THE CONVERGENCE ACTION BLUEPRINTS OF CAMEROON

1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 CONVERGENCE INITIATIVE BACKGROUND

The Convergence Initiative (CI) is a unique collaborative effort championed by the Government of Cameroon, under the leadership of the National Convenor for Food Systems Transformation. The CI is led by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and supported by UN specialized Agencies in-country (WFP, FAO, IFAD) in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator Office, GIZ and other stakeholders. It aims to strengthen and foster alignment and collaborative joint programs between the national agenda for food systems transformation and Climate Action (CA) agendas. In Cameroon, the alignment of priorities also includes the biodiversity and the nutrition policy documents thereby advancing systems approaches and inter-sectorial and intra sectorial win-win collaborations. This will enable the Government of Cameroon to strengthen synergetic action that will simultaneously support the achievement of the SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement goals, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and the Multisectoral Plan to fight against malnutrition within Cameroon's context.

In this regard, an inception workshop on the Convergence Initiative was held on 25-27 February 2025 in Yaoundé, Cameroon, which saw the participation of three Ministers and three Permanent Secretaries, namely the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and his General Secretary, the Minister of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries and his General Secretary, the Minister of Forests and Fauna, and the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development. The third day was devoted to the science-policy-society interface to bring the focus on inclusive processes and foster the participation of the scientific community and youth in the food systems agenda, in line with the National Pathway. A preparatory technical meeting was hosted on 20-21 February 2025 in Douala, Cameroon, to lay the groundwork for the inception workshop. The technical meeting helped identifying key elements of the Convergence Action Blueprint, including key areas of interventions and actions, milestones, as well as existing policy and institutional arrangements that can facilitate the alignment of agendas. One key outcome of the technical meeting was the proposal to include the nutrition and biodiversity agendas in the convergence process; as well as the preparation of bankable projects to contribute to raise funds. The inception workshop consolidated these elements and helped reaching a shared vision among relevant stakeholders.

1.2 CONVERGENCE ACTION BLUEPRINT

The Convergence Action Blueprint (CAB) is a comprehensive detailed strategy that builds on robust national processes: the National Development Strategy 2030 and its declination for the rural sector which is the Rural Sector Development Strategy/National Agricultural Investment Plan (2020-2030), the national pathway for food systems transformation, the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), and Multisectoral Plan to Fight against Malnutrition. This comprehensive approach ensures that Cameroon is prepared to leverage synergies across agendas, thereby enhancing expanded capacities and resources to effectively address climate, food systems, biodiversity and nutrition challenges which are simultaneously and collectively hindering resilient and sustainable economic growth, improved livelihoods and inclusive development.

The Blueprint includes four main pillars: vision, interventions, milestones and monitoring and evaluation.

1.3 NATIONAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT STATE

Cameroon is a country in Central Africa that enjoys an important geostrategic position while being endowed with enormous human,[1] agro-ecological and climatic potential that can make it the linchpin of food security in Central and West Africa. Often defined as Africa in miniature, Cameroon also has great biodiversity (ranked second in the Congo Basin), ecosystems and agricultural potential. Cameroon is divided into five agro-ecological zones[2] that strongly influence agro-sylvo-pastoral and fisheries activities in the regions. Cameroon's climatic zones are characterized by an equatorial climate in the south and a tropical climate in the north. Despite this potential[3], national food systems remain very vulnerable. 11% of the Cameroonian population faces persistent food insecurity due to conflicts affecting the Far North region, the influx of refugees in the East and Adamawa regions, as well as the sociopolitical crisis in the North-West and South-West regions[4], which have led to the breakdown of production systems and made the population highly vulnerable to the consequences of food and nutritional insecurity.

Cameroon is also facing challenges related to climate change, including prolonged droughts in the north and recurrent flooding in the Far North, South-West and South regions. It is therefore important to reduce the vulnerability of populations and ecosystems to these changes by using these agro-ecological zones to develop adaptation and mitigation strategies[5]. Even though African farmers have always used associations, agroforestry, and many other practices, both to improve their food and nutritional security (FNS) and to minimize short-term risks in the event of hazards (climate, disease, fertility, etc.), the general context of food systems in Cameroon is therefore marked by challenges and opportunities, which address the issues of food security, sustainability and resilience in the face of the protean crises affecting its food systems.

In this context, Cameroon is taking part in the CI, a program coordinated at global level by the Hub, which was launched by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations at COP28. It encourages the integration of food systems transformation and climate action for rapid sustainable development. The CI is grounded on the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Accelerated Food Systems Transformation at UNFSS+2 and the COP28 United Arab Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action. These texts emphasize the need to align the transformation of food systems with climate action in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

2. PILLAR I: CONVERGENCE VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 CONVERGENCE VISION

To transform food systems in Cameroon to be more resilient, inclusive and sustainable with a vision of becoming an important engine of the national economy that creates decent jobs and wealth, and meet domestic and foreign demand, while ensuring food and nutrition security for all, the protection of nature, and the reduction of GHG emissions, within the context of sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

2.2 CONVERGENCE OBJECTIVES (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

In line with Cameroon National Development Strategy 2030, the objectives that will help achieving the Convergence vision are:

1. To support the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, with particular focus on SDG2 (zero hunger and better nutrition) and SDG13 (climate action)
2. To enhance policy coherence between food systems, climate action, biodiversity and nutrition, leveraging opportunities and entry point provided by Cameroon's commitments to the international climate, biodiversity and nutrition agendas (including the Paris Agreement, the Montreal-Nagoya Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nutrition for Growth Commitments).
3. To strengthen multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral coordination and partnerships from the national to the local level focusing on inclusive and participatory processes, with a view to create synergies of action across food systems, climate, nutrition and biodiversity agendas and ensuring equitable distribution of food systems revenues.
4. To unlock finance and investments opportunities from diverse sources to support the implementation of actions and interventions that deliver multiple wins across the food systems, climate, nutrition and biodiversity agendas.
5. To leverage the role of science, research, traditional and indigenous knowledge to identify and scale up specific solutions across different segments of food systems that can deliver results across multiple agendas.

3. PILLAR II: KEY CONVERGENCE INTERVENTIONS

3.1 DOMAINS OF INTERVENTION

Three domains have been identified as crucial for the food systems transformation in Cameroon:

i. **Rice value chain**: support for the development of the value chain with smallholders, promotion of intensification for rice cultivation, reduction of methane emissions, climate adaptation with varieties adapted to irrigation and drought, aquaponics (rice + fish), digital agriculture, opening up of new rice-growing areas.

ii. **Agroecological transformation for staples and livestock** (cassava, sorghum, millet, eggs, poultry, indoor aquaculture, dairy farms): mitigation and adaptation practices in these sectors (included in the 2015 NAP and the 2021 NDC), agricultural biodiversity (seeds and local breeds) and locally-sourced high nutrient food products (i.e. vegetables, eggs, dry fish)

iii. **Import Substitution**: increase local production and processing (corn, soy, wheat, fish, milk) to reduce the food import bill and activate local demand (i.e. local purchase to satisfy public needs of food, connecting local producers with school feeding programs, reducing carbon footprint, strategic grain reserves).

3.2 CONVERGENCE INTERVENTIONS

The following interventions were identified (grouped by theme), consolidating and expanding the initial list of 15 interventions:

Governance

- Propose a mechanism for inter-ministerial coordination on the food systems, climate, nutrition and biodiversity agendas.
- Establish a Convergence Group that will be tasked with ensuring synergies and coordination between the food systems, climate, nutrition, and biodiversity agendas.
- Conduct a review of food systems and climate legislations and propose amendments as needed.
- Promote the participation of local communities and civil society in the decision- making processes related to food systems and climate, encouraging their involvement in the Convergence Group.
- Strengthen the coordination of research institutions and Academia with decision- makers to inform evidence-based processes, making use of available data and recommendations coming from the science community

Means of Implementation

- Conduct a mapping of financing flows in food systems and financing gaps, with the support of the Hub.
- Identify capacity building needs to implement the convergence priorities.
- Through the elaboration of Bankable Projects, encourage public and private investment in food-systems infrastructure, including strategic value chains, and accelerate investments in key priority areas to help mitigate the impacts of climate hazards.

Healthy diets and nutrition

- Conduct campaigns for the promotion of food safety considerations and locally- sourced healthy diets (traditional foods).
- Improve access to drinking water and sanitation systems.
- Establish home grown school nutrition programs and raise awareness about nutritious foods in the schools (promote schools gardens to improve access to fresh, nutritious food and schools as hubs of development).

Agroecological transformation for crops and livestock

- Massively training farmers on agroecological practices, including crop rotation and the use of suitable/ heirloom seeds (participatory breeding programmes, local seeds markets).
- Encourage crop diversification to reduce dependence on few crops.
- Encourage the use and access of biogas and solar panels on farms, as solutions to manage organic waste while simultaneously addressing energy demand.
- Limit the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers by promoting ecological alternatives.
- Offer subsidies for the purchase of seeds and agricultural tools to improve family food production.
- Encourage vegetable production and egg production for local markets, encouraging their consumption.
- Promote farm-scale anaerobic digestion to control methane emissions from livestock and introduce selective breeding to reduce emissions intensity and increase production.

Value chains

- Strengthen storage infrastructure and commercialization, by building silos and storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses.
- Promote composting and organic waste management.
- Provide appropriate measure to decrease food loss and waste along the entire agrifood systems.
- In the Rice Value Chain, (a) adoption of innovative farming techniques to improve rice production while reducing GHG emissions and promoting adaptation to climate extremes, (b) rationalized water management, to reduce the time of farm flooding such as Alternating wetting and drying (AWD), saving water and reducing bacteria, (c) Use of bio-inputs (organic fertilizers and natural pesticides), (d) Recycling straw and rice husks into uses such as of-rice composting, mushroom production, energy production, livestock feed, natural fertilizer production; (e) Use of seed varieties that are tolerant to environmental stresses such as drought and flooding; (f) Mapping of flooding regime and measurement of nitrous oxide emissions.

Forestry, biodiversity and natural resources

- Establish a plan for developing and restoring the forestry sector to enhance food security, employment and revenues for forest employees/entrepreneurs Implement reforestation projects to increase carbon storage and preserve local ecosystems.
- Create protected areas to preserve natural habitats and biodiversity while providing livelihoods to local villagers
- Promote sustainable forest management to ensure biodiversity conservation and enhance carbon sequestration.

Resilience

- Setting up training programs to provide information on climate adaptation techniques (irrigation, water management, soil moisture, riverbank protection, etc).
- Develop early warning systems to anticipate droughts and floods.

LIST OF 15 PRIORITIZED ACTIVITIES RELEVANT FOR THE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CI IN CAMEROON

RICE VALUE CHAIN

1. Climate-smart rice-growing practices: (a) Alternating flooding and drying (AWD), (b) Mid- season drainage (Smart Valleys), (c) Combined application of biochar and nitrogen, (d) Site- specific fertilizer recommendations (RiceAdvice), (e) Direct sowing combined with use of rice straw, (f) Conservation agriculture, e.g. rotation, (g) farmer-managed natural regeneration, (h) multi-harvest rice.
2. Development and extension of rice-fish farming: Integrating the rice and fish sectors.
3. Mapping of rice production basins. To be completed with the FAO Hand-in-Hand Initiative.
4. Participatory development of lowlands for rice cultivation.
5. Promotion of low-GHG emissions, high-yielding rice seed varieties.

AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCTION OF STAPLES AND LIVESTOCK

6. Circular food chains and sustainable waste management: (a) Promote composting and organic waste management, (b) Use of biogas, (c) Integration and popularization of biochar and nitrogen in rice production, (d) Use of rice husks for biochar production, (e) Popularization of semi-direct practices with the use of rice straws, (f) In the fish chain, promote recycling of waste as fertilizer, use of water as biofertilizer, (g) In the maize chain : use of stalks for animal feed.
7. Promotion of climatic resilience through crop diversification: (A) Crop association (agroforestry), (b) Crop rotation, (c) Rice-Cassava-corn-pea rotation in upland rice cultivation.
8. Organic farming: (a) Limit the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers by promoting ecological alternatives; (b) Train small farmers in agroecological practices such as agroforestry; (c) Raise awareness among industrialists of the need to produce low-cost organic fertilizers; (d) Train cooperatives to process agricultural and livestock residues; (e) Open an organic farming window in the Credit Facilitation and Guarantee Fund for the development of agricultural value chains (2-FC VAEP).
9. Strengthen sustainable development and management of protected areas to preserve natural habitats and biodiversity: (a) Protect buffer ecosystems around National Parks; (b) Create protected areas to preserve natural habitats and biodiversity; (c) Bushmeat value chain.
10. Climate early warning systems and strengthening the dissemination of agro-climatological information.

IMPORT SUBSTITUTION

11. Nutritious School Feeding Program based on local production: (a) School gardening; (b) Establish school nutrition programs with local products and raise awareness of nutritious foods; (c) Family support: Ofer subsidies for the purchase of seeds and agricultural tools to improve family food production; (d) Milk chain : (f) Rice sector: through the promotion of low- GHG emission, high-yielding rice seed varieties, enriched with micronutrients; (g) Nutritional education in schools: through the promotion of low-GHG emission, high-yielding rice seed varieties, enriched with micronutrients; (h) Nutritional education in schools: through the promotion of low-GHG emission, high-yielding rice seed varieties, enriched with micronutrients.
12. Extension of climate-smart agriculture (adaptation/mitigation practices) and its impact on nutrition and biodiversity: (a) Set up training programs to provide information on adaptation techniques (irrigation, water management) and crop invasion; (b) Use of adapted seeds, (d) Valorization of traditional and customary practices and knowledge, (e) Capacity- building for cooperatives in the acquisition and use of improved seeds adapted to the climate.
13. Fish chain approach: (a) Promotion of aquaculture and responsible fishing among young people.
14. Milk value chain approach: (a) Promotion of small-scale ecological dairy farms.
15. Maize chain approach (a) Use of drought-resistant maize varieties.

4. PILLAR III: CONVERGENCE MILESTONES

In the short term (2025-2026):

- Establish inter-ministerial Convergence Coordination structure (to bring together food systems, climate, biodiversity and nutrition priorities).
- Establishing the Convergence Group with the participation of the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment, Livestock and Health, including civil society, private sector, youth, women and other stakeholders (UN agencies, Technical and financial partners).
- Develop an early warning system to mitigate the impact of climate extremes on food systems.
- Review the Food Systems Transition Route Map to incorporate more explicit references to priority actions included in the NDC, NAP, the Multi-sectoral Strategy to Combat Malnutrition and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.
- Foster MINADER and MINEPIA participation in the review of the other thematic documents such as NDC, NAP, Nutrition and NBSAP.
- Present the convergence initiative in COP30 and UNFSS+4 and other relevant international events
- Present the Convergence Action Blueprint to donors and IFIs.
- Engage local communities and raise their awareness.

In the medium term (until 2027):

- Develop a strategy for specific value chains that may have a great social and environmental impact in a way that can increase return to farmers and smallholders.
- Support applied research on resilient seeds, breeds, and fodder for specific agro-ecological zones of Cameroon.
- Promotion of agroecology and crop diversification.
- Improved access to drinking water.
- Protection of ecosystems and creation of protected areas.
- Improve the data collection, analysis and dissemination on food, climate, nutrition and biodiversity to improve the food systems decision making.

In the long term (until 2030):

- Implementation of reforestation projects.
- Development of school feeding and nutrition programs and vegetable gardens.
- Continuous evaluation of the impact of actions on adaptation and sustainability.
- Implement the National Development Strategy 2030.

5. PILLAR IV: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The institutional and legal framework of the CI is diverse and highlights a large number of actors and institutions implementing the various plans and strategies. There are several M&E schemes already operating in the country (IPC, Paris Agreement, Nutritional screening reports), and those initiatives will have to be integrated to provide a better picture on the Convergence outcomes. Actually, in order to monitor the food systems transition pathway, the National Convenor has proposed the use of the Food Systems Countdown Initiative set of 50 indicators[6] to monitor the current status and the progress of the transition pathway and the CI. It should therefore be noted that governance is becoming a key element in the implementation of the policies that will be detailed in the action plan of the convergence initiative (CAB).

The Convergence group will discuss a monitoring and evaluation system in its first meeting.

1 A young population estimated at more than 25 million inhabitants and a growth rate of around 3% per year.
2 Sudano-Sahelian zone, Guinea High Savannah zone, Highlands zone, Bimodal Rainforest zone, Monomodal Rainforest zone.
3 Agriculture in its broadest sense employs around 70% of the economically active population and generates 80% of the primary sector's contribution to the country's GDP. It generates 1/3 of foreign exchange earnings and mobilizes 15% of Cameroon's budgetary resources.
4 FAO in Cameroon, "Preventing and responding effectively to food insecurity crises", 2021.
5 This is the objective of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PNACC).
6 https://www.foodcountdown.org/ The FSCI set of indicators is being tested in several countries already, supported by GAIN, FAO and GIZ, in order to gain experience before proposing its use to the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and the UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake in Addis Ababa. Cameroon is one of the pilots, and the first one that is going to use it to monitor the progress of the CI.