

FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PROGRESS REVIEW

Concept Note for the Regional Meeting for Near East and North Africa
(UN House, Beirut, Lebanon, 6 March 2024)

Introduction

The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) ¹, are pleased to convene Food Systems National Convenors and other experts from across the Arab region to assess the progress made in transforming food systems, facilitate regional knowledge sharing, and identify emerging patterns and solutions.

This event is part of a series of Regional Preparatory Meetings organized by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub as a follow-up to the United Nations Food Systems (UNFSS+2) Stocktaking Moment which took place in Rome in July 2023². These meetings are being conducted in collaboration with the UN Regional Commissions, the Regional Offices of the UN Agencies supporting the Hub, and other relevant UN and regional bodies.

This meeting is built upon the discussions held during the [2023 Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting](#) that took place on 13 March 2023 and UNFSS+2, where Member States shared their perspectives, best practices, lessons learned, and challenges related to food systems transformation. The importance of accelerating food systems transformation for achieving sustainable development goals was emphasized during these dialogues.

This regional meeting is organized on the sidelines of the [Arab Forum on Sustainable Development \(AFSD\) 2024](#). ESCWA has been cooperating with regional partners since 2014 in organizing annual sessions for the AFSD to support the regional preparations for the [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#) in New York. The AFSD 2024 will be held from 5 to 7 March 2024 in Beirut under the theme "Delivering for sustainability and peace", covering progress made in SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17. We expect the present meeting to contribute to discussions in the AFSD, particularly on the interlinkages between SDG 2 and SDG 13.

Background

The first UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) took place in Rome, Italy from 24 – 26 July 2023, at the premises of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It was Convened by the Secretary-General and hosted by Italy, in collaboration with the Rome-based UN Agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP), the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, and the wider UN system.

The UNFSS+2 Moment built on the momentum of the 2021 Food Systems Summit and created a conducive space for countries to review progress on the commitments to action and identify successes, enduring bottlenecks, and priorities to close the implementation gap by effectively and efficiently utilizing the Means of Implementation for food systems transformation. It was also an opportunity to further socialize the powerful role of sustainable, equitable, healthy, and resilient food systems as critical SDG accelerators and advocate for urgent action at scale, building on the latest evidence that sustainable food systems contribute to better and more sustainable outcomes for people, planet and prosperity leaving no one behind.

The summit saw over 3300 participants, including delegations from 182 countries, 21 world leaders and 126 ministers, 225 Non-state Actor organizations, and close to 900 UN system representatives, gather to share efforts and steer global action towards sustainable food systems.

At the end of the UNFSS+2, the Secretary-General launched a Call to Action for accelerated Food Systems Transformation. The Call focuses on six concrete objectives: embedding food systems

strategies in national policies; establishing food systems governance with a whole-of-society approach; investing in research, data, innovation, and technology capacities; promoting business engagement and accountability for sustainability; including full participation of marginalized groups including women; farmers, youth, and Indigenous Peoples; and ensuring long-term, concessional finance for food systems transformation.

Structure and Objectives of the Regional Meeting

The Regional Preparatory Meeting will take place on 6 March 2024, in Beirut, during the [Arab Forum on Sustainable Development \(AFSD\) 2024](#). The event will assess the progress made in transforming food systems and will explore strategies for aligning food systems transformation processes with existing climate action initiatives, ensuring that our efforts to build more sustainable and resilient food systems are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The event will also focus on identifying key means of implementation, including effective governance mechanisms, financing and monitoring frameworks to drive transformative change at the national and regional levels.

The objectives of the meeting are thus:

- i. Review the progress in food systems transformation, sharing challenges identified and best practices;
- ii. Explore strategies for aligning food systems transformation processes with existing climate action plans;
- iii. Discuss regional opportunities for food systems offered through the COP28 outcomes;
- iv. Identify means of implementation for food systems transformation, including strengthening governance frameworks, improving financing mechanisms, and enhancing data and monitoring systems;
- v. Foster regional collaboration and regional communities by exploring strategies for planning and coordinating future collaborative efforts among participating countries and stakeholders, emphasizing the need for continued cooperation and the setting of shared goals.

Expected Outcome

The expected outcome of the meeting is a summary report that will include the shared outcomes among participating countries and stakeholders to strengthen their collaborative efforts in the transformation of food systems. By the conclusion of the meeting, National Convenors are expected to have a clearer understanding of the progress made and challenges faced in food systems transformation. Kindly inform the UNFS Coordination Hub if you may wish to be excluded from the report analysis, or if certain interventions are to be left out.

In addition, key outcomes will be presented at Special Session - Food for Thought: Unpacking UNFSS+2 Outcomes in the Arab region and Charting the Action Plan for Resilient Food Systems Transformations during the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD) 2024.

Participants And Registration

The regional meeting will bring together National Convenors from the Arab region, practitioners, and civil society members involved in the food systems transformation and climate action, as well as concerned regional and international organizations and academia. Selected government representatives and other participants will be sponsored based on UN Rules and Regulations to attend in-person.

Provisional Agenda

TIME FRAME	SESSION	SPEAKERS
8:30 – 9:00 a.m.	Registration	
09:00 – 09:30 a.m.	Opening	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lebanon: H.E. Mr. Abbas Hajj Hassan. Minister of Agriculture. Ministry of Agriculture. Beirut, Lebanon. 2. Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD): H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Eldukheri, Director-General. 3. ESCWA: Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary 4. UN Food Systems Hub: Ms. Sylvia Ekra, UN Food Systems Hub Deputy-Director. 5. FAO: Ms. Nora Ourabah Haddad, FAO Representative in Lebanon (speaking on behalf of UN agencies supporting the Hub) <p>Master of ceremony: Ms. Michelle Seck, UN Food Systems Hub</p>
09:30 – 11:00 a.m.	Review and stocktake on the progress of food systems transformation: Progress, challenges, and best practices	<p>Scene setting (15 minutes)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Svante Helms, National Pathway Manager, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (online) 2. Mr. Fadhel Kaboub, Associate Professor of economics at Denison University (on leave) and President of the Global Institute for Sustainable Prosperity <p>Country Experience (75 minutes)</p> <p>National Convenors: presentation of national pathways</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Food and Environment Policies, Climate Change & Natural Resource Sustainability Cluster, ESCWA</p>
11:00 – 11:30 a.m.	Coffee Break	
11:30 am – 13:00 p.m.	Roundtable: convergence of food systems transformation and climate action. Country experiences	<p>Presentation convergence initiative (15 mins):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UN Food Systems Hub: Ms. Sylvia Ekra. UN Food Systems Hub Deputy Director. 2. 4SD: Sir. David Nabarro, Strategic Director <p>Country experiences and expectations on food system-climate action convergence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Egypt: H.E. Mr. Ehab Badawy, Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs and International Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Cairo, Egypt 4. Bahrain: Ms. Jehad Alfadhel, Second Deputy Chairman of the Shura Council, Bahrain, Chairperson of The Parliamentary Network of Women Parliamentarians in Africa and the Arab World, and Vice-Chairman Of The Parliamentary Network for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa and the Arab World (PNFSNAA) (online) 5. Yemen: Ms. Karima Ahmed Al-Hada'a, Planning and Liaison Specialist at Scaling-Up Nutrition Secretariat, Ministry of Planning &

		<p>International Cooperation, Yemen and Global SUN Movement Executive Committee Member</p> <p>6. Oman: Mr. Masoud Al-Azri, Director General of Agricultural Marketing, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Oman</p> <p>Partner and Stakeholder presentation</p> <p>7. League of Arab States: Ms. Nada Elagizy, Director of Sustainable Development Division, LAS, Cairo, Egypt.</p> <p>Moderator: Sir. David Nabarro, Strategic Director of 4SD Foundation</p>
13:00 – 14:00 p.m.	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:00 p.m.	Roundtable: Means of Implementation and inclusive approach for food systems transformation.	<p>1. Ms. Carol Chouchani Cherfane, Director, Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies & Cluster Lead for Climate Change and Natural Resource Sustainability, ESCWA</p> <p>2. Mr Micheal Haddad, UNDP Arab States Goodwill Ambassador for Climate Action</p> <p>3. Youth representative</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Maria Pilar Ouro Paz, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCWA</p>
15:00 – 15:15 p.m.	Wrap – up and closure	<p>1. 4SD: Sir. David Nabarro, Strategic Director</p> <p>2. UN Food Systems Hub: Ms. Sylvia Ekra. UN Food Systems Hub Deputy Director.</p> <p>3. ESCWA: Ms. Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Food and Environment Policies, Climate Change & Natural Resource Sustainability Cluster, ESCWA</p>

Guiding Questions

To assist in the preparations of interventions, find below the guiding questions for each segment:

Review and stocktake on the progress of food systems transformation: Progress, challenges, and best practices across pathway implementation and governance (9:30 – 11:00 am)

- What progress has been made in your country in the past year since UNFSS+2 July 2023? Please provide updates on the implementation of national pathways
- How do we keep the national pathways, or other food system planning instruments, relevant and dynamic as a driver for national food system transformation? (e.g. when to revise and update, how best to operationalize and implement, how do we best position the pathways vis-a-vis other food system planning instruments).
- How can food system governance structures effectively drive the national food system agenda? (e.g. national or also local governance structures, focused or with a wide set of actors, who is chairing?). How are you using the national dialogues in your food system planning process and what are the outputs?
- In what ways can we enhance regional collaboration and leverage shared resources to bolster resilience? What are some lessons learned that could be the basis for regional approaches to food system transformation?

Roundtable: convergence of food systems transformation and climate action. Country experiences (11:30-13:00 pm)

- How is your country promoting collaboration between the different ministries, stakeholders connecting food systems and climate action?
- How can the convergence initiative support your efforts to converge food systems and climate action?
- Who are the national stakeholders to be involved in this process?
- How can national convenors be effectively supported and accompanied to access the evidence, knowledge, and skills necessary to address the interconnected and complex issues at hand?

Correspondence

Kindly contact the following focal points should you have any queries related to the meeting:

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Ms. Maria Pilar Ouro Paz
Economic Affairs Officer
Climate Change and Natural Resources
Sustainability Cluster
ESCWA
Beirut, Lebanon
Email: maria.ouropaz@un.org

UN Food Systems Coordination Hub

Ms. Michelle Seck (in-person support)
UN Food Systems Specialist
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy
Email: Michelle.Seck@fao.org

Ms. Juana Giraldo Gonzalez (online support)
UN Food Systems Specialist
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy
Email: Juana.GiraldoGonzalez@fao.org

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