



Food Systems

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Introduction:

The food that a person consumes in his daily life of local or imported agricultural, animal and industrial products is nothing but the result of a long series of steps, procedures, and the enormous material and human potentials that work in various economic, productive, industrial, commercial sectors. These processes also involve elements that often go unseen, such as food preferences and resource investments.

The term “food system” refers to the constellation of activities involved in producing, processing, transporting and consuming food. Food systems touch every aspect of human existence. The health of our food systems profoundly affects the health of our bodies, as well as the health of our environment, our economies and our cultures. When they function well, food systems have the power to bring us together as families, communities and nations.

But too many of the world’s food systems are fragile, unexamined and vulnerable to collapse, as millions of people around the globe have experienced first-hand during the COVID-19 crisis. When our food systems fail, the resulting disorder threatens our education, health and economy, as well as human rights, peace and security. As in so many cases, those who are already poor or marginalized are the most vulnerable.

The good news is that we know what we need to do to get back on track. Scientists agree that transforming our food systems is among the most powerful ways to change course and make progress towards all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Rebuilding the food systems of the world will also enable us to answer the UN Secretary General’s call to “build back better” from COVID-19. We are all part of the food system, and so we all must come together to bring about the transformation that the world needs.

For a better, healthier and more productive life, we realize that food is the goal that all stakeholders must join together to provide, so that the food is of nutritional value and balanced formulations, containing the elements necessary for the needs of the human body, to ensure providing it with positive energy that is reflected in human’s well-being and productivity.

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Food Systems Summit
In 2021



The Global Burden of Malnutrition at a Glance

The world has made some progress towards achieving global nutrition targets. However, this progress is far too slow and malnutrition persists at high levels. Few countries are on course to meet any of the targets for maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN). The latest available data shows that no country is on course to reduce the prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age, with one in three (32.8%) women aged 15 to 49 years affected, particularly those who are pregnant. Globally, it is estimated that 14.6% of infants have a low weight at birth, with only 11 countries on course to meet the low birth weight target. Some progress has been made towards achieving the exclusive breastfeeding target, with 32 countries on course and 44% of infants aged 0 to 5 months worldwide exclusively breastfed. Thirty countries are on course

to meet the stunting target and 49 countries are on course to meet the wasting target, yet 21.3% of children under 5 years of age are still affected by stunting and 6.9% by wasting. Worldwide, 53 countries are on course to prevent an increase in the prevalence of overweight among children under 5 years of age, which currently affects 5.6% of children.

Very few countries around the world are on course to meet the targets for diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). No country is on course to halt the rise of obesity, with 15.1% of adult (aged 18 years or over) women and 11.1% of adult men living with obesity globally. At the same time, diabetes is estimated to affect 7.9% of adult women and 9.0% of adult men, with very few countries on course to prevent these numbers from increasing.

Food Systems Summit

What is the Food Systems Summit?

In 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened the Food Systems Summit as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The Summit launched bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems.

The Summit awoken the world to the fact that we all must work together to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food. It is a summit for everyone everywhere – a people’s summit. It is also a solutions summit that will require everyone to take action to transform the world’s food systems.

Guided by five Action Tracks, the Summit brought together key players from the worlds of science, business, policy, healthcare and academia, as well as farmers, indigenous people, youth organizations, consumer groups, environmental activists, and other key stakeholders. Before, during and after the Summit, these actors will come together to bring about tangible, positive changes to the world’s food systems.

The Summit process aims to deliver the following outcomes:

- ⇒ Generate significant action and measurable progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Summit succeeded in identifying solutions and leaders, and issuing a call for action at all levels of the food system, including national and local governments, companies and citizens.
- ⇒ Raise awareness and elevate public discussion about how reforming our food systems can help us all to achieve the SDGs by implementing reforms that are good for people and planet.
- ⇒ Develop principles to guide governments and other stakeholders looking to leverage their food systems to support the SDGs. These principles will set an optimistic and encouraging vision in which food systems play a central role in building a fairer, more sustainable world. Principles of engagement
- ⇒ Create a system of follow-up and review to ensure that the Summit’s outcomes continue to drive new actions and progress. This system will allow for the sharing of experiences, lessons and knowledge; it will also measure and analyse the Summit’s impact.

The United Nations Secretary-General’s Food Systems Summit 2021 will



- ◆ Contribute to transforming the ways in which people’s food is produced and consumed;
- ◆ Help food systems become more sustainable and equitable; and
- ◆ Advance progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Objectives and tracks of the Food Systems Summit

The United Nations Food Systems Summit has five objectives:

1. Ensuring safe and nutritious food for all;
2. Shifting to sustainable consumption patterns;
3. Boosting nature-positive food production;
4. Advancing equitable livelihoods of people involved in food systems;
5. Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses.

These are the five Summit Action Tracks

Summit participants

Food producers, processors, distributors, and retailers; youth and women’s organizations; consumer groups; indigenous peoples; environmental specialists; health professionals; nutritionists; economists, other scientists and practitioners; from local authorities, governments, businesses, the community, academic institutions, and other stakeholder groups.

Food Systems include

All people and the entire range of actors, as well as interconnected activities, involved in enabling people to access the food they need.

Food Systems include the growing, harvesting, packing, processing, distributing, selling, storing, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food.

Food Systems Dialogues - Action Tracks

The Summit's Action Tracks offer stakeholders from a wide range of backgrounds a space to share and learn, with a view to fostering new actions and partnerships and amplifying existing initiatives. The Action Tracks are aligned with the Summit's five objectives. Importantly, the Action Tracks are not separate, nor do they sit in siloes. Each Action Track is designed to address possible trade-offs with other tracks, and to identify solutions that can deliver wide-reaching benefits.

The Action Tracks will draw on the expertise of actors from across the world's food systems. Together, they will explore how key cross-cutting levers of change such as human rights, finance, innovation, and the empowerment of women and young people can be mobilized to meet the Summit's objectives.

Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all (FAO)

Action Track 1 will work to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and reduce the incidence of non-communicable disease, enabling all people to be nourished and healthy. This goal requires that all people at all times have access to sufficient quantities of affordable and safe food products. Achieving the goal means increasing the availability of nutritious food, making food more affordable and reducing inequities in access to food.



Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns (WHO)

Action Track 2 will work to build consumer demand for sustainably produced food, 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; it also recognizes that we need to facilitate a transition in diets towards more nutritious foods that require fewer resources to produce and transport.



Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD))

Action Track 3 will work to optimize environmental resource use in 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 will aim to deepen understanding of the constraints and opportunities facing smallholder farmers and small-scale enterprises along the food value chain. It will also strive to support food system governance that realigns incentives to reduce food losses and other negative environmental impacts.



Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods (IFAD)

Action Track 4 will work 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 will improve resilience through social protection and seek to ensure that food systems "leave no one behind."



Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress (WFP)

Action Track 5 will work to ensure the continued functionality of sustainable food systems in areas that are prone to conflict or natural disasters. The Action Track will also promote global action to protect food supplies from the impacts of pandemics. 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. Action Track 5 also aims to help people everywhere participate in food systems that, despite shocks and stressors, deliver food security, nutrition and equitable livelihoods for all.



Components of Food Systems

Food Supply Chains

The food supply chain includes all the steps needed to produce and move foods from field to fork. These steps consist of agricultural production, storage and distribution, processing and packaging, and retail and marketing, among others. Farmers, processors, wholesalers, transporters, and retailers are some of the people involved in food supply chains. The steps in the food supply chain are all connected. Changes to one step affect other steps along the chain. Food supply chains are undergoing rapid transformations, especially in low and middle-income countries, often leading to more interaction between these urban and rural settings and actors.

Food Environments

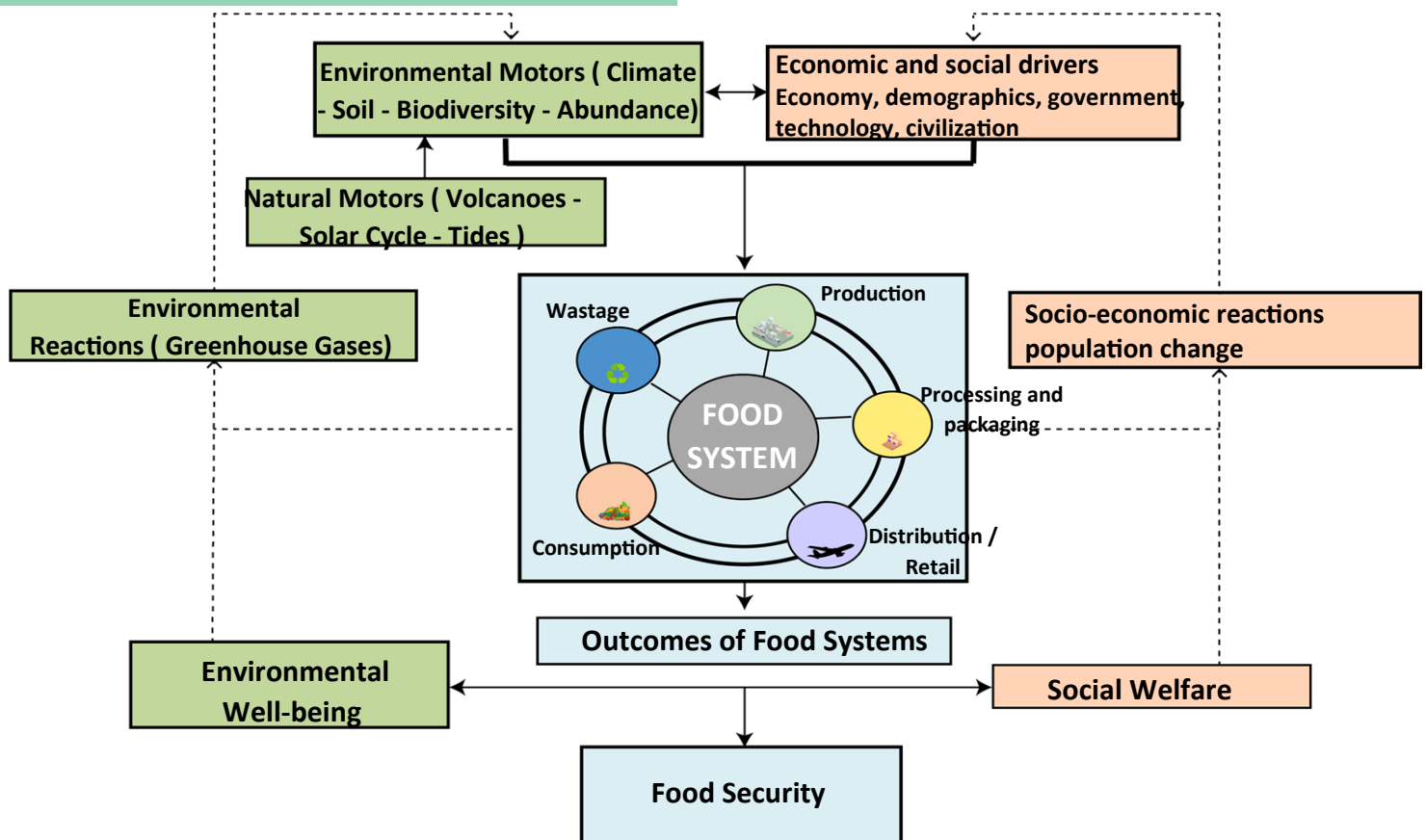
The food environment is where consumers interact with the food system for the purpose of acquiring and eating food. The food environment includes physical places, like stores or markets where people buy food. It also includes social, economic, and cultural factors. Food availability and affordability; safety, quality, and convenience; and advertising are all part of the food environment. These characteristics of the food environment affect diets by influencing the way people access foods.

Individual Factors

Individual factors include a person's economic status, thought process, dreams and aspirations, and overall life situation. These factors all affect what foods a person buys and eats. For example, a person's income might determine what foods are affordable. For some people, nutrition knowledge or environmental awareness affects what they purchase and eat. Work or home environments can affect how much time people have to shop for and prepare food. These individual factors influence how people interact with their food environment and, ultimately, what they choose to buy and eat.

Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior includes people's decisions about what kinds of foods they choose to eat, as well as how people prepare, store, eat, and share food with others in their households. The food environment and individual factors also affect consumer behavior. There is a large body of nuanced research on consumer behavior, but key indicators of consumer behavior, based on data sourced across countries and globally agreed upon, are lacking.



External Drivers of Food Systems

External drivers affect food systems and their diet, nutrition, and health outcomes.

Climate Change

- Climate change is a significant, long-term shift in global weather patterns and sea levels. The effects of unmitigated climate change will likely cause increased food insecurity.
- climate change can lead to declines in fish populations and crop yields
- climate change leads to more crop losses due to increased disease susceptibility and extreme weather events.
- Food prices may increase because of agricultural losses and declining crop yields.

Globalization and Trade

- Globalization makes people and countries more interconnected and interdependent.
- It shapes local economies and affects human health and nutrition in both positive and negative ways.
- Trade can allow people to access foods that may not be easily grown where they live or are less available during a particular season.
- It also makes foods less expensive through efficiency and competition
- The lowered cost of imported food and animal feed can increase access to animal source foods and lead to higher protein intake, which is important for areas with high rates of undernutrition.
- Globalization and trade can also have adverse effects on diets and nutrition. Unhealthy foods have become increasingly accessible and inexpensive around the world, partly due to trade policies and widespread advertising. People's diets have changed from more traditional ones high in minimally processed foods to those high in animal source foods and highly-processed foods with a lot of salt, unhealthy fats, and added sugars. People are also less physically active as a result of globalization.
- All of these changes have contributed to the increasing burdens of overweight/ obesity and non-communicable diseases.

Socio-cultural Context

- Social and cultural traditions shape diets by influencing what foods are desirable, when and how meals are prepared, and what traditions are practiced.
- In most cultures, food is a central part of holidays and traditions, In some cultures, food may reflect a person's social status in society or the household.
- Strong cultural ties to traditional foods and meal practices could work to prevent the shift to diets high in highly-processed foods and reliance on fast food
- In many cultures, certain foods are avoided for reasons such as life stage (adult vs. childhood foods) or gender.
- In particular, culture has a strong influence on what people eat while pregnant or lactating.

Income Growth and Distribution

Income growth can also lead to greater demand for animal source foods, which can stress food systems by putting more demands on land and water resources, and increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Rising incomes can also lead people to buy more unhealthy foods, such as sodas and highly-processed, packaged foods. People may not have equal access to healthy foods because of increased income inequality. In high-income countries, healthier foods – like fresh fruits and vegetables – are typically more expensive than highly-processed, packaged foods.

Urbanization

- In 2050, most of the world's population (68%) is expected to live in urban areas. The biggest increases in urban populations will take place in Africa and Asia.
- Urbanization shapes a country's food system – it creates longer food chains and limits agricultural land.
- urban areas are also typically centers of food technology innovation. This is because there is an increased need for processing, packaging, and refrigeration, and more food losses.
- Urbanization changes the food environment by increasing the number of supermarkets in an area.
- urbanization can lead to food deserts and swamps. In these areas, access to healthy, fresh food is limited, but unhealthy fast foods and highly-processed, packaged foods are plentiful.

Population Growth and Migration

- In 2050, the world's population is expected to increase by more than two billion people.
- Increases in population will put more stress on the current food system.
- Due to global trade and migration, population growth in one country can affect the food system in other regions as well.
- countries may not be prepared for the influx of migrants fleeing conflict or severe weather events. Food systems may not be able to supply everyone with a healthy diet.

Politics and Leadership

A region's policies on agriculture, nutrition, and trade affect food systems. Economic policies on agricultural subsidies and trade can influence the availability and affordability of certain foods, which in turn can affect dietary intake. Governments can implement dietary guidelines to shape policies and promote healthy diets. For example, tax policies can be used to discourage eating unhealthy foods like soda and highly-processed, packaged foods. Political will and investment are needed to make sure that there are sufficient resources to create a sustainable food system.

Outcomes of Food Systems

Diet Outcomes

Diets are influenced by all aspects of the food system, and they affect nutrition and health. The World Health Organization states that a healthy diet starts early in life and includes a diversity of foods — starchy staples, legumes, fruits, vegetables, and foods from animals, like meat and dairy. It balances the intake and expenditure of energy, and limits salt, fat, added sugar, highly-processed foods, and sugar sweetened beverages. Throughout the world, people still do not have access to adequate calories or a diversity of healthy, nutrient-rich foods. This lack of access results in hunger and micronutrient deficiencies. Rising incomes have increased the availability and accessibility of nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, and seafood. However, globalization and rising incomes have also contributed to people eating more unhealthy foods, like highly-processed foods and sugar sweetened beverages. Researchers, policy makers, and consumers are also increasingly focused on the environmental sustainability of diets. Diets and food systems have major impacts on the use and degradation of land and water resources, as well as on greenhouse gas emissions.



Economic Impacts

Globally, the food system is one of the main sectors of employment. Agriculture is a major contributor to the economies of low- and middle-income countries. Changes in food systems and shifts in dietary patterns can have large economic effects on farmers, retail owners, and consumers. For example, increases in imported food products may lead to more competition for smallholder farmers and reduce the production of domestic staples. However, support for export industries may contribute to an increase in the production of cash crops by local producers. Trade can also lead to more investment in the food industry and technology sector, which creates new jobs.

Nutrition and Health Outcomes

Healthy diets are essential for nutrition and health. Poor diets are one of the main risk factors for deaths globally. Unhealthy diets are a leading risk factor for disease and can lead to undernutrition, which is associated with poor cognitive development and increased susceptibility to infections. Diets that lack essential nutrients may lead to micronutrient deficiencies. Children, women, and other nutritionally-vulnerable populations are especially susceptible to poor health outcomes from these deficiencies. Diets that exceed recommended energy intake – especially diets that consist of unhealthy eating patterns – can lead to overweight, obesity, and non-communicable diseases, like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Diets high in sodium and low in whole grains, fruit, nuts, vegetables, and omega3-fatty acids contribute to an increased risk of death. Food safety, antimicrobial resistance, and pesticide usage also affect the health of consumers and people who work within the food system.

Social Impacts

Food systems play an important role in societal well-being – they help to make sure that all members of society are able to be as healthy as possible. To achieve this goal, food systems can help ensure that all members of society have equitable access to a healthy diet. They can also guarantee that food system workers have well-paying jobs and safe working conditions. Equitable food systems help promote community health, gender equality, labor rights, and animal rights.

Food Systems Summit Compendium

“As a human family, a world free from hunger is our imperative”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres

Healthier, more inclusive, sustainable and equitable food systems have the power to catalyse the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 in every country. Collectively recognizing this, people from all walks of life and generations, government representatives, youth, indigenous peoples and food producers at all scales and a wide range of international organizations, followed the Secretary-General António Guterres' call on World Food Day 2019 and came together to design and deliver the “People’s”, and “Solutions” Summit.

Unprecedented efforts took place worldwide, bringing together more than 500 experts from about 250 Organisations, representatives from farmers, youth and indigenous peoples and 70 countries regularly contributing to the Summit's Action Tracks' work, more than 28 internationally renowned experts, representing networks of thousands of scientists active in the Scientific Group, over forty organisations from the UN System, and more than one hundred thousand individuals engaged through dialogues, to design bold new actions and deliver progress on all 17 SDGs through tangible and positive changes to the world's food systems.

SUMMIT OUTCOMES

The UN Food Systems Summit launched bold new actions, solutions, and strategies to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable, and equitable food systems. The Summit will awaken the world to the fact that we all must work together to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about food. To achieve this, the entire process works towards the **following outcomes**:

- **Significant action and commitment to action**, with measurable outcomes and impact that enable achievement of the SDGs by 2030. This will include highlighting existing solutions and celebrating leaders in food systems transformation, as well as calling for new actions worldwide by different actors, including countries, cities, companies, civil society, citizens, and food producers.
- **Dramatically elevated public discourses at community, national, regional, and global levels** about the urgency to transform food systems, and that call and empower billions of citizens and youth among the broad public to take concrete actions and to support the necessary individual and institutional behavioural shifts.
- **Significant Member State and multi-stakeholder action that enable measurable progress on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** Leadership in food systems transformation will be celebrated, and new actions unlocked with the support of committed coalitions of partners and associated finance worldwide.
- **A system of follow-up and review actions to ensure that the Summit's outcomes sustain momentum until 2030.** It will celebrate progress, identify and address bottlenecks on the basis of best available data and evidence, and allow for the sharing of experiences and cross-fertilization.

Coalitions in the context of the Food Systems Summit

Each programme of national dialogues has led to the identification of strengths and vulnerabilities in the national food system, often calling for further collaboration on specific issues involving multiple stakeholders and cutting across a range of sectors, often involving more than one country, within a defined region or internationally.

Over the past months, hundreds of individuals, governments, organizations and institutions are joining forces to support the transformation of food systems in line with the ambitions of the summit.

They have participated in the Summit's Action Tracks, cross-cutting levers of change and Scientific group. They have coalesced around a number of issues that are high priority in national food systems transformation: they are proposing initiatives, alliances and coalitions to accelerate collective action. These emerging initiatives, alliances and coalitions

have been inspired by the options explored during national dialogues. They are being designed to help nations and regions to advance the Summit's vision of more inclusive, resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems by 2030. They will do this in ways that are aligned with each country's priorities and adapted to the local context.

Initiatives, alliances and coalitions are designed to offer tailored support to countries in response to their interests and priorities, on a strictly voluntary basis. Support from these initiatives, alliances and coalitions will help with the shift to future food systems by facilitating access to networks of experience and expertise, from local to global; by encouraging alignment and coherence; by catalyzing coordinated investment and collective action; by mobilizing resources, energy and political will; and by support for learning through the exchange of knowledge, lessons, best practices and capacities.

110 pathways for the transformation of national food systems have been uploaded to the Summit Dialogues website. Food systems transformation is being accelerated and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals in as many as 90 countries: each on its individual journey though with prospects for joint working eg in Mekong sub-region .

The UN is establishing a Food Systems Coordination Hub to ensure that different parts of the UN system offer joined up support for national Food Systems Transformation.

[the information page about the coalitions in the Food Systems Community](#)

References: The Food Summit Website: <https://summitdialogues.org/>