

The United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub

2024 Food Systems Solutions Dialogues

Background

The Food Systems Solutions Dialogues have become a pivotal tool on the journey to revolutionizing food systems across the globe. These events embody the SPARK framework, where 'S' represents state-of-the-art insights, 'P' encourages peer learning, 'A' propels action planning, 'R' facilitates progress review, and 'K' provides knowledge to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since their commencement in April 2022, these Dialogues, organised by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, have tackled a diverse range of critical topics related to food systems transformation. These subjects span from financing food systems transformations and harnessing the power of Coalitions of Action, to exploring governance and institutional evolution, enhancing health and nutrition, and examining the dynamic role of the private sector.

A critical motivator for continued commitment to these Dialogues is the distressing landscape of food systems across the globe. As highlighted in the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2023 report, the UN Secretary-General's urgent call for action remains imperative, as the global crisis of hunger and food insecurity continues to intensify. Since 2015, the number of people grappling with these challenges has surged, exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic, conflicts, climate change, and widening inequalities. The SOFI 2023 report reveals that a staggering 285 million people across 62 countries faced acute food insecurity in 2022.

In tandem with the worsening hunger crisis, the world faces a surge in CO2 emissions and biodiversity loss. The interconnectedness of food security, climate change, and biodiversity loss demands urgent and coordinated action to mitigate these challenges.

Rationale

These alarming statistics underscore the urgent need for action and the imperative for transformative dialogues that drive tangible solutions and a shift towards more sustainable, resilient, healthy, and equitable food systems.

Building upon these challenges, the outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) further underscore the need for a platform to share knowledge and best practices among countries. The UNFSS+2 yielded a wealth of insights, innovations, and commitments from Members. It has become a repository of transformative ideas, strategies, and pledges with the potential to reshape our global food systems for the better. To harness the power of this accumulated knowledge and ensure that these commitments translate into concrete actions, a platform that fosters dialogue, peer learning, and collaboration is more crucial than ever.

The UNFSS+2 concluded with a resounding Call to Action from the Secretary-General, 2 recognizing the urgent need for transformative changes in global food systems. Participants from diverse sectors, including governments, civil society, and the private sector, convened to address the interconnected challenges of hunger, climate change, and biodiversity loss. The main outcome of the Summit was a unified commitment to implementing concrete and inclusive measures aimed at achieving sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems. This Call to Action emphasizes the importance of collaboration, innovation, and accountability to drive positive change on a global scale. The UNFSS+2 underscored the imperative for collective efforts to build a more just and sustainable future, prioritizing food security and environmental stewardship for the well-being of current and future generations.

The significance of the Food Systems Solutions Dialogues is abundantly clear when we consider the pressing global challenges that our food systems face. The Dialogues serve as a dynamic response to the urgency of transforming our food systems to meet the needs of the planet and its people. They provide a crucial platform for nations, organisations, and individuals to come together, exchange knowledge, and mobilize resources for the greater good.

The Dialogues respond directly to the request of National Food Systems Convenors who recognized the value of the Dialogues as a platform to strengthen their engagement. Additionally, the Dialogues are key in informing important aspects of the work of the Hub and encouraging knowledge sharing and peer learning.

Aligned with the transformational vision rooted in the Report of the Secretary-General, titled "Making food systems work for people and planet – UN Food Systems Summit +2," countries have actively sought to anchor their responses to the global food crisis within the integrated framework presented by the Secretary-General in 2021. Over 155 National Food Systems Convenors have assumed their roles, supported by the infrastructure of their respective countries. The 126 national pathways presented stand as robust roadmaps for effecting transformative changes in food systems at the national level.

During the UNFSS+2, countries identified important steps needed to unlock the full potential of food systems while addressing the prevailing constraints and contributing to climate action. Although substantial progress has been made, there is still much work to be done. Concerted and immediate action is imperative to realize the potential of our food systems.

In response to this imperative, **the Secretary-General has called upon leaders across governments, international financial institutions, farmer associations, businesses, civil society, scientific institutions, youth, Indigenous farmers, and the media to prioritize the proactive implementation of future food systems strategies within six key areas that demand coordinated efforts.**

The comprehensive approach involves integrating food systems strategies into national policies that cover various critical aspects, such as livelihoods, nutrition, health, economic growth, climate action, environmental conservation, and the reduction of post-harvest losses. This integration is underpinned by a strong commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that no one is left behind. Additionally, it entails the establishment of a holistic food systems

governance framework that actively engages all sectors and stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of considering short- and long-term perspectives.

There is a strong need for substantial investments in research, innovation, and technology, focusing on strengthening the connections between scientific expertise, practical 3 experience, and technological advancements. It also involves fostering participatory design and implementation, which must be all-encompassing and inclusive, involving women, young people, and Indigenous communities at the local level. This approach encourages knowledge sharing, multi-sector collaboration, cross-sector programming, and the formation of multi-stakeholder partnerships, all within context-specific and location-based actions, embracing diversified production methods and mutual accountability. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on promoting increased engagement from businesses, facilitated through public-private partnerships. Businesses are recognized as central actors within the framework of food systems and play a vital role in shaping sustainable food systems, as well as in establishing and reinforcing accountability mechanisms.

Lastly, ensuring access to both short-term and long-term finance, investments, budgetary support, and debt restructuring is of utmost importance for effecting the necessary transformations. This financial support is critical for driving the changes required to build resilient agricultural systems and reduce the vulnerability of food producers who depend on these natural resources.

The Call to Action also emphasizes the need to align the implementation of national pathways with ongoing updates to National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs) focused on climate action. This alignment is particularly vital in the context of adapting food systems to climate change and mitigating ecosystem service losses. Investments to enhance the resilience of agricultural systems and to reduce the vulnerability of food producers who depend on these natural resources are pivotal elements of this alignment.

Rationale

The Food Systems Solutions Dialogues create a **space for open discussion and brainstorming, allowing participants to acquire new skills and knowledge and to identify localized solutions. The Dialogues serve as a valuable and rich platform that nurtures exchange and capacity development within the National Convenors' networks. These accrued capacities and knowledge can then be used to improve policies which enable environments and governance that support effective food systems transformation at the country level.**

The 2024 Food Systems Solutions Dialogues are positioned to transform dialogue into tangible action. These actions will contribute to realising a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient global food system. Collaboration, unity, and resource mobilisation are pivotal to turning this vision into a reality. It is worth noting that this journey encompasses more than just discussions; it is about **catalysing transformative change to align our global food systems with the Sustainable Development Goals.**

Looking ahead, it is essential to continue the transformative journey that has been embarked upon by addressing the demands collected during the previous cycles of Dialogues and the UNFSS+2.

The resounding success of the Food Systems Solutions Dialogues in previous years reinforces the need for continuity and expansion.

The proposed themes for the 2024 Food Systems Solutions Dialogues have been prioritized based on their relevance to the work of the Hub and in line with the Secretary-General's Call to Action:

1. **Governance for Food Systems Transformation:** The Dialogue will centre on developing food systems governance structures and frameworks that respond to the needs of various stakeholders within the food system. This Dialogue aims to foster transparent national governance structures and ensure the inclusion of diverse stakeholders, voices, and perspectives in shaping the future of food systems.
2. **Capitalizing on Private Sector Accountability for Food Systems Transformation:** The aim is to explore the private sector's role and accountability in supporting the implementation of food systems transformation pathways. The Dialogue seeks to provide insights and facilitate discussions on the private sector's environmental, nutrition, and social equity impacts on food systems. The objectives include examining strategies for innovation, enhancing corporate accountability, and establishing transparent accountability frameworks within food systems and in the context of the UNFSS+4 process. The meeting will build on a technical workshop organized by the Hub in April 2024 that elaborated on the same topic.
3. **Financing Food Systems Transformation to Achieve the SDGs:** The dialogue will focus on exploring latest strategic development regarding financing mechanisms essential for transforming food systems to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Participants will be elaborate on innovative funding approaches and collaborative solutions to address challenges hindering progress toward creating more sustainable and equitable food systems globally. The meeting will also discuss the role of national financing in supporting food systems and how IFIs and private funding support this transformation, ensuring access to short and long-term concessional finance, investments, budget support, and debt restructuring.
4. **Inclusive Participatory Design to Transform Food Systems:** Encouraging innovative approaches and collaborative efforts to leverage stakeholders' potential as agents of change in food systems in an inclusive way. Through collaborative discussions, this Dialogue aims to identify and explore initiatives that foster inclusion, and economic, social, and cultural development tailored to the national needs and country-specific contexts.
5. **Catalyzing Climate Action for Transformative Food Systems:** This Dialogue will explore innovative strategies and practices to address the intersection of climate action and food systems transformation. The dialogue will delve into sustainable practices, resilient

agricultural approaches, and collaborative initiatives, including the Hub's Convergence Initiative, aimed at fostering a holistic response to the climate challenges within the realm of food systems.

6. **Policy Integration to support Food Systems Transformation:** The Dialogue will discuss the central theme of integrating food systems strategies into national policies for sustainable development, including climate policies, employing country-based case studies and best practices approach. The discussions will center on how integrating food systems pathways into national strategies can significantly impact people's livelihoods, nutrition, and health outcomes while also playing a pivotal role in driving economic growth, climate action, and nature conservation.