

# Regional Touch Points with National Convenors

## *Food Systems and Climate Action Convergence Initiative*

### Summary Note

#### Introduction

Between November 14-16, 2023, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, in collaboration with the 4SD Foundation, organized five regional touchpoints to introduce the *Food Systems and Climate Action Convergence Initiative* to National Convenors. With over 200 participants, the event provided an important platform for Food Systems National Convenors to reflect and provide inputs on the initiative. This document presents a summary of these regional touchpoints.

#### Contextualization of the discussion

The touchpoints started with an **introduction** from the **Hub** Director underscoring the intricate connections between the processes of food systems transformation and climate action. Food systems transformation can and shall support national efforts to mitigate emissions and adapt to the impact of climate change in line with 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

**The United Arab Emirates COP28 (UAE COP28) Presidency** presented an **overview of the COP28 priorities**, highlighting the priority the presidency gives to the food systems agenda at COP28 and general expected outcome. COP28 is launching the Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action, where countries are committing to integrate food into their climate plans by 2025. The **Food Systems and Agriculture Agenda for COP28** has four pillars: state level, non-state level, innovation, and finance.

Initiating the **discussion on the Convergence Initiative**, the **Hub** outlined the contributions of currently unsustainable food systems to greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, and freshwater resource consumption. Climate change-induced extreme weather events compound food and water insecurity, disproportionately affecting certain regions, Indigenous Peoples, small-scale food producers, and low-income households. The transformation of food systems can significantly contribute to climate solutions by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting efficient use of natural resources, preserving biodiversity, advocating for sustainable agriculture, influencing changes in consumption patterns toward more plant-based diets, and supporting local economies. The Convergence Initiative envisions aligning food and climate agendas, exploring synergies, fostering dialogues, incorporating science-based evidence, and updating food systems national pathways, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). The initiative aims to evolve as a timeline, spanning COP28, the Summit of the Future, and the UN Food Systems Summit +4 (UNFSS+4).

#### Interactive discussion

The interactive discussion, moderated by **4SD Foundation**, focused on four key questions:

- 1) Existing coordination mechanisms and initiatives fostering a shared understanding and collaboration between food systems transformation and climate action agendas.
- 2) The extent to which food systems issues are integrated into climate policies and plans.
- 3) Opportunities and challenges in convergence.
- 4) The support required to encourage the convergence of food systems transformation and climate action at the national level.

#### Feedback from participants

1. National Convenors welcomed the Convergence Initiative, highlighting its important added value in connecting the food systems and climate action agendas, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Participants recognized the opportunity of the current momentum for the transformation of food systems and how it can be utilised to promote actions on the ground.
2. In several countries, national coordination mechanisms already exist. These multisectoral mechanisms facilitate discussions among government sectors related to food and climate. Some

of these mechanisms were established to advance the transformation process of food systems, while others were created to link agriculture and climate closely, such as forums, dialogues, working groups, and national committees.

3. In several countries, national pathways integrate mitigation and adaptation actions to climate change. Several speakers indicated that food systems priorities have been integrated into existing climate change policies, National Adaptation Plans, and disaster risk management strategies. A few highlighted specific climate strategies for agriculture and food, along with plans for transition to sustainable agriculture and circular economy.
4. Most developing countries and LDCs lack these mechanisms or need support to strengthen them to advocate for the links between food systems and climate action.
5. Participants highlighted the need for a common understanding of how food systems and climate change converge. They called for active stakeholders' engagement in the process, including civil society, the private sector, producers, and consumers.
6. Some National Convenors highlighted the critical role of financing. They referred to the importance of repurposing government support to support research and development, leading to tangible results in food systems transformation.
7. Convenors requested the Hub to facilitate the provision of technical assistance, capacity-building, and sharing experiences to help them advocate for convergence at the national level.

### Key messages

1. National Convenors emphasized the importance of aligning the transformation of food systems with climate action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. They outlined ongoing efforts to link these agendas and welcomed the Convergence Initiative for its potential to contribute significantly at both national and regional levels while adapting to the diverse contexts of each country.
3. Participants also recognized its ability to foster cooperation and synergy among diverse stakeholders in support of food systems transformation.
4. For example, in **Asia and the Pacific**, members recognized the need to strengthen the intersection between climate change and food systems. Several countries shared their proactive efforts of launching renewed food systems transformation pathways and comprehensive National Adaptation Plans while highlighting the ongoing efforts to help farmers adapt to variable climate change conditions.
5. In the **Near East and North Africa**, there has been an increased effort to integrate climate action into national food systems plans. Countries are recognizing the importance of aligning food systems with the SDGs, and the interconnected nature of climate action.
6. In **Europe and Central Asia**, sustainable initiatives to encourage less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have been introduced, with some member states committing to a 70% emission reduction. The adoption of a comprehensive food systems approach and implementation of national programs for climate change adaptation and mitigation also represent significant strides in addressing the food and climate nexus.
7. The **Americas and the Caribbean** countries shared experiences on the emergence of new initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges posed by climate action in transforming food systems. A key theme highlighted in the region is the ongoing efforts and commitment to establishing a holistic strategy blending social responsibility with environmental responsibility.
8. In **Africa**, African countries emphasized the significance of incorporating regional frameworks such as CAADP and the Malabo Agreement on the convergence process at the local levels. Farmers persistently face the repercussions of escalating climate change impacts and various other challenges, directly impacting the food security of the most vulnerable communities and calling for greater support for adaptation.

### The Way Forward

Based on the feedback and guidance received, the Hub will further develop the Convergence Initiative concept and approach, ensuring it responds to countries' needs and contributes to the transformation of food systems and climate action in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The Hub will continue its active engagement with National Convenors in the lead up to COP28 and beyond.