THE CONVERGENCE INITIATIVE

CONVERGENCE ACTION BLUEPRINT – ETHIOPIA

1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 CONVERGENCE INITIATIVE BACKGROUND

The Convergence Initiative is a unique collaborative effort championed by the Ethiopian Government with the support of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, the UN system, other development partners, and national stakeholders. It aims to strengthen and foster alignment and collaborative joint programs between the Ethiopian Food Systems Transformation and Nutrition (EFSTN) and climate action agendas, thereby advancing systems approaches and inter-sectorial win-win collaborations. This will enable the Government of Ethiopia to strengthen synergetic action that will simultaneously support the achievement of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement within Ethiopia's context.

Ethiopia is one of the countries that has committed to embracing the Convergence Initiative to foster cross-sectoral and inter-organizational capacities for expanded food-climate implementation. In this regard, an inaugural national Convergence Initiative stakeholders' workshop was held from 15 to 17 January 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the participation of 61 organizations and more than 120 experts and policymakers.

In the lead-up to the national convergence workshop, five background papers were produced by the collaborative efforts of 18 national and international organizations comprised of 45 experts. These background papers were organized around five themes to underscore how climate change impacts the Ethiopian economy. These are impacts of climate change on a) food production and the economy, b) social impacts, c) environment and infrastructure, d) modelling climate risks and vulnerabilities across the economy, and e) realignment of climate action and the Ethiopian Food Systems Transformation and Nutrition (EFTSN). These themes are nested together to create a realistic assessment of the impending impacts of climate change and the long-overdue acceleration of inclusive and comprehensive development. Furthermore, an overview of national climate action (NDC and NAP) was reviewed to create forward and backward linkages between the EFSTN and climate action.

These thematic background papers must be utilized to understand the key conclusions and priorities in this report.

1.2 CONVERGENCE ACTION BLUEPRINT

The Climate Action Blueprint (CAB) is a comprehensive, detailed strategy that builds on robust national processes: the EFSTN, detailed work around the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), National Adaptation Plans (NAP), the Green Legacy Initiatives (GLI), and others. This comprehensive approach ensures that Ethiopia is well-prepared to leverage synergies between EFSTN and climate action, thereby enhancing expanded capacities and resources to effectively address climate, food systems, and nutrition challenges that are simultaneously and collectively hindering resilient and sustainable economic growth, improved livelihoods, and inclusive development.

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

1.3 NATIONAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT STATE

Agriculture is the backbone of Ethiopia's economy, supporting the livelihoods of over 80 percent of the population and contributing 32.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). It contributes about 70 percent of export earnings. The dependence of the Ethiopian economy on the agricultural sector makes the country highly vulnerable to climate variability. Despite having favourable and diverse agroecological conditions for agricultural production, the country faces significant and imminent challenges due to climate change. The rising temperature and erratic rainfall exacerbate food insecurity and threaten livelihoods. Studies showed that staple crops, namely maize and wheat, could experience yield reductions of 20-30 percent by 2050.

Climate change directly and indirectly affects public health through the proliferation of climate-sensitive diseases, increased water scarcity, and food insecurity. Rising temperatures and altered rainfall patterns exacerbate the spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and cholera.

Climate change also causes people displacement. Many communities, particularly those in drought-prone areas, are forced to leave their homes for better living conditions. Climate-induced displacement exacerbates poverty, reduces access to basic services, and puts an increased strain on urban infrastructure. The displacement of people, particularly from rural areas to urban centres, often results in overcrowded conditions and a further breakdown in social cohesion.

Ethiopia has identified the national food systems transformation pathway to respond to these pressing challenges, which constitutes 24 game changers. These are incorporated in the Ethiopia Food Systems Transformation Pathway (EFSTN) to accelerate the implementation of Ethiopia's Ten-Year Development Plan, thereby also contributing to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The EFSTN's 24 game-changing solutions are further broken down into 165 interventions and 605 activities. The 24 game-changing solutions are grouped into seven clusters for effective coordination and facilitation. The food systems transformation and nutrition initiative aims to address problems from production to consumption,

promoting enhanced food safety, nutrition, and diets, improved livelihoods, greater land preservation and restoration, and greater resilience to shocks and stress.

Within the African Union systems, Ethiopia is also the champion of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). Within the recent CAADP-Kampala Declaration, the CAADP framework presents Ethiopia with a key instrument and program through which the country's agrifood systems transformation ambitions are pursued.

In establishing its blueprint for the Convergence Initiative, senior officials from across the Government of Ethiopia, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and the UN system, and key partners examined some of the challenges at this interface. Ethiopia faces significant challenges to food security partly due to the changing climatic conditions. With climate change exacerbating extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, and temperature fluctuations, food security in Ethiopia has been deteriorating, influencing food availability and access, stability, and utilization of food. As crops fail and food prices rise due to supply shocks, poor households, especially in rural areas, face challenges in obtaining and affording sufficient food.

Challenges include the underdevelopment of water resources, low health service coverage, a high population growth rate, low economic development, inadequate road infrastructure in drought-prone areas, weak institutional structures, and a lack of awareness.

The economic consequences of these challenges are severe. Farmers face rising feed costs, reduced household incomes, and increased poverty levels. As traditional pastoral systems struggle, rural communities' resilience remains under threat. Addressing climate change impacts on livestock farming is essential to sustain rural livelihoods, ensure food security, and preserve Ethiopia's cultural heritage.

2. PILLAR I: CONVERGENCE VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 CONVERGENCE VISION

The CAB vision is:

"Create a resilient, sustainable, inclusive, equitable, climate-smart, and competitive food system that drives sustainable development, ensures food security, promotes better nutrition, and enhances the well-being of current and future generations, in alignment with national development objectives and global and regional commitments."

2.2 CONVERGENCE OBJECTIVES (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

1. Enhance policy coherence between food systems, climate action, and nutrition.
2. Empower rural and urban communities by aligning climate action and food systems transformation, enhancing environmental stewardship, and leveraging innovation and traditional practices to ensure sustainable resource use.
3. Invest in climate-resilient food systems, including agrifood systems, infrastructure, and environment, to achieve food security and better nutrition for all.
4. Increase green investments and create decent job opportunities for sustainable livelihood diversification.
5. Strengthen inclusive development and implementation of policies on food systems, climate action, and nutrition.
6. Strengthen climate-resilient health systems to minimize pressure on human health and health systems during peak climate shocks, with particular attention to those in hotspot areas.
7. Continue to monitor and build on the climate risk and vulnerability modelling exercise underpinning this initial CAB.
8. Enhance public awareness of the link between climate change, health, and education outcomes.

3. PILLAR II: KEY CONVERGENCE INTERVENTIONS

The following non-exhaustive list of interventions was identified as an important contribution to Ethiopia's convergence of food systems and climate action. It represents suggested policy interventions that the government may implement in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and with the support of the UN system and resource partners according to national needs and priorities.

3.1 GOVERNANCE

- Review existing Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (IMSC) and regional coordination mechanisms, ensuring that all views from the relevant sectors are heard in a way that supports policy coherence, coordination, and alignment of strategies, creating an enabling environment for successful policy implementation, and strengthening capacities for system-wide thinking and action.
- Develop robust, updated data systems and leverage geographical information systems (GIS) and remote sensing tools to monitor and share information about vulnerable areas and adaptive infrastructure measures for evidence-based policymaking.

3.2 FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

- Encourage public and private investment in food systems infrastructure, including water management and irrigation systems, and accelerate investments in key priority areas to help mitigate the impacts of climate hazards.
- Encourage economic activity diversification, mitigating the impact of climate change on rural communities.
- Develop comprehensive capacity-building and research programs, ensuring a whole-of-society approach in which all segments of society contribute to food systems transformation.
- Develop programs to target the needs of local communities, focusing on technology and innovation, food safety, soil and water conservation, regenerative practices, and access to market information systems through context-specific interventions.
- Develop national early warning mechanisms, climate insurance, and improved access to rural finance to predict and prepare for climate-induced health disasters.
- Develop a comprehensive incentive scheme to encourage innovative green investments and promote green skills.
- Provide appropriate considerations for food and waste along the entire agrifood system.
- Identify problem-solving interventions, including policies to deal with trans-city and regional management of pastoral issues.
- Identify and ensure appropriate livestock insurance interventions.

3.3 ENVIRONMENT

- Promote sustainable community-based forest management to ensure biodiversity conservation and enhance carbon sequestration.
- Restore degraded ecosystems to bolster resilience against climate change.
- Develop value chains for forest products to maximize the economic benefits of forest resources.
- Expand payment for ecosystem services for the forest and biodiversity.
- Expand efforts on ecological corridors to maintain connectivity across forest landscapes and reduce biodiversity loss.
- Adopt climate-resilient land use planning and implementation strategies that support sustainable land use and combat desertification and deforestation.
- Implement sustainable water resource policies – including establishing water infrastructure projects and hydro-monitoring early warning information accessible to the public.
- Support the expansion of the generation and use of renewable energy sources in the food systems, especially among rural communities.
- Promote green hydrogen for production (fertiliser) as one of the sources of energy.
- Enhance waste management systems and urban greenery to mitigate urban heat and pollution.
- Expand available social protection as well as emergency and anticipatory actions.
- Strengthen feed and water point infrastructures to increase the resilience of pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities.
- Leverage digital platforms and tools to deliver timely advisories and recommendations for pastoral and farming communities.

3.4 SOCIAL AND HEALTH

- Integrate public health services into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, ensuring equal access to public health care for affected individuals, including the most vulnerable such as women and the elderly.
- Improve healthcare infrastructure and sanitation systems to mitigate the impact of climate-induced disease outbreaks, focusing on enhancing capacity to manage vector-borne diseases and prevent outbreaks during extreme weather events.
- Develop food-based dietary guidelines to enhance nutrition outcomes for everyone.
- Implement behavioural change campaigns and programs on eco-friendly food consumption and production practices.
- Encourage community-based interventions through programs such as conditional cash transfers.
- Promote gender-inclusive policies that enhance women's access to resources, land, and decision-making processes.

3.5 FINANCING AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

- Develop financial products like green bonds and climate funds to support reforestation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable forest management.
- Mobilize financing through mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and partnerships with multilateral development banks.
- Establish a conducive investment environment to encourage private investment and foreign direct investment (FDI) in renewable energy, waste management, and sustainable urban development through public-private partnership (PPP) models and to incentivize private sector engagement in sustainable agricultural practices, infrastructure resilience projects, and feed-in tariff mechanisms.
- Mobilize local resources through cooperatives and community savings schemes to fund grassroots environmental conservation and infrastructure projects.
- Promote microfinance institutions to provide loans for small-scale, climate-resilient farming and renewable energy adoption.
- Integrate payment for ecosystem services (PES) and carbon trading.
- Use innovative financing mechanisms and solidarity instruments.
- Develop tax incentives for developers and investors in sustainable infrastructure.
- Utilize digital platforms, webinars, and e-learning tools to provide accessible and scalable training on climate-resilient practices.
- Promote open-access repositories for research, guidelines, and case studies to support knowledge transfer.

4. PILLAR III: CONVERGENCE MILESTONES

4.1 SHORT-TERM ACHIEVEMENTS (BY END OF 2026)

- Strengthen the IMSC to specifically focus on convergence actions with the participation of relevant stakeholders, especially coordinated by the Ministry of Planning and Development, ensuring that the climate action component is integrated into policy making.
- Start implementing the modelling of the FAO Roadmap for achieving SDG2 without breaching the 1.5-degree threshold.
- Present the CAB to the IMSC and Regional State Coordination Mechanism – for endorsement and buy-in.
- Update the relevant policy documents such as the national food systems transformation pathway, the NDCs, and the NAP to reflect the vision of the Convergence Initiative.
- Present Ethiopia's CAB at the UNFSS+4 in 2025.
- Conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify relevant state and non-state actors contributing to the nexus between food systems, climate action, and nutrition. Review the composition and structure of the EFSTN IMSC and Regional Council, ensuring that all relevant ministries and bureaus, including the Ministry of Planning and Development, are represented in line with the convergence vision.
- Align the National CAADP-Kampala plans and the Food Systems Transformation and Nutrition (EFSTN) strategies with climate action frameworks such as NDCs and NAPs so that climate priorities are implemented within and across the food systems game-changers, interventions, and activities.

- Develop and validate a costed convergence plan with broad stakeholder buy-in and secure initial funding for implementation by 2026 by completing the ongoing climate risk modelling exercise and using the 3FS tool implemented by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, with the technical lead of the World Bank (WB) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- Establish a financing framework to pool resources from domestic and international donors for EFSTN and climate-resilient investment across the food systems value chain.
- Develop a strategy for stronger and more effective engagement with the private sector, with a vision of public-private partnerships and corporate accountability.
- Develop awareness campaigns to equip relevant policymakers, institutions, and individuals with sufficient knowledge of the interdependences between agrifood systems and climate action.
- Strengthen capacities for "system-wide thinking and acting" across ministries, regional and local administrations, development partners, private sector, NGOs, and CSOs.
- Finalize and institutionalize a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system to track progress on convergence goals, focusing on metrics like reduced climate vulnerability and improved food security.
- Develop and activate a dashboard for the CAADP, EFSTN, NDC/NAP, and CAB, thereby strengthening the monitoring of these systems.

4.2 MEDIUM-TERM ACHIEVEMENTS (BY 2030)

- Upgrade integrated soil and water management, reduce post-harvest losses, and enhance market access, significantly reducing food insecurity.
- Create a robust climate action framework aligning with NDC targets, supported by comprehensive early warning systems and improved agricultural input systems.
- Launch a national database integrating food systems and climate-related data, focusing on modelling and forecasting for decision-making.
- Present necessary legislation to the Parliament to support food systems climate action convergence.
- Mainstream CAB in all policies and strategies and develop sector-level CAB strategies.

4.3 LONG-TERM ACHIEVEMENTS (BY 2035)

- Deploy digital tools and climate-smart technologies tailored to Ethiopian agroecological zones.
- Transform agricultural and food systems through digitalization and climate-smart technologies supported by advanced research and development capabilities.
- Achieve inclusive commercialization of smallholder farming through integrated risk management systems, which will lead to significant income improvements and job creation.
- Achieve carbon neutrality.

5. PILLAR IV: MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Convergence Initiative will incorporate a robust M&E system. It is built on comprehensive baseline data, incorporating community consultations and participatory monitoring approaches to ensure local ownership and contextual relevance.
- The monitoring system will be based on the KPIs for monitoring the CAADP, NAPs, and EFSTN-CA that are currently being finalized. It will include reporting mechanisms for stakeholders and feedback loops for adaptative management, seeking to strengthen links with the SDG indicators and the Paris Agreement Goals.
- Efforts will be devoted to strengthening institutional and technical capacity for monitoring and evaluation through systematic training programs while developing transparent information-sharing mechanisms that enable effective cross-stakeholder learning and adaptation.
- The system will deploy integrated digital solutions and AI-based data management systems to streamline data collection, analysis, and reporting processes, ensuring timely and accurate tracking of progress across all intervention areas.