

# FOOD SYSTEMS SOLUTIONS DIALOGUES

## *Catalyzing Climate Action for Transformative Food Systems*

9 October 2024

Summary Report

### Introduction

The Food Systems Solutions Dialogues (FSSD) are purposeful and organized events that bring together National Convenors and other food systems actors to share their experiences and insights on food systems, hosted by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub). A new series is launched each year, and morning and afternoon sessions are held for each Dialogue to accommodate different time zones. On 09 October, the fifth Dialogue of the 2024 series was held on “Catalyzing Climate Action for Transformative Food Systems” - this summary report reflects the combined discussions from the two sessions (morning and afternoon).

The dialogue addressed the challenges of aligning food systems transformation with climate resilience, integrating sustainability into agricultural practices, and fostering multistakeholder collaboration. It also served as a platform to discuss the *Convergence Initiative*, which aims to connect climate and food systems agendas in response to the global call for integrated solutions.

### Setting the scene

Mr Stefanos Fotiou, Director of the Hub, opened both the morning and afternoon sessions by underscoring the importance of aligning food systems transformation with climate action. He highlighted the role of the UN Food Systems Summit +2 (UNFSS+2) Stocktaking Moment and the COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action as foundational to this ongoing process. The Hub-led Convergence Initiative, launched during COP28, was presented as a critical response to the escalating climate-related challenges affecting global food systems. Designed to run until 2030, this initiative has significant milestones planned for COP29 and COP30.

In the morning session, Mr Fotiou elaborated on the initiative’s emphasis on governance, policy alignment, and cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve a systemic convergence between food systems and climate action. He called for national ownership and inclusivity, encouraging countries to take the lead in these efforts, with UN agencies playing a supportive role.

Mr Fotiou expanded on these themes, stressing the importance of maintaining momentum as the world approaches key climate and food systems events, such as COP29 and COP30. He also called for greater involvement from the private sector, highlighting the essential role of public-private partnerships in scaling sustainable solutions and enhancing food systems’ resilience. Fotiou emphasized the need for concrete actions and commitments from all stakeholders to achieve the objectives of the Convergence Initiative by 2030.

In both morning and afternoon sessions, Mr Fotiou welcomed a distinguished panel that included:

- Khaled Eltaweel, Senior Programme Coordinator, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
- H.E. Carla Carneiro, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Federative Republic of Brazil to FAO, IFAD and WFP
- David Laborde, Director, Agrifood Economic Division, FAO
- Jahan-Zeb Chowdhury, Global Climate and Environment Lead, IFAD (AM session)
- Jack Rossiter, Senior Technical Specialist, Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP) Manager at IFAD (PM session)

Ms. Florence Lasbennes, Managing Director at 4SD Foundation, moderated the event.

### **Key insights from panellists**

The panellists provided a range of detailed perspectives on the integration of climate resilience within food systems transformation. Khaled Eltaweel opened by stressing that transforming food systems must move beyond traditional productivity goals, advocating for a comprehensive approach that prioritizes sustainability, resilience, and social equity. He described the Convergence Initiative as structured around three main pillars – governance, policy alignment and implementation – aimed at fostering a collective response to climate challenges. Mr Eltaweel emphasized that countries should take ownership of climate-smart policy implementation, with the UN’s role focused on facilitating rather than directing the process. He underscored the importance of engaging smallholder farmers, Indigenous communities, and marginalized groups, stressing that their involvement is vital for effective, equitable transformation.

David Laborde then presented the FAO Roadmap for sustainable agricultural policy reform. Mr Laborde explained that the roadmap aims to reorient agricultural subsidies and policies to support climate-smart practices. He noted that conventional subsidy structures often incentivize resource-intensive practices, contributing to environmental degradation and creating barriers to resilience. Mr Laborde also called for a redirection of these subsidies toward climate-resilient farming practices, emphasizing reforestation, sustainable soil management, and efficient water use. By aligning incentives with environmental goals, he argued, countries could strengthen their food systems’ resilience to climate shocks. To conclude his intervention, he also advocated for greater government intervention in fortifying supply chains, which would help mitigate risks associated with extreme weather events. The roadmap, he pointed out, is an actionable framework designed to guide countries in systematically implementing these shifts.

Mr Jahan Chowdhury shared insights from IFAD’s extensive work on climate-smart agriculture. He detailed how IFAD’s initiatives such as agroforestry, integrated water management, and local capacity-building efforts have contributed to the restoration of significant areas of degraded land in various regions. These efforts have increased water availability and reduced chemical pollutants in the watershed. Moreover, he highlighted that

integrating climate-smart technologies at the local level not only bolsters food security but also creates resilient communities that can withstand environmental shocks.

In the afternoon, Mr Jack Rossiter expanded on IFAD's global approach to smallholder adaptation. Mr Rossiter pointed out that only a small fraction (0.8%) of global climate finance reaches smallholder farmers, who are highly susceptible to climate risks. He discussed how IFAD's flagship programme for channelling climate finance to small-scale farmers, the Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP) is working to bridge this gap by creating de-risking mechanisms that attract private-sector investment in climate adaptation for smallholder agriculture. Mr Rossiter emphasized that embedding climate resilience within national food system policies is crucial for scaling innovation, increasing smallholders' access to financing, and improving market reach. During his intervention, he cited examples from IFAD's work across multiple regions, where public-private partnerships have supported adaptive practices and brought transformative changes to local food systems. To conclude, Mr Rossiter emphasized the urge for stronger alignment of national adaptation plans with agricultural policies to ensure systemic resilience across food value chains.

H.E. Carla Carnero highlighted Brazil's commitment to embedding climate action within its food systems, particularly through a bioeconomy approach. She described Brazil's strategy to leverage its rich biodiversity for sustainable agriculture, which not only supports economic growth but also conserves natural resources. H.E. Carnero elaborated on Brazil's efforts to secure international investments in sustainable food systems, underscoring the importance of partnerships in driving forward climate resilience initiatives. She noted that Brazil's approach includes attracting funds for sustainable soil management, forest conservation, and regenerative agriculture. The Ambassador concluded by underlining that aligning climate action with food systems transformation is central to Brazil's COP30 preparations, as the country seeks to position itself as a global leader in sustainable agriculture.

### **Dialogue with National Convenors**

Following the expert panel, the Dialogue moved into an interactive session with National Convenors, providing a platform to share their insights and lessons learned with implementing climate resilience in food systems. The discussion was guided by questions exploring the main challenges faced by countries in transforming their food systems, the role of crisis management in building resilience, and strategies for aligning food systems with national security concerns.

Convenors were asked to consider:

- How can national food systems transformation pathways be effectively implemented and integrated with national climate action initiatives to simultaneously achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhance climate resilience?
- What specific actions and partnerships are necessary at the national level to accelerate climate financing for food systems transformation?

A common theme was the importance of inclusiveness, with Convenors discussing the need to engage both rural and urban stakeholders in agrifood initiatives. Some countries have employed innovative strategies, such as agrifood tourism and eco-labelling, to broaden public involvement and enhance appreciation for sustainable agricultural practices.

Another significant theme was the reconceptualization of food systems as part of national security. Convenors noted that climate change has intensified food insecurity, making food systems a critical element in national security agendas. They also emphasized the need for stronger inter-ministerial collaboration, particularly among agriculture, environment, and defense sectors, to address the challenges posed by climate-induced disruptions.

Coordination challenges among stakeholders were also highlighted. In their interventions, Convenors reported difficulties in translating national food systems strategies into actionable policies due to fragmented governance structures and insufficient collaboration among ministries. There was a consensus on the need to develop more cohesive governance frameworks to enable effective implementation of food systems transformation plans.

Financial and technical support were seen as essential for achieving sustainable food systems. Convenors called for innovative financing models, including public-private partnerships, to mobilize resources for smallholder farmers and vulnerable communities. Several participants stressed the need to direct climate finance to the regions most affected by climate change, ensuring that local farmers and communities can access the necessary resources to adapt and thrive.

Lastly, crisis response and resilience-building were identified as key areas for future focus. Some Convenors shared their experiences with climate-related disasters such as floods and droughts, noting that these events have intensified food insecurity in their regions. Many advocated for crisis management strategies that incorporate food systems resilience, aiming to reduce vulnerabilities and safeguard food security amidst growing climate challenges.

### **The way forward**

The Dialogue highlighted several essential takeaways to advance the Convergence Initiative. First, it is critical to ensure that climate resilience is fully integrated into food systems transformation efforts. Participants emphasized that aligning food systems policies with climate action is essential for developing sustainable, adaptable food systems capable of withstanding climate-related disruptions. Key areas of focus included the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, crisis response mechanisms, and the incorporation of resilience strategies into national food security frameworks.

Second, the importance of enhancing private sector engagement emerged as a core theme. The dialogue stressed that businesses must align their operations and investments with national strategies for food security and climate resilience. Clear frameworks and guidance

from public bodies can help ensure that private sector actions effectively complement public efforts to transform food systems.

Finally, collaboration across countries and cross-learning were identified as essential. Through knowledge sharing and scaling successful initiatives from pilot projects, countries can adopt and adapt strategies suited to their unique environmental and socio-economic contexts. The Dialogue underscored that collective action, and shared solutions are essential for building resilient, sustainable food systems by 2030.

In his closing remarks, the Director of the Hub highlighted the importance of continued alignment between national priorities and the SDGs within the Convergence Initiative. He emphasized the need for better data coordination and cross-sector collaboration to ensure that all levels of government and stakeholders work together toward transformative outcomes.

In the closing of the afternoon session, Mr Eltaweel echoed these sentiments, underscoring that national ownership and inclusive governance are fundamental to implementing effective climate-smart policies. He reaffirmed the Hub's commitment to supporting countries in achieving their sustainability and resilience goals, highlighting that the path to 2030 will require innovation, collaboration, and accountability at every level.