



FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PROGRESS REVIEW

Regional Meeting for the Asia and the Pacific region

29 April 2024 | Bangkok, Thailand

SUMMARY REPORT



UNITED NATIONS
FOOD SYSTEMS
COORDINATION HUB

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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 the participation of 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 UNFSS+4 in 2025, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub) organized a series of Regional Preparatory Meetings from March to April 2024. On 29 April 2024, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO RAP) organized the fifth and final regional meeting of 2024. This meeting assembled Food Systems National Convenors, representatives from Asia-Pacific Food Systems Networking Group and other UN Agencies, civil society, academia, and other organizations from across Asia and the Pacific to assess the progress made in transforming food systems, facilitate regional knowledge sharing, and discuss key challenges and solutions.

This meeting built upon the discussions held during the [2023 Asia and the Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting](#) on 30 March 2023, and the [UNFSS+2](#) in July 2023, where Member States shared their perspectives, best practices, lessons learned, and challenges related to FST. The importance of accelerating FST to achieve the SDGs was emphasized during these dialogues.

The meeting started with opening remarks by H.E. Sethakiat Krajangwongs, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Minister of Agriculture, and Cooperatives Thailand; Mr. Jong-Jin Kim, Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific; Ms. Lin Yang, Deputy Executive Secretary, ESCAP; and Mr. Stefanos Fotiou, Director, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. Speakers highlighted that the Asia-Pacific region is not on track to achieve multiple SDGs including SDG1, SDG2, and SDG13, where FST is imperative to achieve these goals.

List of countries participating (in-person and online): Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Tuvalu, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Viet Nam.

Concept note and agenda: [LINK](#)

Presentations: [LINK](#)

This meeting report summarizes the presentations and discussion areas shared by National Convenors, government representatives, and stakeholders, including facts and figures shared by the Hub, ESCAP, FAO, and invited speakers. It is structured to summarize progress and 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 Systems Transformation](#).

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

Development and update of national pathways and policies: Progress has been made in developing and updating national pathways which included repurposing of policies, projects, and strategies for FST. To date, 38 countries in the Asia-Pacific region have formulated their national pathways, with 17 of them having been reported to be translated into action plans. Other national convenors have emphasized ongoing efforts in developing action plans to further drive transformational change.

Embracing food systems as a multisectoral agenda and showing political leadership: Countries acknowledged the inherent complexity in managing food systems and have made notable progress in enhancing multisectoral governance structures. Countries including **Timor Leste, Lao PDR, Nepal,** and **Viet Nam** have established taskforces at the highest political level to coordinate among different ministries. Countries highlighted the importance of the integration and alignment of national pathways for FST with other national policies and plans. For instance, FST narratives have been integrated into **Indonesia's** forthcoming 20-year development plan. **Bhutan's** pathway actions have been integrated into the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock's five-year plan with ambitious targets and resource allocation. **Samoa's** pathway actions have also been incorporated in the agriculture and fisheries sector plan 2022-2027 with progress tracking mechanisms. **Vietnam** has integrated the Policy on Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture with the Multi-dimensional Poverty Reduction Strategy 2030. **Fiji's** national strategic plan for 2024-2028 and **Bangladesh's** National Adaptation Plan, Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan, and Delta Plan 2100 all have strong emphases on climate-smart agriculture with which the national pathways are aligned. This demonstrates broader political leadership beyond agriculture ministries, emphasizing the political importance of food systems in accelerating SDGs and other goals.

Localization and multi-stakeholder dialogues: Several countries showed trends of localized food systems interventions. The Midori Act of **Japan** established multi-layer governance frameworks that enable a bottom-up approach to food systems planning. Countries like **Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam** organized pilot food system policy dialogues in selected provinces to discuss local priorities and implementation, reflecting a commitment to tailoring food system strategies to local contexts.

Leveraging data, research, and innovation: Countries are utilizing data, research, and innovation to drive FST with established partnerships with academic and research institutions. Initiatives like **Australia's** successful farmer-funded R&D models are boosting productivity and strengthening the agri-food value chain. Meanwhile, **Viet Nam** and **Pakistan** are collaborating with research institutions to include food systems in the education curriculum and communication materials for different levels.

Private sector engagement: Various countries are actively fostering private sector engagement in FST, underscoring the importance of collaboration between governments, private enterprises, and international organizations in driving sustainable agricultural practices and economic growth. Countries are establishing public-private partnership platforms, such as the National Agri-Food Security Innovation Program (PINTAR) in **Malaysia** and AgroLink in **Australia**, which connects innovative ideas with investors, agriculture technologies, and commercial opportunities.

Recognition of small farmers' role and addressing needs in the FST journey. Small farmers are among the most food insecure and nutritionally vulnerable groups hence any development initiative should recognize and address their needs, including access to financing, training, and technology. Countries like **Bangladesh** and **Cambodia** have committed to creating space for farmer representatives in existing committees and councils to ensure their voices are heard. Countries are working on increasing access to finance for farmers, for example, the Bank of **Vanuatu** introduced a microfinancing scheme that recognizes assets for credits to support rural farmers applying for loans; meanwhile, **Viet Nam** is negotiating for the development of green credit to support the transition away from agrochemicals.

Promoting climate-smart agriculture and increasing food systems and livelihood resilience to climate change and other risks. Countries are adopting innovations and promoting climate-smart agriculture. **Bhutan** has expanded on infrastructure, including upscaling input plants for organic production, and initiated innovative mechanisms to convert fallow land into productive lands. **Sri Lanka** is increasing renewable energy for farming. **Vanuatu** has established 6 agroforestry nurseries and seed banks, small livestock breeding centres, and developed small-scale farms in each province to make available planting materials for nutrient-dense food crops and breeding stock post-disaster, ensuring that farmers can quickly replenish their needs. **Uzbekistan** is developing a three-year agricultural climate change adaptation and mitigation program – aimed at developing an early warning system and introducing carbon farming to encourage farmers to reduce greenhouse gas (GHGs) and develop capacity-building programs for policymakers and climate change. **Fiji's** institutional reforms have prioritized climate, reinstating the Land Resource and Planning division to prioritize research on land management and conservation, and reorganizing the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways to address climate change impacts on agricultural land systems. **Thailand** and **Bhutan** are developing risk assessment and multi-hazard decision support systems, whilst **Fiji** and **Indonesia** are developing GHG reduction inventories to identify opportunities to reduce emissions.

Emphasis on nutrition and food security: Countries in the region are placing strong emphasis on improving nutrition through food systems. As indicated above, there are several establishments for inter-ministerial task forces and policy integration for food and nutrition. Countries such as the **Philippines** and **Cambodia** have reported increasing the budget of their national school meals program to provide more quality nutritious meals. **Bangladesh** with the support of the Healthy Diets Coalition has established a rice fortification program linked to social development programs to improve access to over 15 million of the ultra-poor.

Improving food systems value chains: Countries are adopting innovative solutions to transform the value chains from farm to fork. Approaches such as One Health and agroecology have been reported by countries in adopting their frameworks. In **Papua New Guinea**, a dedicated agency, Fresh Produce Development Agency, is working along all stages of the value chains of vegetables, fruits, and traditional crops to strengthen food security and export. **The Philippines** had made large investments to strengthen the logistical support and infrastructure development to improve facilities such as ports, warehouses, and cold storage to improve the transportation of agricultural products.

Building a stronger Ecosystem of Support: UN agencies alongside international financial institutions (IFIs) and regional networks like ASEAN, have been instrumental in advancing food systems agendas. These entities have provided crucial technical expertise and financial support, facilitating knowledge exchange, capacity building, and the development of initiatives.

- **The ASEAN** Climate Resilience Network serves as a knowledge exchange platform among Southeast Asian countries to strengthen the agricultural sector's adaptation to climate change and optimize its mitigation potential. The initiative produces guidelines, forms negotiation groups for agriculture under the UNFCCC, and supports countries to access funding opportunities like the Green Climate Fund. This network aims to expand to establish an Asia Pacific network to further unlock climate finance and support stakeholders in addressing climate challenges in food systems.
- **UN agencies and development partners** have supported in providing technical expertise and the development of projects. During the meeting, initiatives from FAO, ESCAP, WFP, UNEP, World Bank, IFAD, ADB, and the SUN Movement were shared. In Cambodia, intensive dialogues with UN agencies have resulted in the commitment to the UN Sustainable Development country framework to strengthen national, sub-national, and local capacity to design, implement, coordinate, and monitor the food security and nutrition and related plans, programs, and guidelines aimed at ending hunger and prevention of all forms of malnutrition and break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition.
- **Civil society organizations**, including organizations representing farmers, fisherfolk, consumers, women, and youth are crucial for FST and should be engaged in the planning and implementation of national pathways. The Asia Farmers Association highlighted the national pathways as a mechanism that can amplify small-scale farmers' and fisherfolk realities and a mechanism that demonstrates partnerships with social institutions of farmers and fisherfolk in various groups (ie. health, women, cooperatives, etc) in different countries.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

The process of establishing and advancing national pathways to accelerate the transformation of food systems is different and country-context-specific. Summary points of challenges discussed are listed below.

Climate-related disasters impose significant burdens across the region and threaten current and future FST efforts. It is estimated to cost the region [\\$675 billion annually](#), with droughts being the most damaging, equivalent to 2.4% of GDP. Agriculture and livestock sectors bear 80% of drought-related impacts. Balancing immediate needs for disaster response with long-term objectives is challenging amidst financial crises and more frequent weather events. Smallholder farmers, subsistence fisherfolks, and rural women are particularly affected.

Financial and economic crises, inadequate and fragmented financing. Financial and economic crises pose significant challenges to FST, including disruptions to supply chains, increased food prices, and constraints on financial resources for sustainable agriculture. Some countries are facing difficulty identifying potential funding sources and investment plan/project proposal preparation and are looking at UN agencies as well as international donors for assistance. Others, especially among the Pacific countries, have reported the challenge of fragmentation of financial resources – including from national budgets, international donors, private investment, and NGOs – and highlighted the importance of a coherent and country-driven strategy to ensure all financing inputs are systematically driven towards Agenda 2030 as well as strengthening transparency and accountability of multiple stakeholders in utilizing the funds.

Limited data availability and monitoring mechanisms hinder effective planning and decision-making.

Countries reported data gaps on agricultural statistics, agricultural investments from public resources, and impacts of FST initiatives which hinder effective planning and decision-making. This is recognized as a significant challenge across several countries, including Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Samoa, and Fiji. Also, countries advocated for strengthening monitoring frameworks with measurable indicators to track the progress and impacts of FST actions and policies.

KEY MESSAGES

Below are key areas identified for the interventions and considerations going forward for National Convenors, Government representatives, stakeholders, and the UN system to advance FST and National Pathway implementation in the region.

Enhance advocacy for a food systems approach: Countries stressed the urgent and compelling need for a whole-government approach that connects various ministries to advance food systems approaches in addressing not only food security, but also nutrition, health, climate, environmental resilience, and the promotion of agri-food based industrial development, leading to positive social and economic livelihood outcomes. To maximize cross-sectoral synergies and address the misconceptions of competition of funding between ministries or sectors. The Hub can play a role in awareness-raising on the importance of adopting a food system lens highlighting the mutual benefits of a holistic approach. By promoting collaboration and highlighting the interconnectedness of various sectors, countries aim to foster greater understanding and support for a comprehensive and convergent FST.

Prioritize climate resilience in food systems: Climate change significantly affects sustainable agricultural production, food security, and nutrition, necessitating urgent action. Countries call for accelerated efforts to address climate change impacts and build resilience within food systems that are nature-positive and nutritious, including the development of climate-smart agriculture, climate-resilient infrastructure, food systems early warning, and risk assessment systems leveraging science, technology, and innovative solutions. Additional areas of intervention indicated by countries to promote nature-positive and healthy food systems include: leveraging innovation, digitalization, and integrated approaches such as agroecology and nature-based solutions; Addressing gaps in seed research, climate information, and extension service delivery; Strengthening public awareness for healthy and sustainable diets; Investing in reducing food loss and waste; Supporting smallholder farmers and fisherfolks' livelihoods and access to market, finance, and natural resources, and increasing access to finance empowering their adoption and adaption to sustainable and climate-smart agriculture practices and technology.

Conduct regular reviews and adaptation of plans, policies, and pathways: Recognizing the dynamic nature of food systems and evolving challenges, continuous evaluation ensures alignment with emerging priorities, changing contexts, and evolving needs, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of food system transformation efforts over time. It is crucial to ensure policy coherence and alignment with the updating of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) in 2025. The Hub Convergence Initiative is welcomed to support this alignment.

Enhance and align sustainable financing from various sources to address financing gaps: Closing financing gaps remains an important challenge. Some countries have conducted studies and analyses on state budgets to identify gaps and areas for support from international institutions and donors. Moving forward, countries have requested support in establishing transparent financial management diversified funding approaches, and engagement with development partners to mobilize resources for sustainable financing for FST, including climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives. Countries, especially the Small Island Developing States (SIDs) seek technical support in understanding the process of accessing funds, including climate finance, and analyzing financial gaps in their national pathways. Additionally, countries expressed interest in leveraging tools like the Financial Flows Tool (3FS Tool) presented by the World Bank and IFAD to measure and track public finance trends. Notably, Pacific islands advocate for considering the format of financial aid, advocating for grants over loans to better address their unique challenges.

Strengthen regional collaboration: Countries highlighted the importance of enhancing regional/sub-regional knowledge sharing, technology transfer, capacity development, and other joint initiatives to catalyze sustainable food system transformation.

Widen and deepen stakeholder engagement and participation: Continued emphasis on inclusive multistakeholder engagement and participation, ensuring representation from diverse actors including local communities, women, youth, indigenous peoples, smallholder farmers, and other groups in dialogues and decision-making processes.

- **Actively engage the youth**, recognizing their invaluable contributions to shaping the future of food systems and fostering innovation and inclusivity in transformation efforts. National Convenors welcomed the Youth Leadership Program which provided a platform for 23 young innovators, practitioners, scientists, and activists from 18 low- and middle-income countries to connect, create partnerships, and enhance their skills and knowledge in food system thinking.
- **Increase support to smallholder farmers and fisherfolks** in sharing their perspectives and participating in decision-making.
- **Engage with the private sector** for investments and to support the creation of a financing environment and value addition. Promote nature-positive business models and enhance market standards.
- **Collaborate with academia and research institutions** to improve productivity and nutrition outcomes and address knowledge gaps such as GMOs, climate-resilient seeds, etc.
- **Improve data collection and monitoring systems** to track progress, assess impacts, and inform evidence-based decision-making.

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A side event “Food Systems Transformation as an Accelerator for SDGs Implementation and Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific Region’ was organized at Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development on February 21, find the event summary [here](#).