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Sixth informal joint meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board 30 November–1 December 2022

Update on the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub

Background Note

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations food systems summit (FSS) was convened on 23 September 2021 during the United Nations General Assembly. In his Chair Summary and Statement of Action, the Secretary-General committed the United Nations system to jointly lead a United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub (hereafter the “Hub”) that collaborates with and draws upon, wider United Nations system capacities to support the follow-up to the FSS.
2. The Hub has been established and is hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on behalf of the United Nations system. The Rome-based agencies (RBAs) together with Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), have assigned dedicated professional personnel and/or seed funding for its operationalization. The principals of the RBAs, DCO and the Deputy Secretary-General have also assumed oversight of the Hub through a steering committee. At its last meeting on 22 April 2022, the steering committee approved the Hub’s biennial workplan 2022–2023.

II. The biennial workplan of the Hub

3. The Hub’s workplan was informed by a country needs analysis survey conducted in February 2022 to allow national governments to express their priority needs and expectations for support as well as their perspective on the value addition of the Hub. At the core of the Hub’s mandate is the responsibility to act as a catalyst inside the United Nations system and through the wider ecosystem of support, for coordinated, country-driven, customized support in translating national food systems transformation pathways into action.
4. Based on country priorities, the Hub will cover six key functions:
 - i) facilitate implementation of national pathways;
 - ii) strengthen strategic thought leadership;
 - iii) engage ecosystem of support;
 - iv) leverage means of implementation;
 - v) communicate and advocate a food systems approach; and



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vi) prepare for the 2023 stocktaking moment.

5. National convenors and government stakeholders continue to be the central interlocutors of the Hub in the implementation of its workplan. To ensure that the previous network of national convenors, focal points and permanent representations is kept up to date and regularly engaged, efforts have been made through the Rome-based permanent representations to secure reconfirmations and new nominations of national convenors. Face-to-face meetings with national convenors have been organized in Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean region.

III. Activity update

1) Facilitating the implementation of national pathways

6. As of October 2022, 117 countries have developed national pathways, which demonstrates sustained interest and momentum. Some countries have started implementing their pathways while other countries need technical and financial assistance to either develop a pathway, translate it into the national policy and strategy framework and operationalize it.
7. Since its establishment, the Hub has liaised with food systems national convenors to plan concrete support for the early and effective implementation of their national pathways. These engagements have facilitated a more granular understanding of country technical and financial assistance needs. Multifaceted and tailored assistance is currently being planned in several countries through the mobilization of the existing United Nations presence in each country, under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinators (RCs), as well as by engaging the ecosystem of support – such as food system coalitions, international financial institutions, development partners, think tanks and private sector. The Hub is also collaborating with the Global Network Against Food Crises to identify opportunities to strengthen global, regional and national linkages, ensure consensus around data and analysis and support national convenors to update national pathways, develop complementary analysis, and engage partners around the implementation of humanitarian, development and peace nexus approaches.
8. The Hub has now convened several national convenors, RCs, RBAs representatives and United Nations country team (UNCT) meetings to start shaping country support portfolios, with start-up funds injected by the Hub, to enable essential implementation steps to be rolled-out such as localizing pathways and integrate them in subnational planning and budget processes; enhancing accountability and learning through the design of monitoring and evaluation systems; institutionalizing pathways through the development of a costed action plans; mobilizing resources with the development of investment proposals; and promoting research and innovations through the establishment of food system labs.
9. Considering the impact of the triple crisis of food, energy and finance, there has been growing synergistic cooperation between the Hub and the Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) to assist governments in responding in the immediate term, while keeping the longer-term transformation of their food systems on track. In July 2022, the Hub, together with two of the co-leads of the food workstream of the GCRG, convened a series of five regional touchpoints. These were designed for national convenors to present how their national pathways and ongoing food systems transformation processes were being impacted by current shocks as well



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as on measures taken to mitigate and build resilience to these shocks and protect the most affected and vulnerable.

10. In addition, in line with its mandate to promote greater coordination within the United Nations system and since the Hub will use the existing structures of the RCs and UNCTs, including RBAs' offices, to coordinate and channel support to countries, it is incubating a new thematic window on food systems transformations in partnership with the Joint SDG Fund. The thematic window is expected to be launched for a minimum of five years of operations to enable UNCTs design and implement high-quality joint programmes, in support of national pathways implementation.
11. Finally, to sustain the much-needed strategic integration of the food systems transformation agenda in the field as well as to ensure that the implementation of the Hub's workplan is informed by RCs' first-hand knowledge of priorities, expectations and realities in countries, the Hub has launched a RCs sounding board.

2) Strengthening strategic thought leadership

12. The Hub has organized monthly "Food Systems Solutions Dialogues" since April 2022, on a wide range of technical topics. The purpose of the dialogues is to respond to convenors' request for engagement along thematic lines. In each dialogue, resource people from the RBAs and beyond, are invited for a technical introduction followed by interactive sharing of experiences, opportunities, and challenges among national convenors, in break-out groups. These sessions also include other national focal points at the capitals, Members' permanent representations in Rome, RCs, as well as RBAs and other United Nations agencies at the regional and country levels. These sessions have enabled continued peer-exchange, peer-learning and capacity development within the convenors networks.
13. At the 2023 World Food Forum, during an event promoting the role of investments, science, and innovation in advancing national pathways, the Hub welcomed the nomination of a new scientific advisory group of 33 scientists, whose role will be to enhance science-policy interfaces for food systems transformation. The event was opened by Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, the FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) President Alvaro Lario.

3) Engaging the ecosystem of support

14. Since its inception, the Hub embarked on establishing contact with the coalitions that emerged from the FSS through briefings, brainstorming sessions, a dedicated solutions dialogue as well as one-on-one engagements. The survey revealed that through the mandates of the 27 respondent coalitions, 15 out of the 17 SDGs are addressed. A coalitions compendium and FAQ has been developed and shared widely in order to facilitate countries' engagement and strategic use of coalitions. At the time of the survey 106 Member States were engaging as members of or leading a coalition.
15. In delivering on its mandate, the Hub strives to engage and partner with the full spectrum of actors within the ecosystem of support. A high-level political forum side event, co-organized by the Hub and the Committee on World Food Security Secretariat on 15 July in person in New York,



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highlighting food systems transformation as a key 2030 Agenda accelerator. With regard to participation in global relevant processes, interventions were delivered at the UNCCD COP15, Stockholm+50 sessions, and side events of the United Nations General Assembly among others.

16. Terms of reference for a stakeholder (producers, women, private sector, youth and indigenous people) engagement, networking and advisory group have been developed and were approved by the Oversight Steering Committee. Representatives of indigenous peoples and youth have been identified and nominated through self-organized processes. The representatives were introduced at a ceremony during the World Food Forum in October in Rome.

4) Leveraging means of implementation

17. In December 2021, IFAD was designated by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to lead the agenda on financing for food systems transformation on behalf of the United Nations systems. The World Bank, former lead of the FSS Finance Lever, co-leads this stream of work with IFAD. Since financing came up as the highest area of support sought by countries in the need assessment conducted by the Hub in February 2022, Means of Implementation Finance has been prioritized for the biennium 2022–2023 and a workplan and key deliverables were included in the Hub workplan. This includes two key deliverables: i) the development of country food finance markers to help governments and stakeholders assess the effectiveness of the country's financing architecture for food systems transformation; and ii) country support packages.
18. IFAD and the World Bank convened the former members of the FSS Finance Lever and other key actors in the finance space, including the Good Food Finance Network, to present the financing food systems transformation workplan and gather feedback. During this meeting it was decided that the group of experts would act as a sounding board to validate the work moving forward.
19. IFAD and the World Bank are actively engaging key knowledge partners, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Akademiya2063, the World Benchmarking Alliance, and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition that agreed to support on this workstream. The financing food systems transformation work has also been presented at several high-level multi-stakeholder meetings (the AGRF) and donor round tables (Global Donor Platform for Rural Development).

5) Communicate and advocate a food systems approach

20. The Hub has released a number of publications including the Hub's [Biennial Work Plan](#), [Standard Hub Presentation](#), [Hub FAQs](#), [Country Needs Survey Analysis](#), [Compendium of Food Systems Coalitions](#) and [Food Systems Coalitions FAQs](#) and will strive to support countries and the ecosystem of support at the global, regional and national levels to maintain the momentum and continue to spotlight the role of food systems in achieving the SDGs, especially in the current food and cost-of-living crisis context.

6) Prepare for the 2023 stocktaking moment

21. The United Nations Secretary-General has committed in his Chair Summary and Statement of Action of the United Nations FSS to convene "a global stock-taking meeting every two years to



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review progress in implementing the outcomes of this process and its contributions to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. This will be supported by the RBAs, the broader United Nations system and partners.” The first of these stocktaking moments should take place in 2023.

22. The 2023 stocktaking moment will build on the momentum of the FSS and will create a conducive space for countries to review commitments to action that were made during the FSS, share stories of success and early signs of transformation and maintain the momentum for bold acceleration and bold action, to further the resilience of food systems, advocate their adaptation to climate change, ensure they contribute to communities’ resilience to further shocks and crises and boost the achievement of the SDGs.

IV. Upcoming work

23. In the coming months the Hub will press forward with the implementation of its strategic activities including:
 - Engaging with donors, private sector, and countries to understand potential financing window opportunities (for example Green Climate Fund, United Nations Capital Development Fund and FAO Investment Centre) and further the development of the concept on country food finance markers, which is expected to be ready by end of 2022.
 - The finalization of the investment strategy of the Joint SDG Fund thematic window based on consultations with national convenors, RBAs, RCs, UNCT, donors and agencies of the United Nations system. It will be immediately followed by the development and launch of a first call for proposals early 2023.
 - Multi-partners’ country missions are to design "roadmaps" for partnership and collaboration to build closer partnerships between convenors and critical food system actors, leveraging and connecting assets from the global and national levels. These partnerships will ensure that country support portfolios are sustainable and anchored in national and regional capacities and mechanisms.
 - A solutions dialogue on the role and centrality of food systems to deliver good nutrition and health, especially in the current crisis context.
 - Actively mobilizing United Nations agencies at the global, regional, and country levels to assist in pathways’ implementation, enhance inter-agency cooperation and mobilize commitment of RCs, regional directors and country representatives also of the RBAs.
 - Engaging coalitions to discuss concrete programmatic support to governments in operationalizing and implementing pathways, as well as create opportunities to pass best practices and learning on country assistance across coalitions.
 - Launch its new website which will serve as the main point of information for national governments, the United Nations system, and food systems coalitions, programmes and initiatives. The site will host the Food Systems Solutions Library and will also serve as a knowledge sharing platform for food systems actors.



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- Regional touchpoints in December 2022 to consult countries for the organization of the 2023 stocktaking moment.
 - Continued updates including through the Informal Joint Meeting of the Governing Bodies of the Rome-based agencies.
24. The RBAs together with other United Nations agencies funds and programmes have come together to provide support to the countries to implement their pathways. The food systems agenda has been further elevated as the July 2022 High-level Political Forum Ministerial Declaration included specific language on the follow-up to the FSS and the Hub, and called the United Nations system *“to work with the Hub in order to support governments to develop and strengthen Sustainable Development Goal-based national pathways for sustainable food systems transformation”*.
25. As a follow up to this development the Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2022 questionnaire for the United Nations system SDG implementation database, which currently contains inputs from more than 50 United Nations system entities, includes a specific question on major integrated and innovative policies or initiatives that United Nations agencies may have adopted to support the Hub in its mandate towards countries. This is a great opportunity for the Hub and RBAs to demonstrate leadership in United Nations collaborations and synergetic support to Member States through which the Hub could provide many opportunities to strengthen action-oriented joint activities from the RBAs.