



## Thematic Window on Food Systems Transformation

### Terms of Reference

*Final draft - Feb 2024*

#### I. Rationale

Food systems have the potential to simultaneously deliver on multiple dimensions of sustainable development, including human health and development, biodiversity, sustainable natural resource use and climate change. Yet, food systems are failing to provide equal access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food to the global population, while at the same time creating harm to the environment and accelerating climate change. The 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) identifies **food systems as one of six entry points to achieve the transformative change** needed to “rescue the SDGs”.

To mobilize global action for food systems transformation the **UN Secretary General called for a Food Systems Summit in September 2021**. The Summit spurred national commitment and strategies to transform food systems, as demonstrated by the **adoption of 126 National Pathways and the appointment of 155 food systems National Convenors** since 2021.

In **July 2023, the UNFSS+2 Stocktaking Moment** gathered again governments, international organizations, private sector actors and civil society to discuss and review progress on the delivery of food systems transformation actions, as well as share best practices, lessons learned and priorities moving forward. The preparations for the UN Food Systems Summit +2 - Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) witnessed significant global participation and engagement, with **106 countries submitting voluntary country progress reports** on food systems transformation.

The Stocktaking Moment **culminated with the UN Secretary-General Call to Action for accelerated Food Systems Transformation**. This focuses on six concrete objectives: embedding food systems strategies in national policies; establishing inclusive food systems governance; investing in research, data, innovation, and technology capacities; promoting business engagement and accountability across food systems; including full participation of marginalized groups; and ensuring long-term, concessional finance for food systems transformation.

Through the maintenance of strong political commitment to drive food system transformation for the SDGs, the consolidation of national food system governance mechanisms, effective closure of implementation gaps, reshaping of the national food finance framework, and proactive utilization of knowledge, lessons, and communication to enhance engagement, the **Fund will actively propel the transition towards food systems** that prioritize the well-being of people, the planet, and common prosperity.



To operationalize its Strategy for 2023-2026, *Financing Catalytic Action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, the **Joint SDG Fund establishes a Thematic Window on Food Systems Transformation**. The Window will provide a dedicated funding mechanism for the implementation of the strategic framework and funding approach proposed in the Window Investment Strategy.

In particular, the Fund will support the network of **National Convenors, national food systems transformation pathways, and the global ecosystem of support including Coalitions of Action and multistakeholder networks**, birthed by the Food Systems Summit and supported by the Food Systems Coordination Hub.

The Thematic Window on Food Systems Transformation complements the strategic investments already made or in progress by the Joint SDG Fund in areas related to food systems, including some USD 30 million through its portfolios on integrated social protection and LNOB, SDG financing, and Small Island Developing States.

## II. Strategic framework

The Food Systems Transformation Window will catalyze impact through the following overarching objectives drawn from the Joint SDG Fund Strategy:

1. Promote the transition to sustainable, equitable, healthy and resilient food systems as a catalytic investment for SDGs acceleration in countries and as a powerful response to current and future shocks
2. Advance integrated national action for food systems transformation, that is grounded in National Pathways, driven by whole-of-government approach, and is multi-stakeholder and rights-based
3. Reshape the national food finance architecture to achieve sustainable, equitable, healthy, and resilient, and catalyse more SDG value for money
4. Build national, regional, and global knowledge, capacities and learning, as well as monitor and communicate progress and impact to inform, influence and drive accelerated action for food systems as a key transition

The Window's overarching goals will contribute to the main two outcome areas of the Joint SDG Fund: 1) Integrated multi-sectoral policies to accelerate SDG achievements, and 2) Additional financing leveraged to accelerate SDG achievements.

The combination of integrated transformative policies and leveraged financing will help countries build the case and trigger actions to scale up policy solutions and fiscal support, which are needed to attain



the SDGs. Resident Coordinators (RCs), UN Country Teams (UNCTs), and partners will leverage the Fund's investments to crowd in the additional finance needed to make policy shifts and SDG acceleration a reality.

The outcome areas will also operationalize a systems approach to sustainable development that emphasizes the interconnections between sectors and goals and the interdependence of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental – as well as the importance of integrated, sustainable, and innovative financing to underpin the transformations.

Furthermore, all Joint Programmes will contribute to enhancing SDG data, mainstreaming gender equality, and addressing the principle of LNOB, in line with the overall strategy of the Joint SDG Fund.

The Food Systems Transformation Window takes a country-driven, “bottom-up” approach to allow for a diversity of transformation needs across countries. Hence, the Window will have both core results/indicators (as per the Investment strategy), which are measured across all funded Joint Programmes, and programme-specific results/indicators, which are tailored to the intended impact of each Joint Programme.

### III. Funding approach

The Window will be established until end of 2026, in line with the Fund Strategy. Depending on the implementation status, the Operational Steering Committee (OSC) can extend the window period to account for programmatic closures and evaluations.

The Window will operate through a series of funding rounds, investing in both mature transformative Joint Programmes as well as exploratory work to develop a pipeline of catalytic Joint Programmes. Each funding round may have a more specific approach, which will be presented in the description of the funding round document.

- ***Mature Joint Programmes.*** In this funding pathway, all countries that meet the selection criteria 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.
- ***Early-stage Joint Programmes.*** This funding pathway serves to provide seed-funding and incubate a pipeline of Joint Programmes to maturity.



The Window funding will prioritize Joint programmes that (a) lead to long-term transformative results in an accelerated timeline, with the intention of catalyzing systemic change and (b) mobilize financing from the Government, private sector, IFIs, and/or other in-country stakeholders.

The Window's funding will be used primarily for country-level impact through the implementation of Joint Programmes led by RCs at the UNCT level.

UN entities, Government agencies, and other partners will provide co-funding of Joint Programmes at the country level, while other related funding and financing initiatives will be leveraged to ensure catalytic impact and results at scale.

#### IV. Window Offerings

While each funding round may have specific priorities based on demand and emerging opportunities from countries, the Window globally focuses on a set of window offerings on food systems transformation.

In terms of a specific focus, the Window will prioritize support to Governments that targets the following areas:

- Food security, nutrition and healthy diets
- Climate action and food systems transformation
- Social Protection and better jobs
- Resilience

Within these areas, joint programmes will need to advance the six (6) priority areas outlined in the UNFSS+2 UN Secretary-General Call to Action as follows:

1. Incorporating food systems strategies into all national policies for sustainable development, for people's livelihoods, nutrition and health, for economic growth, climate action and nature, and to address post-harvest losses, leaving no one behind.
2. Establishing food systems governance that engages all sectors and stakeholders for a whole of society approach, combining the short and long term.
3. Investing in research, data, innovation and technology capacities including stronger connections to science, experience and expertise.
4. Deepening joined-up participatory design and implementation inclusive of women, young people and indigenous peoples at the local level, with knowledge sharing, cross-sector programming, multi-stakeholder partnering, context and place-based actions, stronger and more diverse production, and mutual accountability.
5. Promoting increased engagement of businesses, including through public private partnerships, to shape the sustainability of food systems and establish and strengthen accountability mechanisms, recognizing their centrality for food systems.
6. Ensuring access to short and long-term concessional finance, investments, budget support and debt restructuring.



These entry points will allow joint programmes to deliver advances through an integrated, systemic approach that “breaks down the silos”. As a part of this multi-year strategy, these Window Offerings may be modified based on the progress on the implementation of the overall Window.

A particular funding round might focus on all or several of these Window Offerings, which will be presented in detailed guidance and description of a funding round.

RCs and UNCTs will be invited to prioritize those Window Offerings that fully align with national priorities to ensure a country-oriented approach in order to facilitate expected transformations contextualized to local needs.

The Window will ensure alignment and synergies with other thematic priorities / SDG Transitions. Key synergies between Windows will be further specified in the Descriptions of funding rounds (i.e., guidance for proposals) and operationalized at the country level through the design and implementation of Joint Programmes.

## V. Management arrangements

The Operational Steering Committee (OSC) will be responsible for management and oversight of the Window, including decision-making on launching and operationalizing the Window, approving funding and Joint Programmes under the Window, ensuring coordination of partnerships and resource mobilization activities, and other related functions in line with the Fund’s Terms of Reference and the Operational Guidance.

Fund Secretariat will ensure coordination of the overall programme cycle, including launch of the Window and submission of proposals, Joint Programme documents, briefs and updates, and reports. The Secretariat will serve as the main interface with Joint Programme teams for monitoring, reporting and overall programmatic support. It will perform other functions in support of the OSC, as per Fund’s Terms of Reference and the Operational Guidance.

Technical leadership for the Window will be provided by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. It will operate within this window under the overall supervision of the Fund OSC. The Hub will serve as the interface, convening the broader UN system on the development agenda. The Food Systems Coordination Hub will have the following main roles and responsibilities:

- Develop Descriptions of funding rounds, specifically overall process for applications, guidance and template for proposals, selection criteria, and quality and other technical requirements.



- Organize technical review of proposals, including identification and coordination of UN and external reviewers<sup>1</sup>, and supports the Fund Secretariat in conducting the final quality assurance of full joint programme documents.
- Facilitate technical alignment and build synergies between this Window and other SDG transitions/windows of the Fund, and support the achievement of Fund's cross-cutting results (gender, youth, SDG data, LNOB) related to this Window.
- In the course of implementation of Joint Programmes funded by the Window, coordinate technical support at global and regional levels to ensure delivery of transformative results. This may include learning and knowledge management across the Window, and/or more specific technical assistance to one or more Joint Programmes.
- Conduct technical review of Joint Programmes' annual, semi-annual, and final reports, and other progress updates to provide consolidated analyses, including identification of best practices, lessons learned, and areas for improvement or additional investment.
- Provide technical support and inputs as needed for resource mobilization, global partnerships, strategic events, and advocacy for the Window, under overall coordination of the OSC and with the support from the Fund Secretariat.

For the purpose of coordinating technical support for high quality design and implementation of transformative joint programmes, limited funding might be provided to the Food Systems Coordination Hub from the overall Window envelope. The Hub will submit regular updates to the OSC on the use of that funding and the progress on the technical support to the Window.

Regular management arrangements of the Fund regarding development, implementation and reporting on Joint Programmes will be applied in this Window, with the Fund Secretariat as the main interface for Fund-level coordination, monitoring, reporting, and programmatic support.

## VI. Contributors

Earmarked contributions to the Window may be accepted from governments, inter-governmental or non-governmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, and individuals. To contribute to the Window, a contributor needs to sign a Standard Administrative Arrangement (SAA) with MPTFO. The Fund under the decision of the OSC may allocate non-earmarked resources of the Fund to the Food Systems Transformation Window for implementation.

## VII. Amendments

The Terms of Reference on the Fund's Food Systems Transformation Window may be modified at any time by the Fund's OSC.

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<sup>1</sup> The experts would be required to recuse themselves from the review of on any proposal for which they may have a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.