

Secretary-General's Call to Action for accelerated Food Systems Transformation (FST)

Making food systems work for people and planet

- 1. In September 2021, the UN convened tens of thousands of people from the local to the global levels as part of the Food Systems Summit. Two years on, in July 2023, we regather at the UN Food Systems Summit+2 in Rome, convened by the UN Secretary-General and hosted by the Government of Italy, to take stock of existing commitments and accelerate global action towards zero hunger, food security and nutrition (SDG 2), as drivers to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.**
- 2. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic, the triple planetary crisis and the war in Ukraine have had a dramatic impact on already fragile food systems. Food prices have increased as a result of inflation. Fiscal space has tightened. Supply chains are creaking and the poorest are left with little or no recourse to make ends meet given the economic impacts resulting from external crises that have led to the depreciation of their currencies and higher import bills and financing costs.**
- 3. People who are already poor, food insecure or at risk of malnutrition are threatened, especially women, girls and indigenous peoples, and farmers who are being left behind. The shocks have also accentuated pressures on the environments and natural resources which are vital for the well-being of future generations.**
- 4. The capacities of governments to respond to the effects of systems disruptions are constrained, in particular governments of Small Island Developing States and low-income indebted countries who are unable to mobilize the financial resources they need given the depreciation of their currencies and higher import bills. Month on month, the number of people who cannot fulfil the right to food is increasing. Children's ability to learn is affected. They too would benefit greatly from scaled up school meal programmes which can catalyze the transformation of food systems and the reform of the international financial architecture, that is currently not fit for purpose.**
- 5. Consequently, the number of people facing hunger and food insecurity has risen since 2015, exacerbated by the pandemic, conflict, climate change and growing inequalities. 258 million people in 58 countries faced acute food**

insecurity in 2022, an increase of 34% compared to 2021. 45 million children suffered from wasting. Agricultural households constitute up to two-thirds of people living in extreme poverty worldwide. Under current trends, 575 million people will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030. Projections show that by that time, approximately 600 million people will be hungry – 7% of the world’s population. This will be the same proportion as in 2015 and there will be no progress on SDG2. In addition, current food systems continue to generate pollution and degrade soil, water and air, contribute to 28% of greenhouse gas emissions, are responsible for as much as 80 percent of biodiversity loss and account for up to 70 percent of freshwater use.

6. The vision of transformation has rooted, creating momentum for a movement. Countries have sought to anchor their responses to the food crisis in the integrated vision put forward by the Secretary-General in 2021 to Member States in his Stock Take Report “Making food systems work for people and planet – UN Food Systems Summit Stock Taking Moment +2”.

7. Since then more than 155 National Food Systems Convenors have taken office, backed by national ecosystems of support. The 126 national pathways presented are the robust guides for food systems transformation. In recent months, 107 countries have each provided a vivid account of their food systems journey. All this demonstrates leadership and ownership for progress towards pathway priorities, both within and among countries.

8. The stock take report indicates the constraints to be overcome. Most are outside the influence of national authorities. However, at the FSS+2 moment, countries have identified what is needed to achieve potential and address the constraints: in particular, what is essential and urgently needed right now. The message is clear.

There is no shortage of ambition for food systems that combine the right to food with delivering the SDGs for everyone.

There is tangible progress albeit much more to be done.

Concerted and urgent action is needed to achieve the potential of food systems.

9. I call on leaders in governments, IFIs, farmer associations, business, civil society, scientific institutions, youth, indigenous farmers and the media to

prioritize implementation of future food systems now around six areas that I believe need concerted action:

- Incorporating food systems strategies into all national policies for sustainable development, for people's livelihoods, nutrition and health, for economic growth, climate action and nature, and to address post-harvest losses, leaving no one behind.**
- Establishing food systems governance that engages all sectors and stakeholders for a whole of society approach, combining the short and long term.**
- Investing in research, data, innovation and technology capacities including stronger connections to science, experience and expertise.**
- Deepening joined-up participatory design and implementation inclusive of women, young people and indigenous peoples at the local level, with knowledge sharing, cross-sector programming, multi-stakeholder partnering, context and place-based actions, stronger and more diverse production, and mutual accountability.**
- Promoting increased engagement of businesses, including through public private partnerships, to shape the sustainability of food systems and establish and strengthen accountability mechanisms, recognizing their centrality for food systems.**
- Ensuring access to short and long-term concessional finance, investments, budget support and debt restructuring.**

In our emergency response, working together with the IMF, the WB and IFIs, a minimum of 15 billion dollars of immediate investments should be made available to provide countries with urgent support and social protection, in particular in African countries where hunger is twice the global average. The UN Global Crisis Response Group recommendation for a Food Import Facility and the LDC 5 Food Stockholding Mechanism should be fully operationalised. Trade barriers, harmful subsidies and export restrictions must be avoided and hoarding and speculative behavior addressed. We must ensure the openness, integrity, market transparency and resilience of supply chains

The SDG stimulus can be a gamechanger to secure fiscal space and access resources, including SDR rechanneling through MDBs and other prescribed holders, to accelerate food systems transformation, other national development transitions, and to provide, immediate relief to developing countries.

10. We must also align the implementation of national food systems transformation pathways with the continuous updates of National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs) for climate action. As a priority, this should include the adaptation of food systems to climate change and ecosystem service losses, and investments in building the resilience of agricultural systems and reducing the vulnerability of food producers who depend on these natural resources.

11. There are many ongoing international initiatives that will support the transition of food and other sustainable development transitions in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. However, it is necessary to ensure greater coherence and collaboration, and reduce duplication and burdens on country-level engagement.

12. To reduce the vulnerability and hardships faced by communities and people – in particular rural communities, food producers, women farmers and indigenous peoples, who depend on natural systems and livestock for their livelihoods – , the design and operationalization of the UNFCCC Loss and Damage Fund, the full capitalization of the Green Climate Fund and the Sharm El Sheik Adaptation Agenda’s Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation (FAST) must be in the first line of priorities. The report of the High-Level Expert Group on Non-State Actor Commitments provides guidance for food and agricultural companies to set credible and verifiable climate targets to reduce CO2 emissions and keep 1.5 alive.

13. Participants at the July 2023 UNFSS+2 Stocktaking Moment are sharing their increasing awareness of issues, ambition for results and commitment to collective action. The two years since 2021 have seen a wider and deeper understanding of the urgent need to shift global food systems and the opportunities for doing so in ways that are inclusive and deliver changed social, economic and environmental realities to turbocharge actions that improve lives for many millions of people, especially women and youth.

14. In the coming years the UN Food Systems Hub will focus on increasing the capacity of National Food Systems Convenors to shepherd inclusive national processes; contribute to a Convenors’ network; optimize national Ecosystems of

Support, leveraging international Coalitions, coordinate UN entities; and align with other actors. The Hub will also draw on the newly created Window for Food Systems Transformation under the UN SDG Fund aiming for 100 million by the end of 2024, the Science Ecosystem of Support, and other stakeholders to promote evidence-based and multistakeholder food systems transformation processes.

15. The whole of the UN System will improve coordination and partnerships, including with financing institutions, public national banks, and multilateral development banks, to make food systems transformation a reality for all people in the 150 countries that have embarked on this process already and other stakeholders joining the effort in months and years to come. The three Rome-based agencies FAO, WFP and IFAD will intensify their engagement by supporting and leveraging the Food Systems Hub and will continue convening, guiding, and inspiring action at the global, regional, national and local levels.

The Food Systems Summit +2 Stock Taking Moment will inform upcoming processes, including the SDG Summit, COP 28 and the Summit of the Future for 2024.