



FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PROGRESS REVIEW

Regional Meeting for Africa

22 April 2024 | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

SUMMARY REPORT



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BACKGROUND

The first UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment ([UNFSS+2](#)) was convened in Rome, Italy, in July 2023, building upon the momentum of the 2021 Food Systems Summit. With over 3300 representing a broad stakeholder base from 182 countries, the UNFSS+2 aimed to review progress on commitments, identify bottlenecks and advocate for advancing sustainable food systems transformation (FST) as a critical Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) accelerator.

At UNFSS+2's conclusion, the Secretary-General launched a [Call to Action](#) focusing on embedding food systems strategies in national policies, establishing inclusive governance, investing in research and innovation, promoting business engagement, ensuring all stakeholders' participation and securing long-term finance for transformation.

As a follow-up to UNFSS+2, to acquaint participants with the six areas of action outlined in the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action and prepare for the next stocktaking moment, UNFSS+4 in 2025, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub) organized a series of regional meetings from March to April 2024. On 22 March 2024, the Hub and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) organized the fourth regional meeting of 2024 at the margin of the 10th session of the Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (ARFSD10). This meeting assembled Food Systems National Convenors and other experts from across the region to assess progress in transforming food systems, facilitate regional knowledge sharing, and identify emerging patterns and solutions.

This meeting built upon the discussions held during the [2023 Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting](#) on 27 February 2023 and the UNFSS+2 in July 2023, where Member States shared their perspectives, best practices, lessons learned, and challenges related to FST.

The opening segment of the meeting saw the participation of prominent speakers. Dr. Eyasu Abraha Alle, representing the Minister of Agriculture of Ethiopia, indicated that with the growing threats arising from multiple shocks and population growth, progress must be monitored to make informed decisions to address challenges and seize opportunities. H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, Special Envoy for Food Systems of the African Union, highlighted the need for strong institutional quality to implement development policies effectively. Mr Antonio Pedro, Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECA, emphasized the necessity of conducive policy frameworks and support structures to encourage private investments in agriculture and agro-industries alongside the integration of science, technology, and innovation.

Participating countries¹ (in-person and online): Angola, Botswana, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa.

¹ Region and country classification in accordance with ECA members

Concept note and agenda: [LINK](#)

Presentations: [LINK](#)

This meeting report summarises the presentations and discussion areas shared by National Convenors, government representatives and stakeholders, including facts and figures shared by the Hub, ECA, and invited speakers. It is structured to summarize progress, major achievements, challenges, and key messages of the meeting.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND GOOD PRACTICES

This segment showcases progress and examples of good practices undertaken in countries' journeys toward food systems transformation (FST), as shared by National Convenors and their teams. It highlights the diverse efforts of countries in promoting FST across various topics with attention to the areas indicated in the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action at UNFSS+2. The examples provided below are not exhaustive and provide a summary of the discussion areas. Additional good practices will be incorporated into the Hub's [Database Of Practices In Food System Transformation](#).

Progress on National Pathways and governance mechanisms analysed from the 2023 Voluntary Progress Report to the UNFSS+2 presented by the Hub. See presentations [here](#).

Development and update of national pathways and policies: Since the UNFSS+2, significant strides have been achieved in advancing FST across Africa. These efforts are in harmony with the African agricultural development frameworks, such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Malabo Declaration. Currently, 43 countries in Africa have established National Food System Pathways, with 22 among them (Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eswatini, Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe) having reported action plans. An increasing number of countries in the region have integrated their national pathways into related government programs,

Governance mechanisms: Countries increasingly recognise the importance of adopting a coordinated and integrated governance approach to ensure that food systems strategies are coherent, inclusive, and sustainable. More than 70% of countries have established governance structures led by high-level government focal points, comprising various ministries with active private sector and civil society engagement. Most countries, including Central Africa Republic, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Angola and Sierra Leone, have established formal stakeholder engagement platforms and mechanisms. For instance, Mali's National Pathway is being developed through an established multi-stakeholder consultative process, bringing together relevant ministries, the private sector, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the national federations of rural youth and women. As for Nigeria, orientation and consultation meetings and workshops were organised at the state level to identify local priorities and established working groups at both state and regional levels to facilitate collaboration and accountability.

Financing for FST in Africa: Approximately 40% of African countries are integrating financing into their National Pathways² and identifying areas of investment. Ghana has conducted food modelling exercises to identify investment areas in food systems while encompassing different dimensions, including employment, economics, and access to healthy diets. The Financing Flows Tool (3FS), designed to identify funding patterns at both national and international levels, has been operationalized in Niger and Kenya. The results of the 3FS tool in Kenya revealed that significant financial resources are being directed toward enhancing food security and supporting social protection and investment initiatives, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank (WB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB), are pivotal in empowering governments to independently utilize financing tools for regular analyses and foster informed decision-making on food systems financing.

Investment in women and youth empowerment: Countries strongly acknowledge the pivotal role of women and youth in FST, emphasising programs and initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to entry and integrating youth into national food systems dialogues. For example, through South Africa's Rapid Land Release program, 30,000 hectares were specifically allocated to women, while 32,000 hectares were designated to youth. Additionally, an entrepreneurial program exists to place youth on commercial farms to acquire skills that could positively impact their prospects. Angola prioritized the enrolment of young people and women in rural schools and provided farming inputs to integrate youth into production. Meanwhile, Kenya has introduced an agripreneur model involving over 1,000 youth farmers to facilitate access to input and output markets.

Alignment and convergence of FST with climate action: The National Pathways for many countries, as well as the Africa Common Position on Food Systems, recognize the significant impact of climate change on Africa's food systems, emphasizing the urgent need to enhance climate resilience efforts, with some countries revising their nationally determined contributions (NDCs). In the case of Cameroon, a commitment has been made to achieve a 35% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Egypt signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the FAO in January 2024 to enhance South-South cooperation to facilitate the exchange and transfer of knowledge within the agricultural sector among Egypt and African countries and increase access to climate finance for FST through the FAST Partnership.

Countries are committed to working on improving nutrition. Efforts to shift to healthy and sustainable food systems fall within the framework of implementing many African countries' national development and poverty reduction strategies. Technical committees in many African countries have been established to implement strategies to enhance food security and nutrition, aligning with their national development objectives. In addition, several African countries developed school feeding programs with procurement to local producers as a dual action to improve nutrition in schools whilst also supporting the livelihood of farmers. Botswana, assisted by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), is establishing a home-grown school feeding program with procurement from local communities with spillover effects to smallholder producers. Benin has established a national agency with the primary task of developing a national policy for food security and nutrition and enhancing collaboration among concerned ministries with the engagement of NGOs to enhance food systems. Sierra Leone has established a Presidential Task Force for climate change, food, nutrition, and energy, leveraging the SUN Movement network structures to bolster efforts toward achieving resilient, inclusive food systems.

² Analyzed from the Voluntary Progress Report submitted to the Hub.

Commitment to building resilience in communities: Countries are taking strides to reduce dependency and build resilience within their communities against future shocks and stresses. In South Sudan, efforts are directed toward reducing dependence on humanitarian food assistance by establishing depots/food warehouses and creating a national food reserve agency to purchase surplus crops from farmers. Meanwhile, the Central African Republic focuses on community resilience by empowering women entrepreneurs and encouraging a shift from the informal sector to more formal economic activities. Comoros is concentrating on enhancing the resilience and productivity of family farms through action plans that include capacity building, setting up rural activity centres, and promoting rural farming.

Ecosystem of Support (EoS) and regional bodies in the development or implementation of Food Systems National Pathways:

- Engagement with UN agencies and international organizations (IGOs) such as FAO, WFP, IFAD, UNEP, GIZ, AGRA, the Hub, the Coalition of Action on Healthy Diets (HDFS), the Initiative on Climate and Nutrition (ICAN), COP27's FAST Partnership, the SUN Movement, 4SD, and the Food Systems Countdown Initiative, among others, are fostering collaborative efforts in technical backstopping, mobilizing resources and developing evidence-based FST interventions and monitoring at both national and regional levels.
- Engagement with Coalitions: In Somalia, partnering with the [Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Coalition](#) brought together a wide range of actors, such as the SUN Movement and other networks, resulting in improved coordination and knowledge-sharing, offering lessons for the National Convenors, UN agencies, the development community, and beyond.
- The Hub's collaborative engagement in Africa is structured around initiatives and processes coordinated by the African Union Commission, AUDA-NEPAD and the AU Envoy on Food Systems. As requested by countries, it is expected that the Hub will also cultivate closer collaborative linkages with Africa's Regional Economic Communities in the future.

KEY CHALLENGES IN FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Establishing and advancing National Pathways to accelerate FSTs is different and country-context-specific. Below is a summary of challenges presented by scene-setting speakers, National Convenors, and government representatives.

Summary points of challenges discussed:

Challenges persist in addressing malnutrition and ensuring equitable access to healthy diets. According to the [SOFI 2023 report](#), despite hosting 16% of the global population, Africa accounts for approximately 30% of the world's population suffering from hunger. Millions of Africans suffer from widespread micronutrient deficiencies in addition to hunger, with overweight and obesity posing significant public health concerns in many countries. In 2021, approximately 78%, or about a billion individuals of Africa's population, could not afford a healthy diet, against a global rate of 42%. The average cost of a healthy diet in Africa has risen to \$3.57 in purchasing power parity dollars per person per day, significantly surpassing the extreme poverty threshold of \$2.15 per person per day in 2021.

Navigating the complexities of accessing climate financing poses a significant hurdle in transforming food systems. African nations encounter obstacles in accessing adequate climate finance. These challenges include the dominance of loans in public climate finance, complex processes for accessing funding from financial institutions, and eligibility criteria limitations, especially for least-developed countries (LDCs).

Resource mobilization and low investment in transformative technologies continue to pose major challenges in the region. These challenges include low commodity investment and limited attention to promoting traditional crops. Many African countries experience significant post-harvest losses, particularly in perishable agricultural commodities. This is primarily attributed to inadequate infrastructure and limited access to affordable finance.

Challenges persist in the action-oriented implementation of FST across different government ministries, hindering the effective realization of the SDGs. Countries have identified the need for skills-building in negotiation, consensus-building, integrated planning and coordination, and dialogue facilitation, including those involving public and business sector interests. National Convenors highlighted that in most countries, the default situation is that ministries and departments tend to function in silos even when opportunities for communication and collaboration exist. The lack of communication can be observed at two levels, horizontally, across government entities, disciplines and sectors, as well as vertically, between central government and local/decentralized structures. This siloing leads to incoherency in national planning in areas of food security, water, energy, and mining strategies, and initiatives.

Geopolitical dynamics and governance structures heavily influence Africa's food systems. Such dynamics may include trade agreements, international aid and investment flows. Moreover, tensions and conflicts can hinder regional cooperation on food security initiatives, such as cross-border trade agreements and infrastructure development. Geopolitical factors can raise questions of national sovereignty, particularly regarding control over agricultural resources and food production.

Countries, local cooperatives, and agricultural associations in Africa indicated challenges in resource mobilization from both the public and private sectors, as well as in identifying and engaging with key players. The public sector needs to reevaluate spending, as public finances for agriculture have been far below the Malabo target of allocating 10% of national budgets to agriculture.

Challenges related to data and scientific capacity: Countries have called for reliable data and tools such as early warning systems to allow for better decision-making. Additionally, there is a recognized structural deficiencies and limitations in linkages between implementation and research-science capabilities and systems.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Below are key areas identified for the interventions and considerations going forward for stakeholders and the UN system to advance FST in the region.

Food systems are increasingly acknowledged as key entry points for implementing the SDGs in Africa. Many countries are demonstrating political commitment at the highest levels to FST and adopting inclusive approaches to achieve the SDGs. Discussions are ongoing for the post-Malabo Agenda, emphasizing the need for a systemic approach beyond agricultural productivity.

Enhanced coordination and collaboration are needed to incentivize inter-ministerial efforts and improve institutional quality at the national level. A shift towards comprehensive food system ministries/approaches is advocated, with best practices suggesting that committees chaired at the highest political level can effectively convene technical meetings among different ministries. Active support from the Hub is expected to foster cross-sector collaboration, and countries welcome the Convergence Initiative to align food and climate agendas. African countries will enhance their efforts and coordination to prepare for the UNFSS+4 in 2025.

Urgent need for sustained communication and advocacy to build awareness of food systems approaches among various levels of government, including high policy levels. This should be supported by implementation tools and frameworks that can be integrated into national systems, guiding systematic approaches. Advocacy should include guidelines to institutionalize and strengthen food systems coordination structures with appropriate mandates, authority, budget, and staff. Highlighting win-win incentives in food-climate-water-energy convergence, along with practical examples of interdependences across food security, nutrition, health care, education, and economic growth strategies, is crucial.

The implementation of National Pathways ought to center on local communities as the primary stakeholders. Practical tools developed, such as integrated planning and monitoring of public expenditures, must be fit-for-purpose and culturally appropriate to suit the needs of the target context. Enhancing the monitoring of data collection and indicators at the local level is important to complement the macroeconomic analysis conducted at the national level. This includes providing attention and tailor-made support to key stakeholders in the agrifood value chain, ensuring their active involvement and strengthening their roles, including stakeholders such as local food vendors, input suppliers and transporters, local food processes, and producers. Moreover, integration and collaboration across governments, private sectors, civil society organizations and UN agencies are underscored as essential for successfully implementing and integrating national pathways into existing planning frameworks.

Financing FST in the region requires a deeper analysis to assess the effectiveness of public spending on food systems and evaluate the impact of interventions to foster informed decision-making by governments. Countries request increased resources from the UN system and international financial institutions (IFIs) to support FST efforts. Addressing interconnected crises, including debt, nutrition, and climate, has the potential to unlock funding. Meanwhile, utilizing revenue from sugar taxes for nutrition programs, like school meals, aligns with health objectives while addressing nutritional needs. They also encourage scaling up the 3FSs tool for measuring financial flows in other countries based on demand and resource availability. To leverage private sector investment in food systems in the region, [3 main enablers](#) include supporting central bank regulation, blended finance mechanisms, and coordinating de-risking instruments.

It is necessary to allocate resources to youth, including scaling up successful youth-led initiatives. Additionally, there should be a focus on intergenerational knowledge transfer through capacity development, such as programs for young data analysts. Integrating youth into the decision-making process is crucial by involving them in the design and implementation phases. Furthermore, establishing a Global Youth Advisory Board as part of committees or technical working groups would support National Convenors effectively.

Enabling the environment to promote agricultural productivity requires investment in research and development, extension services and infrastructure at the national and regional level, as outlined in the Malabo commitments. There is a need to mobilize sustainable, innovative and adequate financing for rural infrastructure development, including irrigation systems, roads, electricity, storage facilities, digital networks, and others, to enhance the attractiveness and promote a decent life in rural areas and agriculture.

Improving market access and facilitating trade is vital for enhancing food security, stimulating economic growth and promoting regional integration within the continent's food systems. Countries should facilitate reducing regional trade barriers to expand regional markets and accelerate intra-African food trade, leveraging opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Using foresight and scenario planning can support overcoming unexpected shocks or confounding factors in food systems planning by providing data, facilitating stakeholder participation, and incorporating multiple perspectives in creating scenarios. This also employs modelling and indicators to monitor FST progress.

Regional initiatives and collaboration are crucial for building regional cooperation and sharing resources. A continental monitoring framework to track progress in achieving National Pathways would be beneficial to ensure harmonised, comparable indicators for food systems monitoring across the continent. Regional initiatives such as the [Sustainable Debt Policy Coalition](#) and the [RES Islands initiative](#) can enhance Member States' institutional and technical capacities.