

Joint SDG Fund Window on Food Systems transformations

Draft Investment Strategy

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1. Background

1.1 A compelling global context

Food systems are part of a complex nexus, affected by numerous global transboundary issues, and in turn directly accounting for a number of trends which slow down progress towards the integrated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Current overall dysfunctions and fragilities partially account for the dramatic effects for food of the current compounded crises, but food systems also offer tomorrow's solutions.

The significant effects of the **current "triple crisis"** (COVID-provoked economic slowdown, climate and weather-related disasters, and conflict, especially the war in Ukraine) on rising food and cost of living prices, populations' food security and nutritional status, and national sustainability efforts are, in no small part, the consequence and result of decades of unsustainable local, national, regional and global food systems. Today, [more than 828 million people are hungry](#) and [almost 3.1 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet](#), with [malnutrition responsible for more disability-adjusted life years lost \(20 per cent\) than any other contributor](#). At the same time, [one third of all food produced is either lost or wasted](#). Food systems are generating significant soil, water and air pollution, [contributing over one third of greenhouse gas emissions](#), [up to 80 per cent of biodiversity loss](#) and [using up to 70 per cent of freshwater](#). While it is estimated that worldwide, food systems employ two billion people, [agriculture workers and their dependents make up two thirds of the 740 million people facing extreme poverty](#). Overall, [today's food systems generate \\$12 trillion in hidden social, economic and environmental costs](#), a situation that weakens decades of collective development achievements. In several countries, the current crisis is deepening already existing inequalities and stirring social movements (with demands strongly tied to more inclusive, sustainable food systems), accelerating administration turn-over, affecting domestic spending and national debt, as well as resulting in shifting political priorities from long-term political reform, to short-term emergency response. **Today's compounded crisis, however, is also a stark reaffirmation of the centrality of food for people and the planet's intertwined well-being, and the urgent need to build more resilient, equitable and sustainable food systems while simultaneously enacting immediate food-security response measures.**

Healthier, more inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and equitable food systems have the power to set the world back on track to meet the SDGs by 2030 and bring stability and prosperity back to countries. Reducing these "hidden" costs generated by unsustainable food systems can boost growth and prosperity across all continents, reduce inequalities and generate trillions for future generations. Climate smart agriculture, restored soils, ecosystem services and more circular economies can significantly help food systems be part of the solution and keep the world on a 1.5°C trajectory while boosting resilience to natural disasters. Food systems that prioritise nutritious crops and boost local and regional value chains and healthy food environments can ensure adequate and affordable diets for rural and urban communities alike; they can also sustain decent and diversified livelihoods for millions of smallholders, pastoralists, fisher folks and food system workers, thereby catalysing entire nations' human capital development. Social, institutional, and technological innovations – including the promotion of traditional knowledge, more inclusive governance mechanisms and circular circuits – can yield huge economic, social and environmental dividends, and strengthen the resilience of communities and nations to future shocks.

1.2 Food systems: A continued top-priority for governments

Averting a global food, health, social, economic, climate and environment crisis while transitioning to sustainable food systems is a top-priority for governments worldwide – and can be expected to remain so in the next decade at least, as the world is confronted with accelerating shocks and disruptions.

The ambitious political commitments shared by over 75 Heads of State and Governments, and 165 countries during the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, further elaborated in more than 120 inclusive, systemic national visions for food systems transformations (hereafter “national pathways”), have never been more timely and relevant. National budgets are reviewed across all regions to prioritise populations’ immediate food needs and address root causes. Actions to strengthen the sustainability and resilience of food systems are the/a focus of 90 per cent of the UN Joint SDG Fund Development Emergency Modality, launched in July 2022 in response to the immediate effects of the crisis on food, energy, and finance, and nearly a third of the 62 Integrated National Financing Frameworks focused on repurposing finance to support better functioning food systems¹.

But given the magnitude of challenges ahead and the scale of financing needed², progress is still too fragmented and anecdotal to catalyse the large-scale transformations urgently needed in the face of a ticking economic, social and environmental clock, in spite of repeated efforts to raise global awareness³ of the urgency to act through multiple, interconnected entry points. And while it took decades (if not centuries) for past industrial revolutions and social reforms to take place in most countries, national governments worldwide only have a few years left to cease what may be the last window of opportunity to development trajectories that value equally people, the planet and our common prosperity and thus realize the paradigm shift they called for in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “The Future We Want”. **The task is gigantic for governments** which, in order to beat the accelerating effects of global warming, rising inequalities, human migration and displacements, social and political instability and national security concerns, are **required to steer their nations towards drastically new directions in just a few years** – often operating within limited fiscal space further shrunk by national debts and the effects of the current global food and energy price crisis.

1.3 The UN’s unique comparative advantage to support national transformations

Transformations are a political process which requires a shared vision, time, diverse knowledge sets, new ways of working and shifting of mind-sets, as well as all hands-on-deck. The national pathways for sustainable food systems developed in the context of the 2021 Food Systems Summit represent a remarkable starting point; but since 2021, most countries have only started to engage in the critical work of translating their pathways into actionable instruments, and **governments are actively calling for continued UN-coordinated and integrated accompaniment to enable, trigger and steer the required transformations and society changes.** A trusted partner of governments, development actors and stakeholders in countries, the reformed UN Development System (through its UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams) is **modelling the integrated new ways of working needed for effective**

¹ See section 3 for a more granular analysis of the linkages between other Joint SDG Fund windows and Food Systems

² An estimated \$300-400 billion of additional investment per year will be needed to transform sustainable food systems according to the a roadmap produced by the Food Systems Summit Finance lever of change: [Financing A Healthy, Equitable & Sustainable Food System](#)

³ These include amongst many others: 2015 adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Climate Summit; 2021 Food Systems Summit; annual Climate COPs; London, Milan and Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summits; Stockholm +20; adoption of a new global biodiversity framework COP-15 in December 2022; annual High Level Political For a session, etc.

food systems transformation in countries, and steering the necessary shifts globally in follow-up to the UN Secretary-General-called Summit.

Everywhere it operates, the UN is **consistently supporting a principled, peace-promoting, human rights-based approach across countries and regions, effectively advancing women's rights and gender equality, and encouraging decision-makers at all levels to prioritise and build the agency of those left "furthest behind"**. Worldwide, the UN has become a respected, trusted and authoritative partner on which national governments can count in the pursuits of their sustainable development objectives.

From agriculture to health; climate and environment to decent work and social inclusion; from gender, youth and education to human rights, governance and rule of law; from finance or innovation to bridging humanitarian and peace interventions to development action, **the UN pools together expertise from across all food systems-related spheres, and positions technical expertise, networks and strategic support at the immediate disposal of governments in the pursuit of nationally-driven, all-of-government political development priorities.**

The UN system in countries, through the richness of the networks and partnerships woven across society, **acts as a powerful catalyst to bring development and societal partners together behind governments for large-scale, all-of-society changes** such as those urgently called for today.

With the (re)positioning of the UN Development System, **people, institutions, tools and processes are now in place nationally and regionally to strengthen the "power of we" and set in motion positive snow-ball effects across and between countries:** from fit for purpose UN Resident Coordinator Offices and Country Teams accessing the highest levels of government, to regional knowledge sharing platforms and issue-based coalitions, or, globally, to new mechanisms such as the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, the UN Food Systems Taskforce, and policy integration and financial tools such as the Joint SDG Fund⁴, **the UN System has strong comparative advantage and even stronger near-future potential to serve as a global catalyst, working through the existing ecosystem of support in each country and leveraging regional and global UN assets for coordinated, country-driven, customized support in translating the pathways into action and impact for SDGs.**

The Joint SDG Fund, as one of the essential instruments of the UN Reform, has demonstrated its added-value in incentivizing transformative government-driven policy shifts and strategic investments required to catalyse and accelerate progress on interconnected entry-points for the achievement of the SDGs in countries.

1.4 Co-designing the Food Systems Window: An evidence-based, bottom-up, participatory process

In a [survey conducted in February 2022 by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub](#), National Convenors from over 80 countries acknowledged the importance of UN support for the dialogues and national pathway development processes, and flagged "access to funding" and "coordination support" as the most urgent needs, **calling for the creation of a "global financing instrument" to support the design and piloting of the shifts and transformations needed for more sustainable national food systems.**

⁴ For an independent evaluation underlining the Joint SDG Fund's value add and impact, see [System Wide Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund FINAL.pdf](#)

In 2019, the **Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)** identified food systems as a **key entry point for successful transformations towards sustainable development**, concluding that the biggest transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda does not lie in pursuing single goals or targets, but rather in a systemic approach that manages the multiple interactions. In 2022, **the UN Secretary-General designated food systems** as one of the seven areas with highest transformative potential across the 2030 Agenda and all 17 goals, and **approved the incubation of a dedicated Joint SDG Fund Food Systems thematic window** by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub in partnership with the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat.

The present investment strategy builds on a highly participatory, bottom-up and evidence-based process conducted between October 2022 and May 2023.

Between November and December 2022, [a consultation was conducted with 14 UN Resident Coordinators](#), covering a variety of countries from diverse geographic and linguistic regions and income levels, enabling them to reflect on progress and bottlenecks in the post-Summit context, co-identify strategic priority entry point actions in line with national development plans and national pathways for governments and UNCTs to advance food systems transformations in the post-Summit context, and share insights on how a carefully designed Food Systems Window could contribute to galvanizing the efforts of national actors and bring effective, context-relevant solutions. The consultation directly inspired the identification of this window's overall objectives. It also emphasized the continued relevance of the food systems agenda in each specific context and channelled much excitement on the possibility of this window to galvanize national efforts and help the momentum pick-up speed, reach a critical mass and become self-serving and autonomous.

In parallel, a consultation was initiated within the UN System Headquarters, with the objective to harvest collective experiences and lessons-learned from past joint programming experiences. Interviews were held across food-related agencies (outreach was done to FAO, WFP, IFAD, UNEP, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, UN Women). The UNSDG Advisory Group Synthesis Report, "Re-thinking Joint Programmes", provided valuable insights on global trends, good practices, challenges, and emerging options for joint programming. Consultations also took place in close collaboration with various members from the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat, to build on and maximize linkages with ongoing windows and lessons learned.

2. The Food Systems Transformation Window: Stimulating faster, broader, deeper change

2.1 Principles

The Joint SDG Fund Food Systems Transformation Window follows a number of principles:

Bottom-up and country-owned: Each country faces a unique and specific context, calling for a tailored set of priorities and combined measures to accompany their food systems towards greater sustainability; required food systems transformations are best understood by their actors. Submissions will be reviewed and assessed on the basis of their strategic contribution to national pathways. The different funding rounds will also offer the opportunity for various UN system agencies at HQ level to technically support their country offices in developing a coherent, context-specific "food systems narrative" and identify the necessary innovations (institutional positioning, strategic messaging to government departments, design of programmes and activities, collaborations, and partnerships).

Catalytic: Small grants (\$2-3 million per country and funding round) enabling planning, alignment, coordination, and monitoring of implementation are allocated to catalyse, as a next step in the medium term, much bigger and more transformative operations in-country by individual UN agencies, government expenditure, donors or development banking institutions, and the private sector. This is prepared through early collaborations and planning with sectoral government working groups, donor working groups, ministries of finance in-country, and any public-private coordination mechanisms.

Inclusive: Though funding is channelled through the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and Country Team in countries, the UN agencies collaborate with other partners in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of joint activities, such as national and international civil society organisations, farmers associations, youth, networks of academics, private sector associations, and Indigenous Peoples' representatives. A priority of this window is to ensure that national food systems discussions do not happen without those most affected, who often coincide with marginalized or left-behind communities, and that national transformations build upon their knowledge, and strengthens their agency.

Sustainable: Activities taking place in the context of this window aim to strengthen national capacities, in particular around leadership, coordination and planning, advocacy, localising the food systems narrative, as well as technical capacities, in line with overall end-of-window objectives and a clear exit strategy.

Predictable and agile: This window proposes a flexible, multi-annual funding mechanism (five years) to allow national actors to maximise the positive effects of available funding with regards to absorption capacities, leverage context specific political opportunities or adapt to unpredicted developments and new shocks and mitigate their negative effect on the overall impact of the programme.

Comparative advantage and excellence from every partner: When developing submissions, UN Country Team agencies are required to carefully assess respective strengths and weaknesses, as well as that of their implementing partners, with regards to the objectives at hand, and propose a joint programme which draws on the best that partners have to offer.

Lessons learned: This food systems window builds on the learnings of other Joint SDG Fund windows⁵, as well as more global learnings from past generations of Joint Programmes. Most importantly, it values and aims to feature the knowledge generated by actors in a user-friendly way that facilitates countries' learning routes and own food systems transformation experiences.

2.2 Objectives

The Food Systems Transformation Window will deliver results across four overarching objectives emerging from the inclusive, participatory window design process, and aligned to the overall Joint SDG Fund Strategy:

- 1. In a fast-moving context, promote sustainable food systems as the answer to current and future shocks, and a booster to most SDGs in countries.**

The impact of the current cost-of-living crisis on people's immediate food security and basic needs carries the risk to focus national decision makers' attention (a number of which came into office after the Food Systems Summit) on short-term, emergency food availability and accessibility responses, while postponing the necessary more in-depth structural reforms and investments aiming to address causes and to avoid future crises by resetting national food systems on a more sustainable course. Since the Summit, national Food Systems

⁵ In particular, the Development Emergency Modality, Social Protection, Financing SDGs, Digitalisation (see section 3)

Summit Dialogue actors and UN Resident Coordinators have repeatedly flagged the need for continued high-level awareness raising to help **high-level decision makers** (many of them from new administrations) understand the centrality of the food systems agenda, and position and sustain it as a top national priority, even through election cycles, changes of administrations, or natural, economic, and social crises. The creation and development of a shared vision for national food systems, together with acknowledgement of the sectoral links and respective roles, is also further needed across more **technical levels of governments, between and within sectoral ministries and departments**. Outreach, awareness-raising efforts, and education are also needed with **public opinion and citizens in society**, sending their representatives the signal that unsustainable food systems are no longer an option. National actors (government representatives, science and academia, civil society and private sector networks, the UN, donors and other members of the development community) all have a responsibility to champion a more integrated approach to food, creating an enabling and supportive environment for transformation efforts to be effective.

2. Advance government-driven, rights-based, multi-stakeholder food system transformations as envisioned in the national pathways through strategic, coordinated support of the UN Country Team

Most countries now have crystallised national Summit commitments and a vision in national pathways, and many have identified concrete actions across relevant sectors, geographies or communities. Often, national food systems pathways have triggered the revision of sectoral policies to assess their mutual coherence and alignment with an overarching sustainable food systems vision, or the **development of new legislative tools towards greater integration**. Multisectoral, **multistakeholder coordination institutions** are also in the process of being set up or strengthened to be fit for purpose to oversee the collective implementation of this common vision. However, amongst a list of desired national priorities and objectives, the current context of constrained budgets and reduced fiscal spaces calls for smart **prioritisation of a few highly effective entry-points to focus means and efforts – ones that will spark larger-scale implementation for country- and system-wide transformations**. Whether through policy reform, national capacity strengthening, local community engagement and decentralization, or the development of strategic and fruitful partnerships, governments are looking at the UN to accompany them in this endeavour.

3. Reshape the national food finance architecture towards healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems, and catalyse more SDG value for money.

The majority of current investments in food systems, be they from private sector value chain actors, domestic budgets, or Official Development Assistance (ODA), are short-sighted, pursuing sectoral objectives with little to no acknowledgement of spill-over effects and possible externalities on other sectors, generating as a result \$12 trillion in hidden social, economic and environmental costs. Sustainable food systems, on the other hand, could help unlock \$4.5 trillion in new business opportunities every year, save USD six trillion in public health costs, and support over half of the world's GDP (44 trillion). It is widely acknowledged that, if investments are accurately directed, the transformation will pay for itself⁶. However, this requires food finance actors to take drastic and coordinated measures to redirect private sector investments, repurpose public budgets and spending, global and regional development bank programmes, and bilateral donor support. Notable efforts are starting on several fronts at global and regional levels. At global level, countries can leverage the Joint SDG Fund's Integrated National Financing Frameworks and the Hub's work on country budget tools and ODA measurement to promote the needed behaviour change, amongst private sector investors, within government and with ODA partners to set new foundations

⁶ Food Finance Architecture Executive Summary Financing a Healthy, Equitable and Sustainable Food System

for a food finance architecture that generates dividends for all other SDGs. Regional actors (AGRF, AfDB) and bodies (AU guidelines to transition from national pathways to investments) are also driving efforts to finance national pathways. The Food Systems Window will provide seed funding to initiate the articulation and alignment of large-scale investments to national visions.

4. **Contribute to building national, regional, and global knowledge and learning around food systems transformations, as well as monitor and communicate progress and impact.**

From policy briefs, user guides, expert reports, documentation, and repositories, never has there been such a wealth of information available, and yet it seems increasingly difficult for decision makers to effectively access the context-specific information and action-oriented knowledge they need when faced with time-sensitive decisions. Beyond repositories of diverse products, more needs to be done to connect, in a time- and user-friendly way, relevant knowledge, data, analyses, and experiences, with actors faced with policy decisions. Investing in capacities and towards a 360° understanding of contextualized food system interactions, within governments and the UN Country Teams, as well as regionally and globally, creates safeguards against “business as usual habits” and the risk of regressing towards sector-based approaches. It is also an investment in cross-country solidarity (and South-South cooperation is already playing an important role) and weaving more closely than ever before the knowledge collected by UN institutions at various levels, shaped for practical use by context-specific end users, building on the regional assets created by the UN Development System Reform or other leading regional entities, or the Hub’s knowledge management role. Lastly, it contributes to demonstrating to its investors that Food Systems Window investments are making a concrete and lasting impact which will far outlive the duration of grants, and that “we” is more than the sum of its parts.

2.3 Cross-cutting results

Throughout its objectives and support to SDG transformations, the Fund, including this Food Systems Transformation Window, will continue to mainstream gender equality to **fully integrate gender perspectives and women’s empowerment** in all its programmes. The Fund will continue to apply its gender equality marker to track and effectively report on all UN resources utilized for gender equality and women’s empowerment and build on the integration of human rights-based approaches. In addition to gender, the Fund will ensure its programme commitments to **youth**, guided by the UN Youth2030 and to contribute to the principles of leaving no one behind.

The Fund including this Food Systems Transformation Window recognizes the need for data **and statistics that are accurate, timely, sufficiently disaggregated, and accessible** to monitor and fully implement progress towards the SDGs. The Fund will also continue to both advocate for greater investments in, and better use of, data for the SDGs and **strengthen national capacities** for high-quality and trustworthy data from national statistical systems. Furthermore, the Fund will commit to enhance capacities of, and support reporting by, its public and private sector partners to provide robust data and concrete measurements on SDG impact for its catalytic investments building on its work in piloting the OECD-UNDP Impact Standards for Financing Sustainable Development.⁷

⁷ OECD/UNDP, “OECD-UNDP Impact Standards for Financing Sustainable Development.”

As part of its UN-wide commitment to **Leave No One Behind** and prioritise the need and agency of those most marginalized, the Food Systems Window will lay **particular emphasis on internally displaced persons (IPS), refugees, and people with disabilities.**

2.4 Results framework

Select key performance indicators at the outcome level (to be tailored to each Joint Programme):

Window objective	Core results/indicators*
<p>1. Promote sustainable food systems as the answer to current and future shocks, and a booster to most sustainable development objectives in countries.</p>	<p>Through evidence-based awareness-raising efforts with government and society/communities, food systems transformations are identified as a priority or catalyst in emerging National Develop Plans, UNSDCFs, CCA, with emphasis of the links between sustainable food systems and SDGs.</p>
<p>2. Advance government-driven, rights-based, multi-stakeholder food system transformations as envisioned in the national pathways through strategic, coordinated support of the UN Country Team.</p>	<p>A solid, inclusive national food systems transformation vision is effectively steered and operationalized through adequate policy and institutional instruments, and concrete results are delivered collaboratively prioritizing the most vulnerable through an all-of-government and all-of-society effort.</p>
<p>3. Reshape the national food finance architecture towards healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems, and catalyse more SDG value for money.</p>	<p>Financial support (domestic, ODA, development banks, private sector etc), for food systems is re-assessed (using, for instance the budget tracking tool) and initiatives proposed for a gradual, virtuous cycle shift towards a reformed, more efficient, and sustainable food systems finance architecture.</p>
<p>4. Contribute to building national, regional, and global knowledge and learning around food systems transformations, as well as monitor and communicate progress and impact.</p>	<p>National achievements as well as lessons learned are tracked, documented, communicated, and shared within and between countries, using global and regional knowledge and learning mechanisms.</p>
<p>Round-specific indicators:</p> <p>Individual funding rounds will detail relevant round-specific performance indicators and accompany teams in the identification of tailored Joint-Programme specific indicators. Additionally, each JP funded by the Joint SDG Fund will be requested to select and report against relevant SDG and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework indicators as well as select global indicators in the Fund’s programmatic results framework.</p>	

2.5 Funding tracks

The breadth and depth of the food systems transformations called for in countries will require an ambitious funding envelope and strategically designed funding rounds to accompany countries pivot and encourage their leadership from wherever they currently stand – while ensuring a “bottom-up” approach and an emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. This window adopts features and modalities based on due analysis of past joint programming experience, lessons-learned shared from country to HQ levels throughout the UN system, as well as good practices.

Funding envelope

The Window is anticipated to have a multi-year funding envelope of USD \$350 million over five years (2023-2028), with a window-specific thematic evaluation and the incorporation of lessons in the third year. Annually, the window will support an average of 15-20 mature Joint Programmes and provide preparatory design-phase funding for a limited number of early-stage Joint Programmes (e.g. maximum 10% of the total budget for a funding round). This would amount to an average annual resource envelope of USD \$70 million.

Timeline and predictability

The window will adopt a phased, multi-annual approach, offering predictability to countries, as well as the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and accompany countries “graduate” from one stage to the other.

Prioritised scope

The Window funding will prioritize opportunities that (a) demonstrate and strengthen national leadership and effectively engage the national ecosystem of support behind national pathway objectives, (b) lead to transformative results in an accelerated timeline, with the intention of catalysing systemic change (c) demonstrate a shift in individual and institutional behaviours to ensure efforts outlast the grants and (d) mobilize, on the basis of national opportunities finance from the Government, private sector, IFIs, and/or other in-country stakeholders.

Joint country-level action

The Window’s funding will be used primarily for country-level impact through the implementation of Joint Programmes led by Resident Coordinators at the UN Country Team (UNCT) level and benefitting at least two UN (and no more than four) entities⁸. Beyond the coordinated and integrated engagement of various sectoral government ministries behind the national food systems narrative, UN agencies receiving the grants are highly encouraged to engage and include the wide range of actors from the national ecosystem of support towards an “all of society approach”, through existing or new partnerships and implementation agreements, in line with their respective rules of engagement with non-UN actors and with due consideration to comparative advantages. As is relevant in each national context, countries will be strongly encouraged to dedicate efforts, in collaboration with their government, parliament, donor landscape and private sector, to co-funding/co-ownership of efforts, and to the development of longer-term arrangements conducive to more public and private flows autonomously supporting sustainable food systems results.

Funding tracks

Several funding tracks (or “baskets”) will be offered, in order to make sure the support is entirely tailored to countries’ (absorption) capacities and leads to successful achievement of realistic ambitions. The Window will operate through a series of funding rounds investing in

⁸ Alignment and contribution of additional UN entities at own costs is encouraged.

both mature, transformative Joint Programmes and exploratory work to develop a pipeline of catalytic Joint Programmes. The primary focus of the Window will be funding mature Joint Programmes with the potential for catalytic effects in a limited time. Each funding round may have a more specific approach, which will be presented in the description of the funding round document. Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams will be invited to submit an expression of interest (EOI) which can either qualify for funding for a mature Joint Programme or, in cases where a country does not yet have a mature Joint Programme, qualify for seed funding for an early-stage Joint Programme. Mature proposals will need to meet selection criteria (see Annex A).

1. Mature Joint Programmes

In this funding track, all countries that meet the country selection criteria in their EOIs will be provided technical support to formulate a Joint Programme and all proposals meeting quality threshold will be funded within the overall envelope for the funding round.

2. Early-stage Joint Programmes

This funding track serves to provide seed-funding and incubate a pipeline of Joint Programmes to maturity. This pathway is competitive: all EOIs that did not qualify for the mature Joint Programme pathway will be invited to submit a concept note. Only a limited number of top-quality concept notes will proceed with the formulation of a simplified Joint Programme.

In contrast to mature Joint Programmes, early-stage Joint Programmes will pursue the aim to lay a number of food systems transformation foundations, and will not necessarily seek outcome-level results, but rather focus on process deliverables. This might include the organisation of inclusive, participatory food systems dialogues, the development, or refinement, of national food systems pathways, or further work to operationalize the pathway through a costed action or implementation plan, identify key objectives, actions and indicators, roles and responsibilities, or build capacity to fundraise. If successful, these initiatives will become a part of the pipeline and be considered in later funding rounds for mature Joint Programmes.

Proposal development process

After submitting the EIO, the countries that meet the selection criteria will start to develop full-fledged Joint Programme documents, and, upon successful quality assurance, will receive the funding. Those that do not meet the criteria, will be invited to submit a brief concept note for early-stage Joint Programmes. This will be a competitive process with technical review of concept notes based on the standard technical criteria of the Joint SDG Fund (with possible modifications). Countries with top quality concept notes (within 10 per cent of the total budget allocated for a funding round) will develop simplified Joint Programme documents and, upon successful quality assurance, receive funding. The early-stage Joint Programmes might apply for the first funding track (mature Joint Programmes) in the next funding round, but no commitment of funding will be made in advance.

All Joint Programmes will be developed and implemented with technical support and quality assurance provided through the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. Joint programmes will be designed based on quality standards established by the Fund and aligned with the new UNSDG Joint Programme Guidance Note.

Fig. 1.0: Funding tracks for the Food Systems Transformation Window

The detailed approach to each funding round will be presented in the description of the funding round, which will also include guidance for proposals and explanation of the overall process. This will also specify the overall funding round budget and the expected number

of Joint Programmes for both funding tracks, based on budget available. However, an overall typical approach is presented below.

Instrument & purpose	Typical funding	Tentative number of Joint Programmes
Mature Joint Programme to trigger food systems transformation and produce tangible results at scale that improve the situation of the most vulnerable.	USD 2-3 million for two years	15-20 on average per funding round
Early-Stage Joint Programme to incubate and develop into mature Joint Programmes.	Up to USD 400,000 for 1-1.5 years	10 on average per founding round (<i>within 10 per cent of the total budget for a funding round</i>)

2.6 Offerings: Food Systems Transformations Action Areas

The Food Systems Transformation Window will prioritize support for 5 Action Areas/offerings to governments. These act as entry points to deliver advances in the cross-cutting areas through an integrated, systemic approach that “breaks down the silos”, in line with the [UN Secretary-General’s Food Systems Summit Chair’s Summary and Statement of Action](#). These Action Areas structure the UN offer and bring together individual mandates and workplans around common goals and objectives. Beyond the scope of this Window, UN Country Teams are encouraged to consider these when planning UNSD Cooperation Frameworks and annual joint workplans.

(1) Nourish All People

Access to (nutritionally, socially, culturally, etc) adequate food is a right for every individual worldwide. Efforts to boost agricultural productivity (access to inputs, infrastructure, technology, markets) to ensure that food is available, accessible, and affordable must be more intentionally articulated with interventions that address the specific nutritional needs of children (especially in the 1000 days), women of reproductive age, and men through the promotion of adequate, diverse and healthy diets. Nutrition action (treatment, prevention, labelling, product reformulation, procurement practices, workplace legislation, unhealthy product taxation), measures to reduce food loss and waste, address food safety issues (in particular food-borne diseases), school meal programmes, access to care (universal health coverage) and WASH (access to safe drinking water, sanitary infrastructure, education), social protection, education and training should converge to ensure food and nutrition security for all people at all times through food systems that source sustainably and to the extent possible, locally.

(2) Boost Nature-based Solutions

As it becomes increasingly evident that human, animal and natural resource health is intrinsically linked (“ONE Health” approach), food systems must optimize environmental resource use in, and impact from, food production, processing and distribution, thereby

reducing biodiversity loss, air and water pollution, water use, soil degradation, desertification, deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. A number of approaches, innovations, knowledge and technologies are known to support natural resource regeneration and can support such efforts. However, their scaling-up is slowed by insufficient policy and financial incentives for smallholder farmers and small-scale enterprises along the food value chain, and an overall often outdated approach to food system governance (including subsidies) that prioritizes nation-wide economic aspects over concerns for citizens' health, livelihoods and environment.

(3) Advance Equitable Livelihoods, Decent Work and Empowered Communities

Many of today's food system workers are not provided with fundamental rights, resulting in exacerbated socio-economic vulnerability for people and communities such as migrant workers, youth, women, Indigenous peoples, informal economy workers, and those marginalized on grounds of ethnicity, race, religion, and disability, and loss of agency and dignity. Accelerated legislation, enforced policy incentives, and inclusive, innovative and participatory tools, activities and processes are needed with the objective of empowering the furthest behind and reinstating their dignity and agency. Institutionalizing Human Rights, especially women rights and gender equality, promoting decent employment conditions and living incomes, ensuring access to social protection, recognizing the unique contribution of Indigenous Peoples' communities and knowledge, of family farming models, and of the role of Youth to regenerate and achieve sustainable food systems worldwide, is the key to ensuring, beyond immediate relief and social well-being, that poverty-reduction efforts and other social interventions deliver dividends spanning to the planet and prosperity for this generation and the next.

(4) Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses

Today's global crisis emerging from the world's insufficient ability to respond to, and cope with the compounded effects of multiple shocks (COVID-19 related economic slow-down, climate-change induced natural disasters and expanding conflicts) ring the alarm on the need to build stronger and more resilient food systems to withstand these and future shocks. Early warning systems are essential, as are disaster risk reduction frameworks and policies, national emergency and resource management plans, pandemic recovery efforts and food crisis interventions that truly integrate the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. Critical connections between crisis response and longer-term structural changes are needed to keep the transformation of food systems on track.

2.7 Window governance

The Joint SDG Fund governance applies to the Window.





The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub will provide technical leadership in the design of funding rounds (calls for submissions), assessment of proposals quality, technical accompaniment of UN Country Teams in the development of their full-fledged submissions, and in the programmatic review of progress and impact.


3. Fitting in the broader picture

3.1 Catalysing the Food Systems Finance Architecture Reform Agenda

The food systems finance architecture is in urgent need of reform, with inaction currently generating \$12 trillion in hidden social, economic and environmental costs. The Food Systems Summit finance lever developed and presented at the Summit a “roadmap” towards transformation of food systems finance which identified five “food finance imperatives”, and roles and responsibilities for food systems finance actors in the public and private sector, from national to global levels.

Through its small, catalytic grants, the Food Systems Window has the potential to contribute to, or directly create an enabling environment to support finance actors achieve these five imperatives.

The Food Systems Window will...	...contribute to....	... the five food systems finance architecture imperatives
Support national efforts to review existing sectoral policies and strategies and assess their alignment to a national vision that equally promotes people, the planet and prosperity.		1. Reshape public support and incentives using subsidies and market mechanisms to redirect capital out of unhealthy, destructive assets to support public goods.
Promote a shift of narrative around food systems amongst public decision makers (finance and policy) as well as other investors (donors, financial institutions, businesses) for more balanced consideration to be given to economic, social/health and environmental externalities in all business and financial decisions.		2. Integrate health, environmental and social risks into financial decision-making, future-proofing portfolios by measuring & disclosing food system risks and redirecting investment into new business models to mitigate exposure.
Provide catalytic funding to potentially engage more broadly finance actors (policy makers, private and public development banks, cooperatives, businesses) in the national landscape in view of devising reformed financial products and services that de-risk sustainable business.		3. Scale fit-for-purpose financial products and business models, mobilising private capital by de-risking and mainstreaming innovative financial instruments & regenerative assets while improving access to finance & services for primary producers through new supply chain partnerships.
Encourage coordinated UN support to government-driven reforms along a number of action areas, including decent employment and labour rights and investing in infrastructure (see section Offerings, 4.)		4. Secure equitable food systems by rebalancing bargaining power, investing in rural infrastructure to drive sustainable production & development and implementing fair prices and living wages to ensure access to affordable, healthy diets.

<p>Directly support government-driven efforts to establish or strengthen inclusive and effective coordination and governance mechanisms.</p>		<p>5. Strengthen food governance and stability as the underpinning foundation of the entire food system to build physical and financial resilience to shocks.</p>
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3.2 Leveraging all avenues : articulation with other Joint SDG Fund windows

The Fund has already invested around USD 29 million in food systems through previous portfolios, with an addition USD 18 million invested through the Development Emergency Modality. A number of countries addressed food, agriculture and climate change in the context of shock-responsive **social protection**, while 17 countries are worked through the **enabling SDG financing portfolio** to repurpose finance to support better food systems and 90 per cent of the **Development Emergency Modality Joint Programmes** recipients either focused entirely or partially on food systems.

In addition to the Food Systems Window, the Joint SDG Fund is currently incubating other thematic priorities into windows. The new Joint Programmes within those windows countries could relate to improving the sustainability of food systems, for instance through the **solutions for digital transformation** (food productivity, value chain sustainability, food loss and waste management), **climate action and energy access** (harnessing food systems' adaptation and mitigation potential, circular economy and use of agricultural bi-products), **solutions for internal displacement** (strengthening sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural refugee settings) and **localising the SDGs** (raising urban and rural communities' awareness of the interconnectedness between people, the planet and prosperity). The Joint SDG Fund expects to continue investing into **decent jobs and universal social protection** in support of the global accelerator.

The incubation of the Food Systems Window has already established strong synergies with the incubation of other windows. Through robust communication, information sharing, joint use of dashboards and analyses, the Hub benefits from a granular understanding of ongoing projects in each country as they potentially relate to food systems, and vice-versa, other windows have access to strategic and technical analyses of national landscapes from a food systems perspective. The Food Systems Window will build on and expand the solid assets laid by previous windows (for instance, integrated national financing frameworks), and multiply ongoing and future work through parallel windows.

3.3 Alignment with the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub Work Plan and mandate

The Food Systems Window uniquely resonates with and amplifies the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub's mandate and is designed to continue maximising every opportunity. The Window is instrumental to equip national teams (National Convenors, UN Country Teams, other stakeholders from the Ecosystem of Support) in the operationalization of national pathways and collective delivery of results. It is also essential to sustain national momentum and advocacy around the Summit narrative.

The timing and focus of the Window's funding rounds will be directly informed by the Stocktaking Moment preparations (results of the voluntary country stocktaking exercise), and outcomes, so as to accompany closely national efforts in the next biennium towards the following Stocktaking Moment 2025.

4. Annexes

Annex A: Country selection criteria for Mature Joint Programmes

Specific selection criteria are applied for Mature Joint Programme submissions to ensure that the **proposals demonstrate the highest degree of readiness to drive accelerated results at scale**. The criteria will apply to all countries submitting an EOI and a ranking will be

produced. Those that meet the minimum thresholds will move into the Mature Joint Programme pathway. Those that pass the quality threshold will be invited to submit a concept note within the second track. Further details on the process will be provided in description of funding rounds.

Window objective	Selection criteria
1. Promote sustainable food systems as the answer to current and future shocks, and a booster to most sustainable development goals in countries.	The Joint Programme demonstrates the ability to access and build on relevant national, regional and global knowledge, data and networks to develop a tailored national sustainable food systems narrative and make a convincing case across (political, technical and societal) audiences of diverse nature.
2. Advance government-driven, rights-based, multi-stakeholder food system transformations as envisioned in the national pathways through strategic, coordinated support of the UN Country Team.	The Joint Programme targets few, carefully selected cross-sectoral priorities in the national pathway determined jointly at a strategic level with the government. It relies on and expands existing collaborations with government and national multi-stakeholders (such as civil society, private sector, food producers associations, academia, youth networks, local governments, etc) and ensures that end-beneficiaries are included at all stages of the activities.
3. Reshape the national food finance architecture towards healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems, and catalyse more SDG value for money.	The Joint Programme harnesses existing studies and analyses related to the finance landscape to propose activities that will foster either greater quality (integration/coherence) of sectoral funding flows (national and international), increased quantity of funding directed towards sustainable food systems (through co-funding, innovative financing instruments, etc), or to pilot/strengthen innovative sustainable value chain business models, in support of national food systems transformations and pathway implementation.
4. Contribute to building national, regional and global knowledge and learning around food systems transformations, as well as monitor and communicate progress and impact.	The Joint Programme aims to build robust progress tracking, review and knowledge management systems allowing user-oriented documentation of achievements and lessons learned during national food systems transformations/pathway implementation. Channels have been identified to communicate on progress (with government, society, regional and global levels) and connect it to SDG follow-up and review discussions in country, regionally and globally.
<p>Round-specific selection criteria</p> <p>Each funding rounds may involve additional round-specific selection criteria associated with the focus of the call.</p>	

Annex B: Overview of Joint Programme approach

In line with the Joint SDG Fund mandate in supporting UN Development System reform and the need to facilitate an integrated approach to SDG acceleration, this Window will provide funding through the modality of Joint Programmes. Under the common umbrella of the UN Cooperation Framework, Joint Programmes support the development and implementation of national priorities for coherent action towards systemic change, transformative results at scale, acceleration of the SDGs, and facilitation of UN Development System reform.

“A Joint Programme is appropriate if it identifies and builds on complementarities and brings together the added value of its partners in addressing complex development challenges. It requires a commitment from participating organizations to work together. Its design should ensure components that build on each other, clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each partner, and mutual accountability on the delivery of development results⁹”. Joint programmes bring together expertise and reinforce UN Country Team capacity and facilitate national ownership and strategic partnerships with development partners and IFIs, jointly implementing the programmes.

The Window funding will be limited to Joint Programmes that meet the following criteria:

1. Requires Resident Coordinator leadership in design and coordination of Joint Programmes at the country level.
2. Directly contributes to the results and theory of change in the Cooperation Framework and to enhancing UN Country Team coherence.
3. Is multi-sectoral in nature, creates cross-sectoral impact, and contributes to accelerated progress on several SDGs.
4. Requires pooling of expertise, knowledge, and networks from two or more UN entities.
5. Leverages engagement of diverse stakeholders, including government, private sector and civil society, and promotes a systems approach to designing, developing and implementing solutions, and therefore benefits from the convening authority of the Resident Coordinator.
6. Facilitates systemic and catalytic results to scale SDG action in line with priority goals of the UN Secretary-General and UN Sustainable Development Group.

Moreover, Joint Programmes supported through this Window will also be required to ensure the following:

- Implemented by two or more UN entities (PUNOs: Participating UN Organizations), one of which with the role of lead agency, to ensure integrated and coherent approach to producing transformative results based on national priorities.
- Roles and responsibilities of each partner clearly defined, based on an analysis of the comparative advantages of each partner and their role in the broader UN Country Team, and operationalized through Joint Programme management arrangements (e.g. JP Steering Committee).
- Adequate support (resources, time and willingness to work together) for the Joint Programme from all key stakeholders involved (including the government) and

⁹ UNSDG Guidance Note on Joint Programmes

adequate PUNO capacity (including technical expertise, geographical presence and logistics, human resources for collaboration, capacity to innovate and scale up).

Typically, Joint Programmes are managed by Joint Programme steering committees, or a related mechanism comprising of UN Resident Coordinator, UN entities involved in implementation, government representatives, and other local and international partners. There will be a possibility for local partners contributing with a certain amount/percentage of co-funding of the Joint Programme (e.g. USD 20 million or more) to become a member of the country-level Joint Programme steering committee. To the extent possible, existing structures will be prioritized to anchor Joint Programmes, and its management arrangements at the country level streamlined to avoid fragmentation and duplication of structures and processes. Day-to-day coordination of technical aspects of Joint Programmes is the responsibility of It is expected that one implementing UN entity agency takes the lead in the Joint Programme implementation, depending on allocation of roles and responsibilities amongst UN entities taking part in the Joint Programmes, and the broader organization of the UN Country Team.

Throughout the programme cycle, the Window will be supported by inter-agency technical expertise at global, regional and country levels. Details on management arrangements for with Window will be presented in terms of reference of the Window, but, typically, this will include dedicated funding for: a) technical review and selection of proposals (EOI; concept notes), b) support to technical design of high-quality Joint Programmes (focusing on Theories of Change and Results Framework), c) Technical analysis of Joint Programme results, including regular monitoring and evaluation technical briefs and annual/final Joint Programme reports, d) ensuring technical alignment with the broader global agenda in the focus of the Window; and e) other support to Joint Programme implementation, including strategic communication, learning, strategic events and knowledge management.

Further information on policies, requirements, programme cycle, and best practices that will be applied for Joint Programmes in this Window will be based on the Joint SDG Fund operational guidance aligned with the UN SDG Guidance Note on Joint Programmes.

Annex C. Actions for integrated support to national food systems transformation efforts - for consideration in UNSD Cooperation Frameworks and UN Country Team Joint Work planning.

People	Peace	Planet	Prosperity	Partnerships
AA1: Nourish All People	AA4: Build Resilience	AA2: Boost Nature-based Solutions of Production	AA3: Advance Equitable Livelihoods	AA5: Means of Implementation

Examples of areas for interventions

N.B. The examples listed below are only indicative as most are cross-cutting and contribute to (/should be listed under) several given action areas. The list is simplified to facilitate readability.

Food security Nutrition (treatment, prevention, labelling, reformulation, procurement, workplace legislation) Food safety (food borne diseases) School meals Care (maternal), WASH services Social protection Education & training Agricultural productivity (access to inputs, infrastructure, machines, markets)	HDP Nexus Pandemic response & recovery Early warning systems Risk disaster reduction Emergency plans Natural resource management	Climate-smart agriculture & adaptation Biodiversity conservation Soil health Land degradation & restoration Desertification Deforestation Oceans ONE Health CC mitigation & carbon sequestration Irrigation, water use Aquaculture Water & air pollution Regenerative agricultural techniques (incl. agroecology) Nature-positive knowledge, innovations & technologies Resource-use efficiency	Smallholders, cooperatives Tenure governance, land rights Social protection Democratized access to credit & productive resources Support to SME development Cash-based transfers Well-connected formal/informal markets Infrastructure (roads, storage, processing facilities, electricity) Territorial development, short value chains, farm-to-fork approaches Labour & human rights, social dialogue CSR, new frameworks to hold private sector responsible	Finance Capacity transfer/development Data Innovations & technology Governance Thought leadership & knowledge-sharing
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Examples of game-changing solutions emerged from the Food Systems Summit¹⁰

Fortify staple foods & crops	Climate risk reduction & management	Agrobiodiversity	Enhance local production for local consumption	Promoting integrated food systems policies, planning, & governance
'Reset' wasting prevention & treatment to catalyse action & accountability	Humanitarian development-peace (HDP) nexus	One Health	National food supply chains	Strengthening capacity in food systems
Accelerate action for women's nutrition & empowerment	Pandemic resilient food systems	Land-freshwater nexus	Empowering food system workers through strengthening workplace organisation & effective social dialogue	Promoting inclusive investments in food systems
Motivation, education & information to shift demand for healthy & sustainable food consumption	Climate adaptation, mitigation, resilience	Aquatic & blue foods	Institutionalise & strengthen labour & human rights regulations by placing people's dignity & rights at the centre	Aligning data, stakeholders & evidence for nature-positive production
Healthy food environment	Systemic approaches to crisis management	Deforestation-free & conversion-free food supply chains	Develop new standards & legal frameworks to drive private-sector change & hold companies accountable	Launch a global food systems data consortium
One Health		Global Soil Hub	Promoting economic diversification & economic & social inclusion	Address true costs through a global partnership on the true price of food
Enable food safety innovation & tools		Food is never waste, halving food loss & waste by 2030	Promoting inclusive investments in food systems	
Food safety: Develop low- & middle-income country capacity to track foodborne disease & improve food safety performance		Repurposing public support to food & agriculture	Strengthening sustainable territorial developments	
Empowering communities & Indigenous Peoples: Recognising rights & traditional knowledge		Transformation through agroecology & regenerative agriculture	Democratise access to future technology, inputs, & finance: empowering smallholders as stewards of healthy and productive soils	
Gender transformative approaches for inclusive & sustainable food systems		Transformation through innovation for nature-positive production		
"Zero Hunger, Nourish the Future"		Grasslands & savannahs		
		Indigenous Peoples' food systems		

¹⁰ Please see <https://foodsystems.community/> for full description of each solution, context, implementation, monitoring and partners

Pledge for the private sector				
Summit Coalitions of Action ¹¹				
Zero Hunger Coalition	Climate Resilient Food Systems Alliance (CRFS)	Food Systems Transformation through Agroecology	Decent Work and Living Income and Wages Coalition (DWLIW)	Global Coalition for Data and Digital Food Systems Innovation
School Meals Coalition – Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child	Fighting Food Crises along the HDP Nexus Coalition (HDP Nexus Coalition)	A Global Action Agenda to Advance Nature-Positive Innovation	Coalition on Family Farming	Public Development Bank Coalition (PDB Platform for Green & Inclusive Food Systems)
Coalition of Action on Healthy Diets from Sustainable FS for Children and All	Resilient Local Food Supply Chains Alliance	Coalition of Action 4 Soil Health (CA4SH)		True Value of Food Initiative
Coalition on Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Food Systems (UFS Coalition)		Blue Aquatic Foods		
Making Food Systems Work for Women and Girls		Coalition on Family Farming		
Social Protection and Food Systems Transformation		Sustainable Productivity Growth for Food Security & Resource Conservation		
		Food is Never Waste		
		Halting Deforestation & Conversion from Agricultural Commodities		
		Indigenous Peoples' Food System		
		Land and Freshwater Nexus		
		Shifting to Healthy, Humane and Equitable Livestock Systems		

¹¹ Please see <https://foodsystems.community/> for full description of each coalition of action, objectives, activities and partners