamentary committee brings together farmers, civil society, private sector and research to share advise, renewing this collaborative processes as we go along. While Switzerland has this tradition of multi-stakeholder collaboration, in recent years we have seen new processes building both on the UNFSS process and the Swiss traditions.

The UN food systems dialogues in the run up to the UNFSS in 2021 were an opportunity to bring all these stakeholders together and reframe the national agriculture policy debate to talk about food systems rather than agriculture. As an example, agricultural policy in Switzerland does not consider cities, whereas cities are very active in this area. The dialogues gave us an opportunity to reach out to them. And these dialogues between federal level and city level will continue.

For implementing the national pathway we established a citizen assembly on food systems, which was organized not through the federal administration but through the civil society leaders. In this way citizens/consumers can tell us more on their vision on food systems development, with science and private sector involved as well – this is a new approach for us.

Joyce Akpata, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, Nigeria

Food systems are complicated and related planning of food systems action is complicated too. It requires collaboration at different levels and among different sectors. This comes with challenges in coordination, especially for a country with a size such as Nigeria. The involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in planning, decision-making and implementation has improved effectiveness and ensured a steady growth in the journey towards transforming food systems in Nigeria. 40 dialogues took place, which did not only include government representatives but also youth, women's groups and others. The office of the National Convenor has been pushing for multi-stakeholder collaboration and for cross ministerial engagement. Collective action cannot be overemphasized, and its has been instrumental in the success thus far.

Cascading down information about food systems transformation from federal level to subnational level is key as this is the level where activities are typically undertaken. Commitments of stakeholders at sub-national level is thus essential. Sensitization workshops have been organised by governments and development partners to ensure that stakeholders priority actions and pathways are understood. Action plans in which actions were mapped out and prioritized were developed to guide and aid the implementation of the pathways. Stakeholders are held accountable to ensure success, and parameters for measurement are in the process of being established. Pulling in diverse stakeholders has contributed to developing a robust implementation strategy, although it is not a seamless process and comes with challenges around things such as diverging interests and power imbalances which should be managed. It is important to be clear about a collective goal.

Wangeci Gitata – Kiriga, Foresight4Food, Kenya

Foresight is a tool that governments, private sector and civil society can jointly use to better understand future opportunities and risks in food systems, to explore and reimagine the future and adapt. A stakeholder can see in this way its relation to the bigger picture. This contributes to joint understanding of everyone's position in the system. Foresight as a tool allows to bring stakeholder views together and explore what emerges in terms of a common perspective. E.g. the rich picture tools is a method where you analyse the complexity of food systems through envisioning the system and drawing the strengths in this particular system. Opportunities and weaknesses are visualized and linked to data for verification, used to develop messages that can be shared with others – e.g. legislators and policy makers.

The foresight tool is part of the multi-stakeholder approach used in Kenya, as well as in a number of other countries, including Jordan and Bangladesh.

### Summary of panel by Andrew Bovarnick, UNDP

There are several common elements to these remarks, including linking the national to the local and the need to reach the often forgotten communities and bring them into the dialogue. Dialogues need to be multi-sectoral and multi-level. Food systems pathways should be localized by engaging the local government, as they are key in this transformation.

### Q&A

- Global Forum Agriculture (GFAR): We should try to make sure that we do not just do this at country level, but also at regional and global levels.
- Boston Consulting Group: Interested to hear more about how you include the private sector
- Welthungerhilfe: organised a side-event on inclusive food systems governance, very similar to this topic. What are your experiences on involving local government (municipalities). Also, what are your criteria for considering MSPs? Answer Dr. Augustino: In South Sudan we have tried to localise the national pathways, bringing on board ministers to discuss actions to be taken on state level. Local government was very keen.
- GAIN Bangladesh: Agenda 2014 – national development framework – is also very relevant to connect this discussion to the food systems pathway in Bangladesh
- Alliance Bioversity: Key to have a common understanding among stakeholders.

## **Closing remarks**

### James Lomax, Ecosystems Division, UN Environment Programme

We should also discuss the 'how' for transformation, looking not just at where to transform to but also at what is in needed in this process. One relevant tool is e.g. the 'Rethinking our Food Systems' guide published by UNEP, UNDP and FAO. The term transformation is used very liberally, and we should do more to collectively understand how transformation happens.

In the process we should ensure there is an equal and inclusive playing field, getting all the voices in, and also thinking about e.g. the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment.

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