



**UNITED NATIONS  
FOOD SYSTEMS  
SUMMIT 2021**

## **UN Food Systems Summit : Action Tracks and Levers of Change Progress Report (19.01.2021)**

As a core element of the 2021 Food Systems Summit preparatory process, a set of five Action Tracks and four cross-cutting Levers of Change have been identified to focus on how food systems can support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their design is the result of careful consideration by the Special Envoy, in consultation with the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General and with input from Member States, entities of the UN system, technical and research institutions, civil society and the private sector. The Action Tracks establish a space for sharing and learning across constituencies and for generating coordinated action, commitments and new partnerships. They are multisectoral and multi-stakeholder in nature, open to all stakeholders and designed to overcome silos. Guided by the Summit's vision and objectives, the Action Tracks are tasked to create synergies and inspire solutions at local, national, regional, and global levels and to scale up and accelerate existing initiatives which align to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This note is a digest of the Action Tracks' work to date including their interaction with the cross-cutting levers of change. The Action Tracks have identified a number of major bottlenecks to more sustainable food systems, and are scoping some initial ideas, which could result in game-changing, systemic solutions to address these in the next months.

The subnational, national, global, and independent Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSD) that are being implemented during 2021 will be essential to bring together stakeholders to build pathways towards sustainable food systems with actions, commitments, initiatives and solutions that are tailored to specific contexts. The three prominent areas identified by each Action Track will provide a focus for the identification of game changing solutions that can inspire, and be used to frame, these dialogues. In turn, the dialogue outcomes will be shared with the Action Track and Lever of Change communities at regular intervals during the process as they develop their menus of possible game-changing solutions and commitments that will emerge in the lead up to the Food Systems Summit. The Dialogue outcomes will also shape the contours of nationally owned "pathways" to sustainable food systems transformation well beyond the Summit and throughout the Decade of Action to deliver the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

To help to ensure that the solutions generated by the Action Tracks are cognizant of the broad based scientific research and evidence, an independent Scientific Group has prepared research synthesis papers in support of each Action Track<sup>1</sup>.

### **Action Track 1 – Ensure Access to Safe and Nutritious Food for All<sup>2</sup>**

Action Track 1 looks at ways to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and reduce the incidence of diet-related non-communicable diseases, enabling all people to be nourished and healthy and to progressively realize their right to adequate food. This goal requires that all people at all times have access to sufficient quantities and quality of safe food.

Three prominent areas have been identified, and for each, a variety of challenges and potentially relevant solutions are now being compiled:

- **Achieving Zero Hunger** will require a focus on increasing food availability, on social protection that builds productive assets, on reducing inequalities, on correcting macro distortions (price/taxes), on improving infrastructure (Energy, ICT, storage/marketing), on sustainably increasing food production, and on behavior change around food production and use. A special focus must be given to fragile and conflict-affected settings, as well as youth and gender dimensions.
- **Increasing access to affordable, nutritious foods** calls for looking at strengthening food accessibility – especially economic access to healthy diets. Informed by the joint UN publication the 2020 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), three barriers should be lifted in priority: food prices which are fair to both producers and consumers and better reflect health externalities, purchasing power, and perception of affordability.
- Increasing **food safety** requires to reduce food-borne illnesses and deaths due to unsafe food. This calls for action across four areas: policies to support vulnerable consumers, producers and vendors in markets; understanding and preventing risks; an enabling regulatory ecosystem; and fostering consumer demand for food safety.

### **Action Track 2 – Shift to Sustainable Consumption Patterns<sup>3</sup>**

Action Track 2 works to build consumer demand for sustainably produced food and healthy diets, strengthen local value chains, improve nutrition, and promote the reuse and recycling of food resources, especially among the most vulnerable. This Action Track recognizes that we need to eliminate wasteful patterns of food consumption; and we need to facilitate a transition in diets towards more nutritious foods that require fewer resources to produce and transport.

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<sup>1</sup> The papers can be downloaded at <https://foodsystems.community/communities/scientific-group/documents/>

<sup>2</sup> Find out more about Action Track 1 and [join the online AT1 Community](#)

<sup>3</sup> Find out more about Action Track 2 and [join the online AT2 Community](#)

Three areas call for significant improvements, where a variety of challenges and potentially relevant solutions are now being compiled:

- Improving **Food environments** means looking at ways to create or strengthen healthy, safe and sustainable food environments for people to adopt and maintain healthy dietary practices. Looking at availability, distribution, and display of food in value chains and dining environments, this working group will document best practices around policies, tools, building legal capacities and support innovations and networks.
- Strengthening **Food demand** is looking to improve the product experience of healthier and more sustainable food and improve consumers' motivation and capability.
- Reducing **Food waste** occurring at household, food service and retail level is a priority, and can be achieved by providing targeted support to countries, cities and companies in measuring, reducing and revalorizing food waste, and shifting consumer food waste norms and facilitating circular, productive uses of commonly wasted foods.

### **Action Track 3 – Boost Nature-Positive Production<sup>4</sup>**

Action Track 3 works to optimize environmental resource use in and impact from food production, processing and distribution, thereby reducing biodiversity loss, pollution, water use, soil degradation and greenhouse gas emissions. In its pursuit of this goal, the Action Track aims to deepen understanding of the constraints and opportunities facing smallholder farmers and small-scale enterprises along the food value chain. It also strives to support food system governance that realigns incentives to reduce food losses and other negative environmental impacts.

Three Areas of Collective Action & Innovation (ACAI) were identified:

- **Protect** natural ecosystems against new conversions for food and feed production. The objective is to move towards deforestation-free, conversion-free and overfishing-free production and trade systems by repurposing agri-food supports (such as ag subsidies) so they generate co-benefits for people and nature, including social safeguards and secure the rights of the most vulnerable (especially indigenous peoples, local communities and rural women). A key will be to get systems actors, and especially decision-makers, to recognize (and value) that natural ecosystem services and biodiversity underpin nature-positive food production.
- **Manage** sustainably existing food production systems to the benefit of both nature and people requires context-specific solutions ranging from digital farming to traditional indigenous knowledge, that increase input efficiencies; minimize externalities; improve yields while maximizing biodiversity and ecosystem functions, improving livelihoods and **enhancing resilience to climate change**.
- **Restore** and rehabilitate degraded ecosystems and soil function for sustainable food production. Restoration of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems can create jobs while

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<sup>4</sup> Find out more about Action Track 3 and [join the online AT3 Community](#)

enhancing biodiversity and building ecological resilience, but this calls for greater support to restorative innovations and more enabling policy, social, technical and financial environments.

#### **Action Track 4 – Advance Equitable Livelihoods<sup>5</sup>**

Action Track 4 works to contribute to the elimination of poverty by promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all actors along the food value chain, reducing risks for the world's poorest, enabling entrepreneurship and addressing the inequitable access to resources and distribution of value.

Action Track 4 looks to improve resilience through social protection and seek to ensure that food systems “leave no one behind”, with a focus on three areas:

- **Strengthening Agency:** Supporting the empowerment of family farmers, small-scale farmers and livestock keepers, indigenous peoples, labourers (including seasonal and landless labourers), migrant informal workers, as well as informal markets workers, women and other marginalized peoples in food systems to build the awareness, confidence, aspirations, skills, capabilities to access dignified jobs and wages; security of land tenure of land; productive and natural resources and services, and to redress unacceptable income inequality and poverty.
- **Inclusive Policies:** Transform structures to support inclusive, rights-based global, national sub-national and local norms and laws, customs, values and practices to end discrimination and promote fairness and justice within food systems.
- **Multi-dimensional Welfare and Access:** Change relationships of power in ways that ensure a fair share of resources (land, inputs, water, advisory services, etc.), finance, capital, markets, technology and prices.

#### **Action Track 5 – Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks, and Stress<sup>6</sup>**

The ambition behind Action Track 5 is to ensure that all people within a food system are empowered to prepare for, withstand, and recover from instability and everywhere participate in food systems that, despite shocks and stressors, deliver food security, nutrition and equitable livelihoods for all. Efforts are focusing on developing game changing solutions to ensure that food systems - which are affected by conflict, and environmental, health and economic shocks and stresses - can maintain functionality, recover from adverse effects, and improve to a better-off state, focusing on three areas:

- **Economic resilience** to be equitable and inclusive. This working group will focus on enhancing local food systems, encouraging citizen-driven, micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) initiatives, exploring blended finance facilities, public-private

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<sup>5</sup> Find out more about Action Track 4 and [join the online AT4 Community](#)

<sup>6</sup> Find out more about Action Track 5 and [join the online AT5 Community](#)

partnerships, targeting investments made by public and private sectors towards all levels of food systems and creating safety nets, mechanisms and shock-responsive social protection systems to food system stakeholders, particularly farmers to build resilience. Price information systems, credit and insurance markets and building effective financial institutions will also be addressed.

- **Social resilience** to ensure there are broad-based benefits for all people. This working group will look at prevailing inequalities – structural, gender, social in access and utilization of resources, knowledge, assets, technology, markets in event of conflict. In addition, empowering indigenous communities and strengthening coordination of international and local actors will be addressed.
- **Environmental resilience** to generate positive and regenerative impacts on the natural environment. This working group will focus on scaling action to address impacts of biodiversity loss, climate change on food systems and look into ensuring healthy soil, water ecosystems; reducing GHG in agricultural practices; addressing agro-ecology and new agricultural practices, food waste; protecting landscapes through regeneration; and identifying harmful agricultural practices like use of pesticides, excessive irrigation that threaten sustainable food systems. It will also ensure that climate adaptation is considered as an important part of conflict-prevention strategies given the nexus between weather shocks, market collapse and conflict outbreaks.

### Levers of Change

Four levers of change have been identified, that cut across the different Action Tracks: Human Rights; Innovation; Finance; and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Youth empowerment is also a top priority of the Summit, incorporated at all levels of the Summit content and process. Young people are represented as Vice-Chairs in all 5 Action Tracks, working together with the youth champions and food systems heroes. On multiple continents, self-organised youth constituencies led by young champions are actively engaging in all AT debates. Through regional fora and a variety of advocacy, social, educational activities, they will ensure in the lead-up to and during the Summit, that young people have a strong voice in shaping sustainable food systems for their future.

The levers of change are relevant across the full range of the SDGs and are critical for ensuring that different food systems become sustainable in the coming decade. The communities engaged in the levers will identify key issues that deserve attention within Summit dialogues and action tracks.

- **Human Rights:** The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has joined the Food Systems Summit process to help ensure that human rights and law play a central role in the Summit. The Special Rapporteur will help bring a systematic understanding of the policy instruments, legal frameworks, resolutions, and treaties that already exist for the

Summit's efforts to focus on action and implementation, building upon the strong foundations of multilateralism and rights that already exist.

- The **Finance** community will work with Action Tracks on areas including assessing investment need, incentives, solutions that address inclusion, and risk. Its objectives across all Action Tracks are to leverage substantial resources, look into ways to de-risking innovations and accelerating change, and mobilizing private capital, including from financial institutions, business and consumers. It further identified specific questions and issues to be brought into discussions for each AT, and especially, considered when shaping solutions.
- The **Innovation** community will bring together public, private, social sector innovation partners in a commitment to make innovation a significant enabling factor for food systems transformation both in the lead into the Summit and in alignment with the 2030 Agenda and all 17 SDGs. It has identified a twin track approach to support specific action tracks and gamechanger initiatives, and support a cross-cutting innovation agenda across business model, scientific, technological and social innovation. Emerging areas of focus include data and digital, scientific and technological, national and regional innovation ecosystems as well as societal and institutional innovation models, including traditional and indigenous knowledge.
- The **Gender** community identified seven prominent issues, to elevate gender equality women's empowerment as well as the engagement of women across all action tracks: Women's rights to land; economic empowerment of women in food systems; unpaid care and agricultural labor burden; women's leadership in food systems; access to technologies (including digital); changing norms and addressing institutional barriers; gender responsive agricultural and food systems policies.

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