

# **Progress on food systems transformation since the UN Food Systems Summit 2021**

## **Report of the Secretary-General**

The UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) offers a unique opportunity at a critical moment to further tap into the powerful role of sustainable, equitable, healthy, and resilient food systems, as a critical SDG accelerator. Urgent action at scale is now required, building on the latest evidence that sustainable food systems contribute to better and more viable outcomes for people, the planet and prosperity, leaving no one behind and that food systems transformations have started happening.

This report is based on the analysis of direct inputs received through voluntary country progress reports from 101 countries, and dozens of actors of the Food Systems ecosystem of support, including coalitions of action, the UN System as well as other organizations.

### **I. Food Systems Transformation as a key SDG accelerator**

The world is not on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. A preliminary assessment of the roughly 140 targets with data, shows only about 12 percent are on track; close to half are moderately or severely off track and some 30 percent have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.

In the face of multiple interlinked crises, our global food systems are strained. A confluence of factors — the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, the triple planetary crises, economic distress, natural disasters and regional and national unrest and conflicts — impeded progress towards the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. These crises of multiple origins have spillover effects that go beyond borders and severely weaken food systems. And imperiled food systems can trigger vicious cycles of aggravated, protracted social, (geo)political, economic, and environmental crises.

The hidden social, economic, and environmental costs associated with today's food systems amount to a staggering USD12 trillion, undermining decades of collective development achievements.

By 2030, 575 million people will still live in extreme poverty. The number of people who face hunger and food insecurity has risen since 2015, while one-third of all food produced continues to be lost or wasted. Between 702 and 828 million people were affected by hunger in 2021, with projections indicating that nearly 670 million people will still suffer hunger in 2030. This represents 8 percent of the world's population, the same as in 2015. Around 2.3 billion people in the world (29.3 percent) were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021 – 350 million more

compared to before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 924 million people (11.7 percent of the global population) faced food insecurity at severe levels, an increase of 207 million in two years. Gender gaps in food insecurity grew from 1.7 percent in 2019 to more than four percent in 2021, with 31.9 percent of women moderately or severely food insecure compared to 27.6 percent of men.

In 2021, there was a rise in the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet compared to 2019, before the pandemic. Malnutrition remains a pressing concern. The rising cost of food has made it increasingly difficult for individuals and families to afford a healthy diet. This affordability gap undermines efforts to promote nutrition and exacerbates the challenges faced by vulnerable populations.

Although food systems account for around 40 percent of global employment, agricultural households constitute up to two-thirds of people living in extreme poverty worldwide. Women, who constitute a quarter of the world's employed population, play essential roles in food systems. However, despite their critical contributions to pushing sustainable practices, they do not equally benefit from their efforts.

Meanwhile, food systems continue to generate soil, water, and air pollution, contribute more than one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, as much as 80 percent of biodiversity loss and use up to 70 percent of freshwater use. As co-leads of the financing agenda for food systems transformation, IFAD and the World Bank have gathered benchmarking and private sector coalitions, to provide evidence on the performance of the private sector for food systems transformation in the lead up to the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment. Iterations of multiple indexes and benchmarks are showing that progress is not at the level of ambition needed. According to the World Benchmarking Alliance, in 2021, less than 10 percent of the 350 largest food and agricultural companies had set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The Access to Nutrition Initiative's 2021 Global Index shows that 70 percent of the food produced by world's largest manufacturers do not meet healthy thresholds. For measurable progress to be achieved, the time has come for more ambitious target-setting, vigorous disclosure of information and evidence of impact.

These ongoing interlinked crises, including the war in Ukraine, fuel one another, intensifying the challenges faced in addressing food security, hunger, and sustainable resource use. These crises create a complex web of difficulties that hinder progress in achieving these vital goals. Among those most affected are vulnerable populations, particularly households led by smallholder farmers and agricultural laborers. These groups experience deepening poverty and face poor nutritional outcomes. They desperately require greater social protection and the recognition that fiscal constraints significantly challenge the implementation of comprehensive support measures.

As disruptive shocks become more frequent, it becomes crucial to take multisectoral action to enhance resilience. This requires coordinated efforts across different sectors to build robust systems that can withstand and recover from such disturbances.

To accelerate progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, a more integrated approach is necessary – one that addresses multiple goals simultaneously, rather than limited, excessively narrow sectoral approaches. Food systems transformation presents an extraordinary opportunity to achieve the world's shared goals. The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) stressed that the biggest transformative potentials of the 2030 Agenda do not lie in pursuing single Goals or targets, but in a systemic approach that manages their myriad interactions. Food systems and nutrition patterns were identified as one of the six entry points needed for transformation. The 2023 GSDR builds on this framework and proposes key synergetic interventions in each of the six entry points for sustainability transformation.

The transformation of food systems entails profound shifts across production, storage, consumption, and disposal of food. These shifts have the potential to generate multiplier effects, acting as catalysts for broader transformation across multiple systems and SDGs. By reimagining and redesigning our food systems, we can address pressing challenges and unlock opportunities for progress in other areas.

This was the vision of the UN Food Systems Summit held in 2021 which marked a significant milestone for the global community in accelerating actions towards more sustainable, equitable, and nutritious food systems. The culmination of the UN Food Systems Summit was a powerful Statement of Action, which urged countries to go beyond rhetoric and take concrete steps towards implementing their newly adopted food systems national pathways. These pathways represent strategic frameworks tailored to each country's context, outlining specific actions to be undertaken for food systems transformation.

## **II. Progress two years on**

Since 2021, 122 countries adopted national pathways and 155 appointed food systems national convenors, demonstrating their sustained interest and commitment to transforming food systems.

### **A. The Voluntary Country Reporting process**

The preparations towards UNFSS+2 witnessed significant global participation and engagement, with 101 countries submitting voluntary country progress reports. These reports provided insights into the progress and efforts being made to transform food systems worldwide. Importantly, the participation spans across the entire spectrum of income classifications, highlighting the inclusive nature of this global stocktaking exercise and the universal relevance of food systems transformation. There are 30 voluntary country progress reports from countries in Africa, 13 from the Americas, 28 from Asia, 16 from Europe and 14 from Oceania. 23 reports come from countries classified as high-income, 23 are classified as upper middle-income, 35 are classified as lower middle-income and 19 are classified as low-income.

Some countries chose to contribute through voluntary country progress reports, even though they did not take specific steps to adopt national pathways or appoint food systems national convenors, which is a testament to the inclusivity of the post-UNFSS 2021 process, that has always valued the unique circumstances of each country and the individual routes they adopt for their transformation.

The 101 voluntary country progress reports provide insight into the efforts undertaken by countries at different stages of their transformation journeys and contribute towards a collective understanding of what transformational changes are needed. In the coming years and until 2030, they will serve as an important mechanism for tracking progress, identifying gaps, and inspiring and driving collective action.

Around the world, countries demonstrated resilience and adaptability in their commitment to transforming food systems despite unprecedented challenges. The global crisis forced nations to revise their national pathways and make difficult decisions, particularly in the context of limited fiscal resources, but overall, countries have remained steadfast in their long-term commitment to food systems transformation. The impact of the crisis on food systems served as a wake-up call, capturing the attention of decision-makers at all levels. The various shocks experienced during this time highlighted the vulnerabilities of food systems and the critical importance of food security and resilience.

## **B. Status of country progress**

Some 66 percent of the countries reporting, particularly middle and high-income nations, successfully integrated the priorities outlined in their national pathways into their overarching national development plans and strategies. This demonstrated a clear commitment to ensure that the transformative goals of their food systems pathways are aligned with broader national objectives.

Improvement at policy coherence is noticeable across many dimensions of sustainable development with the integration of food systems transformation, food security, nutrition, food safety, agricultural and value chain development, climate, and water agendas. This deliberate integration and policy alignment allowed for greater focus on environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, and the resilience of production systems and livelihoods. Recognizing the interdependence of these factors, countries worked towards ensuring that their food systems are productive and efficient and environmentally responsible while capable of withstanding the challenges posed by climate change. A few countries (Georgia, El Salvador, and Uruguay) referenced their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for climate action and promising signals indicate a likely increase in efforts at mainstreaming food systems in NDCs and vice versa, in the coming years.

Efforts at integration extended beyond the traditional domains of agriculture, food security, and nutrition. Some countries indicated the incorporation of their food systems transformation vision

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into policies related to women and gender (United States of America, Fiji, Sierra Leone), youth (Fiji, Tanzania), early child development, and social protection (Haiti, Guinea). Notably, the impact of the UNFSS 2021, spurred several countries to develop food security and nutrition strategies for the first time.

The UN Food Systems Summit 2021 and the series of shocks experienced by food systems led lawmakers to extend heightened attention and scrutiny to the political importance of food, the right to food, the rights of food systems workers, and the necessary trade-offs within food systems. This increased attention resulted in a growing engagement of parliamentarians in food systems transformation efforts, with some countries going as far as integrating elements of their national pathways into national laws.

Approximately one quarter of the countries that submitted reports indicate a greater incorporation of critical topics. These include: the right to food (Nepal), food security and nutrition (Iraq), food loss and waste (Republic of Moldova), school meals (Latvia), healthy diets (Mexico), public procurement of food (Peru), and labor codes into their legal frameworks. This underscores the important role that legislation can play to support the transformation of food systems.

A growing trend among countries (Chile, Dominican Republic) has been to emphasize food sovereignty as a central tenet of their food systems strategies.

Recognizing the critical importance of public awareness and engagement in driving food systems transformation. Approximately a quarter of countries described initiatives aimed at positioning food systems transformation within the national social and political discourse, with the goal of building support, generating momentum for concerted action, and fostering behavior change. By raising public awareness, these countries seek to empower individuals to actively participate in shaping the future of their food systems and making informed choices about their consumption, production, and waste management practices.

### **C. Operationalizing food systems through the means of implementation**

#### **Governance**

A significant number of countries (70 percent) indicated their efforts to establish or strengthen food systems governance, particularly among low- and low-middle-income countries. Recognizing the complexity and interconnectedness of food systems, new forms of governance have been introduced that facilitate cross-sector collaboration. These innovative approaches aim to engage multiple stakeholders at various levels, including national, subnational, and local, to mobilize collective action towards sustainable food systems.

Countries are taking steps to establish and strengthen interdepartmental mechanisms for coordinated action on food systems, with a mandate to enable effective coordination, resource allocation, and implementation oversight. They are instituting, revitalizing, or merging pre-

existing mechanisms. Such initiatives aim to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach to food systems transformation. These mechanisms facilitate the integration of policies, strategies, and actions from various sectors to foster synergies and coherence in addressing food system challenges.

When it comes to the institutional housing of these coordination platforms, countries used various options. The majority of National Convenors (63 percent) hail from the agriculture sector, while others come from diverse backgrounds such as (Vice)President or Prime Minister Offices (7 percent), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (6 percent), the national institution in charge of food (5 percent), Ministries of Planning (4 percent), environment (4 percent), health (3 percent), economy (3 percent), and social affairs (1 percent). Since the placement of these mechanisms is a strategic decision that directly impacts their effectiveness, countries must consider the organizational structure and location that will best facilitate collaboration, coherence, and synergy among different stakeholders and sectors involved in food systems, based on their national context.

The governance of food systems involves multiple ministries and departments responsible for different aspects of the food system. At a minimum, ministries, and departments responsible for agriculture, fisheries, industry, transport, environment, health, nutrition, social welfare, economic planning, finance, human resources, and decentralized administrations should be included. Their collaboration and coordinated actions are essential for addressing the complexity and interconnectivity of food systems challenges.

In some countries, coordination mechanisms are weak and require revitalization due to changes in government. In others, bureaucratic barriers and sectorial budget accountability and structures sometimes recreate silos and constitute obstacles to coordination.

Countries around the world recognize the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders in the dialogue and decision-making processes for food systems transformation. Building on the momentum generated by the 625 national dialogues convened ahead of the Food Systems Summit in 2021, most countries continued to foster engagement with various stakeholders.

Over the past two years, countries sought the input and collaboration of stakeholders involved in food production, processing, trade, and distribution. These stakeholders include representatives from civil society organizations, the private sector, and women's organizations.

Engagement with youth and Indigenous Peoples groups is still limited. Efforts should be made to actively involve and empower them in decision-making processes. Their perspectives, innovative ideas, and traditional knowledge can contribute significantly to the development and implementation of sustainable and inclusive food systems and ensure intergenerational equity.

Many countries (38 percent) took steps towards decentralization and sub-national engagement in advancing their food systems transformation agendas. The reports emphasize the need for a

decentralized focus on food systems, recognizing that localized approaches can better address the specific needs and priorities of different regions.

Regional-level initiatives emerged in certain areas, particularly in relation to harmonizing food safety standards and promoting trade unions (International Union for Agricultural Research in the Near East and North Africa (ENNA), The Pacific Community, European Union, Southern African Development Community, among others). Regional communities play a vital role in facilitating collaboration and coordination among countries within a specific region. These initiatives recognize the shared challenges and opportunities faced by neighboring countries and seek to foster cooperation for more sustainable and efficient food systems.

## **Finance**

Despite the tight fiscal situation in many countries, there are significant levels of domestic funding being mobilized for food systems transformation. Notwithstanding, their commitment to mobilize domestic revenues to cover the incremental costs associated with food systems, financing remains insufficient for the transformation that is needed. Unsurprisingly, low-income countries are the most challenged in mobilizing financing for food systems. Difficulties in developing national financing strategies for food systems transformation also emerge as a recurrent issue in voluntary country progress reports. Only half of the countries report progress in assessing financing gaps for food systems transformation, with only a few embarking on costing their National Pathways. The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub reported in a 2022 survey to Member States, that financing for food systems transformation ranked as the first area of support requested by member states. In addition, countries requested analytical support and tools to inform targeted allocation of public financing to food systems.

In response, IFAD and WB, leveraging the ecosystems of support (in particular OECD, IICA, FAO, GAIN, AATI, AGRA, AKADEMYA 2063, 4SD, the Good Food Finance Network, the SUN Movement) are fast-tracking the development of a harmonized methodology to help decision-makers track Financial Flows to Food Systems (the 3FS) and influence resource flows in real time. To design effective financing strategies and optimize limited funding, governments and the global community must know how much resources are going into food systems, what is being financed and where the gaps are. Keeping track of the financial flows to food systems against targets is an essential building block to spur transformative financing and foster accountability. The 3FS-prototype provides visual and simple financial statements on food systems to help decision makers have a coherent view of their financing flows for food systems in real time, negotiate allocation of domestic public resources and international development financing to food systems, and measure progress towards financial targets.

The preliminary results of the prototype of this tool, which is being piloted in five countries and also include an analysis of ODA flows in collaboration with the OECD, show that between 2018-2020, development partners increased ODA to food systems by about 10% in absolute terms. The 3FS-prototype indicates that close to one-third of ODA to food systems is directed to social assistance to vulnerable groups, including food assistance. However, in 2021 it decreased by 3

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percentage points, warranting attention moving forward. Another interesting trend is the challenge in achieving the right blend between emergency assistance and long-term development activities in a context of multiple crises.

### **Science and technology**

In recognition of the critical role of science, evidence, and technology in driving food systems transformation, 59 percent of countries actively sought to enhance their engagement with the scientific community. This concerted effort demonstrates a growing acknowledgment of the importance of evidence-based approaches and the utilization of technological advancements to shape more sustainable and resilient food systems.

The analysis, however, suggests that countries in the upper middle- and high-income groups have enjoyed a distinct advantage when it comes to utilizing this mean of implementation. In relation to this, several countries have called for improved access to technology for all nations. This emphasis on equity highlights the importance of ensuring that scientific advancements and technological innovations are shared and made accessible facilitating knowledge exchange, promoting technology transfer, and supporting capacity-building initiatives in lower-income countries.

### **Data**

To ensure effective monitoring and evaluation, countries are working on improving the availability and use of relevant information together with the scientific community. More than 63 percent of countries report efforts to enhance data availability and utilization for monitoring progress and evaluating impact. It includes improving data quality, integrating new data sources, and expanding data collection and analysis capabilities.

Quality data and analytical capacity play a pivotal role in guiding decision-making processes and monitoring progress. Countries recognize that reliable information enables them to track and evaluate the impact of their food systems transformation efforts over time. As a result, countries are investing in digitalization and databases to establish more integrated information systems that can be accessed by various stakeholders, including farmers. Some countries developed "food systems dashboards" at national and district levels (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya and Pakistan). However, it is important to note that no country currently possesses a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system specifically designed to track the progress and impacts of national food systems transformation. There is a need for more integrated monitoring mechanisms that can capture the multidimensional nature of food systems transformation. By addressing the gaps in information and monitoring, countries can better understand the effectiveness of their interventions and identify areas for course-correction.

### **Trade**



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Countries implemented various initiatives in the realm of trade to address challenges and promote self-sufficiency in their food systems. Primarily, these initiatives focus on reducing the reliance on imported food or agricultural inputs. Moreover, countries highlight the significance of maximizing the benefits derived from free trade agreements (especially in Africa).

#### **D. Transformation efforts across the four thematic action areas**

##### **Nourish All People—reduce hunger and malnutrition and promote healthy diets**

In this action area, countries' priorities vary based on their income levels. High-income countries emphasize the importance of promoting healthy diets, while low-income countries prioritize efforts to reduce hunger and malnutrition. Governments recognized the urgency of addressing the cost-of-living crisis and have taken steps to ensure people's right to food, nutrition, and school meals. Social protection and safety-net programs have also been implemented, with a special focus on the most vulnerable populations.

##### **Boost Nature-based Solutions**

The majority of countries directed their attention to crop production and diversification as a means to boost nature-based solutions and enhance the resilience of their food systems. Some countries also prioritized sustainable livestock and fisheries, including the concept of Blue Food. Technological advancements for sustainable productivity growth were incorporated into strategies as well. Reducing food loss and waste remains less of a priority.

##### **Advance Equitable Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Empowered Communities**

A relatively smaller proportion of countries reported specific initiatives to create jobs, improve farmers' income, enhance women's opportunities in food systems, and increase youth participation in food production businesses. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions provides an opportunity to address the challenges of the food systems transition in a way that promotes equitable livelihoods, decent work, and empowered communities.

##### **Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks, and Stresses**

In response to shocks, countries adopted a comprehensive food systems approach that addresses various components, processes, and stakeholders involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of food. While prioritizing food security and resilience, countries have acknowledged the need to balance environmental and nutritional concerns. Governments of food-importing countries have worked on increasing resilience and reducing dependency by diversifying their sources of food supply and boosting domestic food production. Additionally, disruptions in global fertilizer markets have prompted efforts to encourage efficient fertilizer use and explore the use of organic alternatives.

Approximately half of the countries recognize the urgency of adapting food systems to climate change and promoting environmental resilience. Actions have been taken to address land restoration, water management, and soil health.

## **E. Enduring challenges**

### **The complex crisis context**

The current complex crisis context tests countries' capacity to navigate the need for constant adaptation. Securing the necessary political support for both crisis response and long-term changes in food systems is complicated for any government.

Transitions in government and administrations can significantly impact the momentum of food systems transformation within a country. In these situations, the transformation of food systems faces unique hurdles. Changes in political leadership and administration can disrupt the continuity of efforts, leading to delays or shifts in priorities. In approximately 15 percent of countries that have undergone such changes in the past two years, national pathways for food systems transformation have played a crucial role in more easily securing the commitment of new teams to the transformation agenda.

### **Operationalization of pathways, policy integration and coherence**

In some countries, the endorsement of new policies, laws, or implementation plans by the government is still pending. The process of operationalizing these plans requires time and effort, particularly in cases where there is contention surrounding the policies or when there is a lack of financial and technical resources. These challenges are more pronounced in small island developing states (SIDS) and countries grappling with conflicts.

### **Finance**

Accessing and mobilizing funds continues to be a persistent challenge for many countries and stakeholders engaged in food systems transformation. Securing adequate financial resources is vital for implementing transformative actions, supporting innovation, and scaling up initiatives that can drive sustainable changes within food systems. Furthermore, the fragmented nature of funding sources and mechanisms adds complexity to the process. Countries often rely on a mix of domestic, international, public, and private funding sources, each with their requirements, procedures, and priorities. Navigating through this landscape and aligning diverse funding streams with the objectives and strategies of food systems transformation can be daunting.

### **Technical capacity**

Deficits in technical capacity are an obstacle. The lack of qualified personnel equipped with the necessary competencies in systems approaches is a conundrum for countries trying to drive food systems transformation. National reports highlight that low-income countries in particular,

encounter difficulties in accessing technical assistance to bridge this capacity gap. The successful transformation of food systems requires individuals who possess a profound understanding of the complex interactions and interdependencies within the system. These professionals should be skilled in applying a holistic approach, considering social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors, to guide transformative actions. Unfortunately, many countries face a shortage of such qualified personnel. This hinders the pace of implementation and can limit effectiveness and efficiency. The journey towards enhancing personnel capabilities, however, is an ongoing process. Fully 80 percent of countries expressed their intention to further develop these capabilities in the next two years at the national and sub-national levels.

### **Infrastructure**

Many low-income countries face significant challenges in their food systems due to gaps in adequate infrastructure for storage, transport, and processing. These infrastructure gaps hinder the efficient movement of food from production areas to markets, leading to post-harvest losses, limited access to markets, and increased food waste. To address these infrastructure gaps, major investments are needed.

### **Trust building and time to transform and shift**

Practitioners working at the country level encounter various dilemmas when it comes to convening and coordinating inclusive and participatory processes for food systems transformation. These challenges arise because such complex tasks require them to engage a diverse range of stakeholders, address conflicting interests, and ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and equitable.

One of the main obstacles faced by practitioners is the labor-intensive nature of convening and coordinating inclusive processes. Effort is required to identify and engage relevant stakeholders and other actors involved in the food system. Activities demand time, resources, and dedicated personnel to carry out the necessary coordination and facilitation.

Ensuring inclusivity and participation requires practitioners to overcome power imbalances and build trust. Often, different actors within the food system have varying levels of influence, resources, and access to decision-making processes. It is crucial to create a safe and inclusive space where all stakeholders can freely express their perspectives, contribute their knowledge and expertise, and actively participate in the decision-making processes.

The slow unfolding nature of the transformation process also poses challenges for practitioners. Achieving meaningful and sustainable changes within food systems requires long-term commitment and persistence. Transformation does not happen overnight; it requires incremental steps, adaptive approaches, and continuous learning. Practitioners should manage expectations, communicate the long-term nature of the transformation process, and maintain the engagement and motivation of actors and stakeholders throughout the journey.

## **F. The way forward: Accelerating the effective use of means of implementation and breaking down the mechanics of transformation**

The 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) emphasizes the need for strategies that identify and minimize barriers to food systems transformation. Such strategies should mobilize the multiple and complementary roles that different actors and entities can play, leveraging their expertise, resources, and influence for a more holistic and effective transformation.

Additionally, the GSDR highlights the importance of utilizing evolving solutions and means of implementation specific to different phases of transformation, namely emergence, acceleration, and stabilization. These means of implementation include governance mechanisms, economic and financial instruments, scientific and technological innovations, individual and collective actions, and capacity building. These levers mutually reinforce each other and should be strategically utilized throughout the transformation process to drive progress and overcome challenges.

Transforming the food system can have implications for other sectors and systems, such as the environment, economy, and social dynamics. Managing these interactions requires comprehensive planning, collaboration, and consideration of potential trade-offs, synergies, and international spillovers. Additionally, it is important to address the resistance and political backlash that may arise against change. Building broad societal support and stakeholder engagement, as well as effectively communicating the benefits of transformation, can help overcome these barriers.

In transitioning towards sustainable food systems, the focus must be on enabling more equitable global access to nutritional foods, reducing food loss and waste, and maximizing the nutritional value of produce while, at the same time, minimizing the climate and environmental impacts of production and increasing the resilience of food systems.

### **III. Support from the coalitions of action and the ecosystem of support**

A total of 31 self-organizing and independent coalitions emerged from the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). Among these, 27 coalitions responded to a survey conducted by the Hub in May 2022, resulting in the creation of the first Compendium of food systems coalitions of action. The primary purpose of these coalitions is to catalyze the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—many of them contributing to SDG2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG13 (Climate Action)—through support to national pathways' implementation.

Assessing the value-addition of coalitions is difficult due to the absence of agreed-upon metrics and the diversity within coalitions. Collectively, however, they have strengthened the follow-up of the UNFSS, albeit to varying degrees.

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The stocktaking of coalitions works over the past two years, based on self-reporting, reveals that they primarily focused on three key areas: transferring lessons, best practices, and capacities (89 percent); fostering alignment and coherence (84 percent); and mobilizing energy and political will (79 percent). Additionally, coalitions have worked on catalyzing coordinated investment (69 percent), networking from local to global levels (69 percent), and mobilizing resources (26 percent). Their modus operandi often leaned on support in policy formulation, advocacy, peer-to-peer learning, analytics, and monitoring and evaluation.

**At the global level**, the coalitions play a crucial role in engaging in global policy spaces to emphasize the importance of food systems transformation. To influence international and UN policy documents, prioritize collective action, and mobilize political commitment, coalitions focus on shaping global discourse, ensuring affected people's voices are central in global events and discussions, establishing global action networks, and facilitating knowledge sharing and management.

**At the regional level**, coalitions focused on enabling regional spaces to promote knowledge, experience, expertise, and lessons sharing, in implementing national pathways. These will serve as valuable tools to promote regionalized solutions for addressing country-specific challenges.

At **country level**, coalitions prioritized efforts on providing technical support for the implementation of national pathways. In 100 countries, the coalitions have provided technical analysis, modeling, and other methods to inform specific policy choices; design food systems strategies, investment plans and bankable business cases to mobilize resources for implementation and facilitated national-level dialogues and capacity building.

The coalitions play an important role in advancing transformation across all Summit Action Areas. Below are some examples:

**Nourishing All People:** emphasizing the importance of access to nutritious food; supporting school meal initiatives in various countries; advocating for incorporating blue/aquatic foods into food systems transformation efforts.

**Boosting Nature-Based Solutions:** facilitating the adoption of regenerative agroforestry practices and encouraging investments in soil health; developing standardized protocols for measuring food loss and waste, as well as supporting policy formulation and implementation related to agroecological transitions.

**Advancing Equitable Livelihoods and Empowered Communities:** contributing to policy formulation and analytics, particularly around social protection.

**Building Resilience to Vulnerabilities and Shocks:** supporting the integration of resilience actions into national strategies, policies, and plans; providing scientific assessments and operational guidance to address context-based challenges related to vulnerabilities and shocks.

In doing so, they have facilitated the use of **means of implementation** within countries as demonstrated by the following highlights:

- Financing: increasing domestic financing by developing sustainable financing strategies and promoting innovative ways of financing; building a major new financing mechanism to support aquatic foods together with private, bilateral, and multilateral donors and investors
- Innovation: uniting actors over an action agenda for agricultural innovation; elevating the importance of nature-positive practices and innovation in achieving sustainable and resilient food systems worldwide
- Science-policy: translating science into action by cooperation with the private sector and extension agents
- Capacity development: initiatives benefiting cross-fertilization and learning among countries
- Data: leveraging the capacity and global expertise of the public and private sector to embrace data-driven decision-making and policy implementation

The coalitions also report encountering challenges that must be addressed for future progress. These challenges include limited interactions with national conveners, coordination gaps among stakeholders, inadequate national policies and lack of policy coherence, difficulties in scaling up successful models, overwhelming demand for support, and limited funding and resources. To overcome these challenges and achieve meaningful impact, coalitions will need to strategically plan their priorities for the next two years, aiming to go beyond incremental change.

One of the primary objectives of creating coalitions is to reduce fragmentation within the food systems ecosystem of support, by bringing together a broad range of initiatives, partnerships, and actors. Otherwise, coalitions do not sufficiently consider the complexity and dynamic of interactions among actors of the food system and between interconnected systems for health, education, social protection, and others.

During 2021-2023, the coalitions strived to foster alignment, minimize fragmentation, and promote collaboration. While they have made a dent in this daunting endeavor and collaborated with each other in many instances, much remains to be done to address fragmentation. To overcome these challenges in the next biennium, coalitions recommend closer interaction and engagement, breaking down barriers, and aligning efforts based on an overarching narrative and vision. They highlight the challenges posed by the costs of coordination and promoting a systems approach to transformation.

Since its establishment, the UNFSS Coordination Hub works closely with coalitions and other actors, serving as a connector, making these support structures more visible to country conveners, and facilitating knowledge and learning generation and exchange. To enhance coordination and strategy in the future, the Hub could further support matchmaking between country needs and relevant coalitions able to provide support. Rationalizing coalitions could help avoid duplication of efforts and ensure targeted approaches that address country priorities efficiently and effectively.

The full potential of coalitions has not fully unfolded, especially at country-level, given the ambitious goals and expectations and the time needed to implement and observe change. Going forward, cross-system collaboration and a systems thinking approach should be strengthened to avoid duplication and fragmentation and to reduce the transaction costs of numerous uncoordinated outreach to countries. Monitoring, accountability, and learning should be further invested into to transparently assess the impact of the work coalition roll-out, especially at the country level. The current important contributions to transformative action globally and the promising engagement with regional bodies should be pursued.

#### **IV. Integrated Support from the United Nations System**

##### **A. The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and the UN Food Systems Task Force**

The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub was established as an immediate outcome of the UN Food Systems Summit to sustain the Summit's follow-up. The Hub articulates its work around 6 Key Functions: facilitation of national pathways implementation (which is at the centre of Hub's work), convening of the global ecosystem of support, strengthening the means of implementation, communication, and advocacy for food systems transformations, and thought leadership.

Since its establishment, it has engaged National Convenors, through monthly global food systems solutions dialogues, quarterly regional touchpoints, and regional face-to-face meetings. Country-specific engagements have also facilitated a more granular understanding of country technical and financial assistance needs, allowing to offer multifaceted and tailored assistance, through the mobilization of the existing UN presence, under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinators (RCs), as well as by engaging the ecosystem of Support. The Hub developed an innovative tool to map food systems ecosystems of support in countries (institutions and activities), which can be used to support decision-making and coordination efforts by governments, identifying multipliers or challenges, areas of trade-offs and duplication.

Building on the legacy of the UN FSS, the Hub also sought to mobilize a broad range of constituencies, including two advisory groups, the Stakeholders Engagement, Networking and Advisory (SENA) Group made up of representatives of Producers, Women, Private Sector, Youth and Indigenous Peoples, and the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) composed of 29 nominated scientists.

Preparing for the UNFSS+2, the Hub, together with the UN Regional Commissions and other regional partners, organized a series of five regional preparatory meetings: in Niamey (27 February 2023), Beirut (13 March 2023), Geneva (28 March 2023), Bangkok (30 March 2023), and Santiago de Chile (25 April 2023). By engaging in these consultations, which saw the participation of around 800 people, National Convenors, contributed to shaping the vision and roadmap of the UNFSS+2. These five meetings were complemented by the 4th Global Conference of the One

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Planet network's (10YFP) Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Programme, which (Hanoi, Viet Nam - 24-27 April 2023) which served as an important pre-UNFSS+2 event.

Over the past two years, the UN Food Systems Task Force, currently co-chaired by UNEP and WHO, and bringing together over 40 UN agencies continued to provide a platform to connect and catalyze transformative actions inside the UN system and coordinating with wider stakeholders to galvanize food systems knowledge and expertise supporting countries' action.

## **B. Support from the UN System at global, regional and country level**

UN agencies at Headquarters' level are positioning food systems as a priority and taking concrete steps to integrate them into their core areas of work. This took place through internal redesigns. New divisions and departments were established in FAO (Food Systems and Food Safety Division) and UNIDO (Food Security and Food Systems Unit). Furthermore, new strategies were adopted, such as (UNEP's Sustainable Food Systems Strategy, the Multisectoral Action in Food Systems Unit, One Health Initiative, the WHO global strategy for food safety 2022 - 2030. These institutional changes facilitate collaborative interagency work and enable integrated approaches that transcend traditional silos and encompass areas such as ecology, climate, health, nutrition, agriculture, social protection, agribusiness, and education.

Agencies come together to prioritize food systems in important global conferences and meetings such as the UN Ocean Conference, COP15, UN Water Conference, Stockholm 50+ international meeting, World Health Summit, and COP27. The UN played an essential role in developing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes 23 targets across food systems to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. The elevation of the topic post-Summit is further evidenced by its increasing prominence at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) remains an essential actor of policy convergence at global level, within the UN System and beyond. A wide range of endorsed integrated policy frameworks and evidence-based recommendations on more than twenty cross-cutting themes (from land tenure governance to climate, protracted crises, youth, food loss and waste, water, responsible investment, nutrition, biofuels, agroecology, smallholders, etc.) offer decision makers and multi-stakeholders precious guidance to adopt a food systems approach through individual sectoral entry points.

UN agencies issued UN Calls for Action in response to global food emergencies, food security, and childhood wasting. The Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy, and Finance was also established in response to the far-reaching impacts of the war in Ukraine.

UN agencies actively collaborated to develop tools and knowledge products such as the multidimensional risk framework developed by ESCAP, WFP, FAO, UNEP, and UNICEF. They work together to release joint policy documents and plans, including the Joint Plan on One Health led by the Quadripartite FAO, UNEP, WHO and World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH).



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UN agencies and others made significant investments in improving financing in food system transformation. IFAD and the World Bank, as the co-leads of the financing agenda for food systems transformation, developed tools to help most vulnerable countries manage financial flows in a complementary manner, namely domestic revenues, Official Development Assistance (ODA) and private sector investments, and advocated for the capitalization of MDBs and IFIs dedicated to food systems and the use of innovative financing instruments, such as the new emission of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to significantly step up low-income countries' access to highly concessional financing for food systems. A new and innovative Joint SDG Fund Food Systems Window was also incubated by the Hub and the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat.

Collaboration led by UN Women also pushed to advance gender equality within the food systems transformation agenda. In the digital realm, agencies, including IPU, collaborate on the use of AI in agriculture.

The work at the regional level was greatly enhanced by the emergence of 4 regional platforms: the UN Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems in Europe, the Africa Opportunity and Issue-Based Coalition on climate action, resilience, and food systems transformation, the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Task Force on Food Systems and the Asia Regional Networking Group on Food Systems. These regional assets engage with UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams, regional organizations, and countries, to foster collaboration, policy coherence, joint programming, knowledge sharing, capacity development, technical guidance and joint advocacy. They help address regional and cross-border challenges and ensure integration between regional, sub-regional, and national dimensions.

Consider the stocktaking exercises conducted in Europe and Central Asia to analyze the outcomes of the 2021 Summit, the support for the Implementation Plan and Road Map of the African Union Year of Nutrition, the joint publication of the annual Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition reports in the Near East and North Africa region or the Gran Chaco Americano initiative, were the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay. All were supported to adopt a shared vision to transform their food systems, mitigate and adapt to climate change, prevent conflict, and empower Indigenous Peoples.

UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams were instrumental in supporting countries prepare for the 2021 Summit. In its immediate follow-up, they intensified their assistance to operationalize national pathways, advance integrated policy on food systems, support the integration of food systems transformation into national development plans and implement joint programs, often with support from the Joint SDG Fund. An increasing number of new generation UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) include food systems transformation within their key priorities. Many UN agencies developed specific guidance to support the mainstreaming of food systems in UNSDCFs. UN Nutrition's guidance to UNCTs focusing on "sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets" offers an interesting example.

### **C. The UN within coalitions and the broader ecosystem of support**

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UN agencies are also actively collaborating through coalitions of actions, with 26 UN agencies directly supporting them. Existing collaboration platforms have also expanded their focus to include food systems. This is the case of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which launched its Food Systems Integrated Program in partnership with FAO and IFAD to address environmental degradation associated with food systems.

After UNFSS+2, the UN will play a critical role in supporting countries to make a more robust use of Means of Implementation to accelerate progress. To enhance the effectiveness and impact of its support, the system should consider establishing a comprehensive joint UN framework on food systems, including a unified reporting framework that would provide guidance on coordinated actions, ensuring alignment among multiple agencies; encouraging capacity-building, collaboration and knowledge exchange among agencies, member states, and stakeholders to address critical gaps.

Furthermore, other global processes are also mainstreaming food system issues in their agenda. To this extent the recent G7 Summit has continued a stream of work on food security and food systems. In addition to the launch of Food Coalition, FARM (Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission), GAFS (Global Alliance for Food Security) and ELPS (Enhanced Linkages between Private sector and Small-scale producers) initiatives, the “Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security” issued at the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023 highlights the relevance of this work with the UN Food Systems Summit+2 Stocktaking Moment.

## **V. The way forward: towards the SDG Summit and priorities until 2025**

The United Nations Food Systems Summit issued a powerful call to transform food systems in the context of the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. This first global stocktaking teaches us that a great deal can happen in two years on a scale we wouldn't previously believe to be possible.

Today, we find ourselves at cross-roads, with no real alternative than a leap forward through a strong collective coordinated response across several fronts, to guide and focus efforts in the next biennium. Success will be conditioned by unwavering political will from world leaders, and integral commitment by actors and institutions from all sectors and regions, especially those who shape (and must reform) the food systems finance architecture.

### **A. Key priorities for the next biennium**

**Policies** are the instrument through which governments shape the future of their nation. National policies must give greater attention to leveraging food systems, to contribute to the well-being of all people and of the planet, both in the immediate future and the long term. National Strategies and Development Plans can ensure that food systems are at the heart of actions for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and for responses to a plethora of ongoing crises. In line with the direction set by National Pathways, sectoral policies and regulations, laws and bills can be revised to operationalize holistic Food System visions. National commitments for the

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climate (Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans), nutrition or biodiversity, must be linked to food systems transformation strategies—based on National Food Systems Pathways and vice versa.

In a context of accelerated and compounded shocks, it is essential to **combine crisis and long-term response** while tackling underlying structural issues. This is done by building resilience throughout food systems, from production through to logistics, storage, processing, and distribution, and increasing access to social protection, universal healthcare coverage and nutrition, especially for the most vulnerable.

**Inclusive and participatory governance** requires a focused commitment that everyone realize their right to adequate food. It requires the full engagement of many diverse stakeholders, cross-sector collaboration, and procedures that are both transparent and accountable.

Subnational administrations—provinces, districts, cities, and municipalities play an important role to ensure that the specificities of local food systems and the priority concerns of local communities. These inform local development plans, budget prioritization and joint cross-sectoral action decentralized administrations and service providers.

The 2021 Food Systems Summit called for USD300-400 billion of additional investment per year to finance the world's transition towards healthier, more equitable and sustainable food systems. While this amount sounds daunting, putting it in perspective relativizes its magnitude. I.e., the estimated market value of the global food industry is around USD10 trillion (Source: The Food Finance Architecture, 2021). **Mobilizing, allocating and safeguarding financing** is critical to enable the transition. Ensuring access to catalytic finance, analyzing current flows of public, private, and concessional finance and regularly assessing whether they are conducive to more sustainable food systems, avoiding sector-based spending patterns, mobilizing blended funding, de-risking investments from the private sector and non-traditional sources, coupled with smart short-term support measures to vulnerable food producers, with continuous review and repurposing of long-term support, can effectively support food systems transformation in the face of constrained fiscal spaces and shrinking ODA.

Transformations are only as solid as the **knowledge, understanding and capacity** of actors and institutions that drive them. Capacity-building and greater access to expertise (science, innovation, know-how, research, exploration, and innovation), need to be better rolled-out as stark accelerators of transitions.

**Regional collaboration and communities** have untapped potential to de-multiply national efforts, accelerate context-relevant knowledge sharing and address trans-boundary issues, particularly around trade. South-South Cooperation, regional collaboration and public-private partnerships have the power to stimulate local and global communities of practice.

## **B. A roadmap for the global ecosystem of support**

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The rich, diverse global ecosystem of support, which drove much of the Food Systems Summit's thrust, remains deeply committed to leveraging their expertise, resources, and influence for impactful, government-driven transformations. The results of the UNFSS+2 point towards accelerated action in very specific directions.

The effectiveness and impact of **better coordinated Rome-Based Agencies and wider UN support for food systems** will be enhanced through a more robust global framework for integrated delivery that outlines the shared goals, objectives, and strategies for food systems transformation, provides guidance/alignment for coordinated actions among multiple agencies involved, encourages regular communication, and rationalizes structures. Coupled with a common reporting framework defining key performance indicators, data collection mechanisms, and reporting timelines to monitor progress and measure the impact, it will enable stronger joint reporting and enhanced accountability. A resourced Joint SDG Fund Food Systems Window will be instrumental in enacting context-specific coordinated delivery of support by UN Country Teams.

The UN System will continue to support the **UN Food Systems Coordination Hub** in deploying the full strength of its convening mandate to help Member States deliver on the promise of national development pathways for food systems transformation.

Investing in sustainable food systems by development partners and international financial institutions can go a long way in translating national pathways from vision to resourced action. **International Finance Institutions**, Multilateral Development Banks, and National development banks, can be true game changers by decisively increasing access to finance for food systems transformation for countries most in need by applying more flexible and concessional lending rates and expanding borrowing limits. In the context of the reform of the international financial architecture, IFAD and the WB and partner Multilateral Development Banks are raising the attention to the criticality of financing for food systems transformation for the attainment of the SDGs and the Paris climate agreements. The agenda seeks to increase the share of ODA to food systems, increase the capital bases of Multilateral, Regional and National Development Banks and International Financial Institutions providing long-term high concessional financing for food systems, and support the channeling of SDRs to countries most in need through international financial institutions to generate additional liquidity for investment in food systems. Facilitating the access of countries to comprehensive information on funding windows for food systems transformation is a must that should be delivered as an immediate outcome of UNFSS+2.

Learning from best practices in forging effective **multistakeholder**, multi-sector collaboration and policy dialogue will help sustain the necessary process of discovery and trust-building, where Producers, **Youth, Women's groups, and Indigenous Peoples'** perspective become central. The powerful UNFSS pledges to action by various groups of stakeholder constituencies, from the private sector to food producers, SMEs, Youth have not been fully exploited in countries; it is time to connect the dots between global and national to deliver concrete results.

**Summit coalitions** have great potential to scale-up systems-based transformations in the next biennium by adopting a systems (cross-coalition) approach in their activities, scaling up successful pilot projects and identifying new solutions to address externalities, elevate political will, commitment, and ambition by bridging the gap between local and global efforts and leveraging existing tools.

### **C. Towards UNFSS+4 and 2030: From Rome (UNFSS+2) to NY (SDGs Summit), Abu Dhabi (COP28) and beyond**

Before it is too late, we must integrate Sustainable Food Systems transformation objectives across global and national policy discussions, commitments, and targets. Doing so conditions our collective ability to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals. A number of milestones pave the way towards 2030: SDGs Summit (September 2023), the Climate COP 28 (November 2023), Nutrition for Growth (2024), the Summit of the Future (2024), as well as annual High-Level Political Fora and Financing for Development conferences. They are critical in accelerating the convergence of sustainable food system objectives with efforts to reach poverty eradication, health and nutrition, climate, biodiversity, and water goals. They must be strategically identified, leveraged and maximized to speed up collective delivery.

The **Sustainable Development Goals Summit** in September 2023 in New York will provide an immediate opportunity for world leaders and stakeholders to reinforce the link between sustainable food systems and integral development, and due consideration must be given to food systems both in the Summit programme, Declaration, and national statements.

With the **upcoming Climate Summit (COP 28)**, an example of walking the talk on the climate-food nexus is being set by a championing Presidency and a number of front-running countries. A Leaders Declaration on Food Systems, Agriculture, and Climate Action is under preparation to secure the place of food systems in the climate agenda and COP process over the years ahead, with parallel efforts for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to better integrate food systems; to boost non-state actor leadership and action; to scale up climate-smart food systems innovations, particularly of importance for smallholder farmers; and to increase finance for food systems transformation.

Similar opportunities to advance nexus action are offered, amongst others, by the Nutrition for Growth Summit to be hosted in France in 2024, while Türkiye will host the next Conference of Parties on Biodiversity to take stock of the targets and commitments set by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Leaders steering critical intergovernmental processes must be made aware of the centrality of transformed food systems for other sectoral or overarching sustainable development objectives and accompanied to steer accelerated integration of sustainable food system objectives in other action-oriented roadmaps and frameworks.

To capitalize on this strategic opportunity, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub has engaged in a strategic partnership with the COP28 Presidency with the objective of establishing a global

narrative and roadmap for a synergetic approach focused around “food systems transformation and climate action”. The goal of the partnership is to organize a series of convenings which are mutually supportive of both COP28’s Presidential Action Agenda with respect to food systems transformation and the broader landscape of global events and processes related to Food Systems Transformation, including the 2024 UN Summit of the Future, the first and second UN Food Systems Stocktaking Moments in 2023 and 2025, COP29 in 2024 and COP30 in 2025.

**UNFSS+4** in 2025 will offer the opportunity for the global community to reconvene and assess progress in transforming food systems for sustainable development. With their 2023 Voluntary Progress Reports, countries have offered a granular picture of their strengths, challenges, and ambition for the future. This baseline should enable even deeper analysis of progress and impact achieved during the upcoming biennium, through evolved 2025 VPRs, which will inform a new UNSG report in 2025. In the meantime, regional sustainable development meetings will offer countries a precious opportunity to convene and continue learning from each other in 2024 and 2025.

The 2025 Stock Taking Moment (UNFSS+4) will take place shortly before the mid-point between the 2021 UNFSS and the 2030 horizon deadline. After a UNFSS+2 dedicated to early signs of transformation, it is the hope that UNFSS+4 will no longer need to call for closing implementation gaps but rather focus on means to scaling up multitudes of stories of transformation across the globe, providing the demonstration that collective and committed action can suffice to put countries back on track to deliver the World We Want.