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JOINT MEETING

**Hundred and Thirty-third Session of the Programme Committee and
Hundred and Ninety-first Session of the Finance Committee**

Rome, 16 May 2022

Update on the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The UN Food Systems Summit (hereafter `the Summit`) was convened on 23 September 2021 as a virtual event during the UN General Assembly. In his Chair Summary and Statement of Action, the Secretary-General committed the UN system to jointly lead a “UN Food Systems Coordination Hub” (hereinafter referred to as “the Hub”) that collaborates with, and draws upon, wider UN system capacities to support follow-up to the Food Systems Summit.
- Following consultations between the Deputy Secretary-General and the Principals of FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Development Coordination Office (DCO), it has been agreed that the Hub will be hosted by FAO on behalf of the UN system and will be placed under management of the Office of Sustainable Development Goals (OSG), reporting within the Office of the Director-General. The Director of OSG has already assumed leadership of the Hub.
- Thus far, the following describe the main developments after the establishment of the Hub:
 - i. The preliminary organizational structure of the Hub has been finalized;
 - ii. Six UN Agencies, Funds or Programmes (AFPs) have committed to assign staff to the Hub;
 - iii. The existing UN Food Systems Summit Trust Fund hosted by WFP will close as of 31 March 2022. A new trust fund hosted by FAO will be established to support operations of the Hub;
 - iv. An assessment survey has been conducted to identify the needs for supporting Members, as appropriate, to continue the development and/or implementation of national pathways; and
 - v. The Hub’s Head has initiated informal contacts with many actors that have expressed interest to support and engage with the Hub.
- With the Food Systems Summit Secretariat ending on 31 March 2022, the Hub will accelerate its operations from the beginning of April. The Hub will focus its work, until the end of 2022, on the following main areas:
 - i. Finalize its programme of work (at strategic level) and budget;
 - ii. Convene coordination meetings with National Convenors and UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in order to advance the support to National Pathways;
 - iii. Prepare information reports to be shared at the upcoming High Level Political Forum in New York in July 2022;
 - iv. Establish a stakeholders engagement group;
 - v. Develop a peer-learning and cooperation platform between coalitions of support and coalitions and countries;
 - vi. Provide technical support as per request from countries; and
 - vii. In cooperation with WFP, liaise with donors in an effort to transfer projected surplus of the WFP-hosted Food Systems Summit Trust Fund, to the FAO-hosted trust fund to support operations of the Hub.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE JOINT MEETING

- The Joint Meeting is invited to provide guidance as deemed appropriate.

Draft Advice

The Joint Meeting:

- **welcomed the information provided on the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub; and**
- **underlined the need for strengthened mobilization of financial resources to support the initial operations of the Hub with a view to assist Members on further developing or implementing their National Pathways.**

I. Update on the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub

A. Outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 and the establishment of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub

1. The UN Food Systems Summit (hereinafter referred to as 'the Summit') was convened on 23 September 2021 as a virtual event during the UN General Assembly.
2. The Summit was an historic opportunity to empower all people to leverage agrifood systems transformations; to underpin robust and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate action towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
3. Overall, more than 50 000 people across 193 countries watched the Summit and 37 000 registered delegates participated in the event. Through their contribution, those participants steered the event towards becoming a "People's Summit".
4. In his Chair Summary and Statement of Action, the Secretary-General committed the UN system to jointly lead a "UN Food Systems Coordination Hub" (hereinafter referred to as "the Hub") that collaborates with, and draws upon, wider UN system capacities to support follow-up to the Food Systems Summit. The overall architecture of this follow-up has been presented to the 168th Session of the FAO Council in the document CL 168/6. This document presents developments on this follow-up between mid-November 2021 and early March 2022.
5. Following consultations between the Deputy Secretary-General and the Principals of FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Development Coordination Office (DCO), it has been agreed that the Hub will be hosted by FAO on behalf of the UN system and will be placed under management of the Office of Sustainable Development Goals (OSG), reporting within the Office of the Director-General. The Director of OSG has already assumed leadership of the Hub.
6. Oversight of the Hub will fall on a Steering Group comprised of the Principals of the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), DCO, and UNEP as the initial Chair of an evolved UN Task Force. The Chair of the UN Task Force will rotate among interested UN agencies with strong connections to the work of the Hub.
7. Thus far, the following describes the main developments after the establishment of the Hub:
 - a) The preliminary organizational structure of the Hub has been finalized after technical consultations between the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) that support the establishment of the Hub. The structure is presented in Figure 1 at the end of this document. The Hub structure will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose.
 - b) Six AFPs have committed to second/assign dedicated professional personnel to the Hub. These include FAO (two professionals), DCO, IFAD, UNEP, WFP, WHO (one professional each), and UNICEF (50 percent of a professional). The AFPs have indicated that this is a first round of secondments with additional ones to be considered in the future.
 - c) As per agreement of the Steering Group, the existing UN Food Systems Summit Trust Fund hosted by WFP will close as of 31 March 2022. A new trust fund hosted by FAO will be established to support operations of the Hub. It is projected that the WFP-hosted trust fund might close with a surplus and donors may wish to consider continuing supporting the follow-up by allowing its transfer to the new FAO-hosted trust fund.
 - d) An assessment survey has been conducted to identify the needs for supporting Members, as appropriate, to continue the development and/or implementation of national pathways and coalitions of action, *inter alia* through provision of technical assistance at country level, and science- and evidence-based support to policy making. The main findings of this survey are presented in the next section of this document.
 - e) The Hub's leadership continues to engage with the AFPs that support the Hub to finalize its programme of work and budget within the spirit of One UN.

- f) The Hub's Head and the Deputy Head Designate have started informal contacts with the Food Systems National Convenors, the UN Resident Coordinators, and the UN Country Teams to set up a platform for support at the country level, ensuring that no new mechanisms or structures will be created.
- g) The Hub's Head has initiated informal contacts with many actors that have expressed interest to support and engage with the Hub, including with the emerging coalitions, stakeholders, action track leaders, science, and other international organizations.

B. Country needs assessment to implement National Food Systems Pathways

8. The Food Systems Summit provided a platform for 'National Dialogues' which were organised by government-nominated National Convenors. During the Summit, countries demonstrated a collective sense of urgency and the need for national agrifood systems transformations to ensure a sustainable future for all. This impetus was crystalized towards the submission of 'National Pathways' for sustainable and equitable agrifood systems by 2030. Among the 148 countries conducting National Dialogues, 103 submitted their National Pathways for agrifood systems transformation at the Summit.

9. To follow through countries' Summit commitments and to support them in implementing their National Pathways, the Hub conducted a 'Country Needs Survey' through UN Resident Coordinators and National Convenors in January-February 2022.

10. Overall, 84 countries responded to the survey, representing more than 80 percent of the countries that have submitted a pathway and thus indicating the big need for support from the Hub.

11. The first results of the survey show that 52 percent of the respondent countries have already endorsed their National Pathways, whereas 25 percent of the countries' National Pathways are under political consideration and likely to be endorsed soon. At the same time, the development of national agrifood systems transformation pathways remains a non-linear process, with most countries (57 percent) approaching their pathway as a "living document", fed by consecutive virtuous circles of sectoral, multisectoral and supra-sectoral visioning and policy reform, implementation and stock-take towards achieving the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals.

12. While the Hub is following up with more in-depth consultation with the countries, the following preliminary messages emerged from the survey:

- a) Countries appear to be planning a phased approach towards 2030 with biennial stock-takes as milestones, prioritizing advocacy-driven systemic policy and institutional strengthening as the first step towards the 2023 stock-take, with other areas such as finance, connections and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools expected to play more of an important role downstream for which early Hub support is requested;
- b) Countries differentiated between areas important to achieve their objectives towards the 2023-stock-take overall, and areas where they would seek specific Hub support;
- c) Support to leverage finance is the highest one sought from the Hub (74 percent), but it is something countries do not highly prioritize as their focus for the 2023 stock-take moment;
- d) There is also a big expectation for the Hub to leverage the connections, existing tools, knowledge and networks to play a key role in national implementation (71 percent), but not directly provide means of implementation. The request for the Hub to facilitate M&E through guidelines, processes and tools is also very high (68 percent);
- e) Areas such as advocacy, and policy development are placed high as countries focus to reach the stock-take in 2023, but relatively medium as priority for support from the Hub (both of them prioritized by 57 percent of the responders);
- f) Notwithstanding a few exceptions, countries seem confident that issues around national multi-sectoral/-stakeholder platforms can progress autonomously in national contexts and less than half of them (48 percent) prioritize this as an area for Hub support; and

- g) Overall, this differentiation likely reflects the sense and knowledge, from national convenors, that support on a number of areas is -often- available and even sufficient/best delivered at country level (UN Country Teams or other stakeholder networks), and will be sought there as a first priority. On the other hand, leveraging finance, establishing connections to coalitions, stakeholders and initiatives for implementation, access to knowledge and peer-learning, and support for monitoring and evaluation, may be perceived as gaps in countries, which the Hub would add value to help bridge.
13. With regard to leveraging finance, support needed ranges from providing human and financial support to build local capacities and finalize a national vision (national consultants to support pathway coordinator, dialogue process, draft implementation plan), to technical capacity to cost plans and actions, map funding, embed in sectoral and subnational budget programming, and track spending.
14. A number of countries call for a specific global funding mechanism to cover the following: accelerating national pathway interventions; priming the national private sector competitiveness pump; bridging temporary funding gaps of projects; or providing start-up funding. Some donor countries are interested to align financial support behind national implementation of pathways in other countries that meet the needs of the furthest behind.
15. With regard to connections and knowledge, countries call for a decisive role for the Hub in fast-tracking support needs, matching implementation needs to solutions, and promoting coordination between implementing partners aligned behind national agrifood systems agendas. For this, coalitions particularly stand out, to support the implementation of specific pathway actions, facilitate access to knowledge and tools, or to unlock through global advocacy transboundary or normative obstacles to more sustainable agrifood systems. Most countries are in the process of identifying coalitions of national interest and defining their own involvement, requesting more information.
16. With regard to monitoring progress and evaluation, several countries need technical support to create baselines and/or nationally relevant monitoring frameworks which would reflect an integrated approach to track social, economic and environmental interconnections and implications. Guidance from the Hub is sought by many to clarify the reporting framework and indicators, requirements and frequency, and identify milestones to keep momentum.
17. Nation-wide ownership on agrifood systems approaches and associated concepts are likely to remain a challenge for decision-makers. Therefore, countries seek continued advocacy support as well as easy access to up-to-date scientific material, data, evidence and analytical tools to elevate national and sub-national systems approaches, collaborations and governance.
18. Many countries also call for continued UN leadership and coordination in stimulating coalitions, encouraging linkages, improving coherence among coalitions and providing a common platform for coordination and information sharing among non-governmental organizations.
19. In addition, increased collaboration with private sector stakeholders is sought regarding infrastructure, innovation and technology for rapid sustainability gains in implementing national pathways.

C. Next steps

20. With the Food Systems Summit Secretariat ending on 31 March 2022, the Hub will accelerate its operations from the beginning of April. The Hub will focus its work, until the end of 2022, on the following main areas:
- a) Finalize its programme of work (at strategic level) and budget;
 - b) Convene coordination meetings with National Convenors and UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in order to advance the support to National Pathways;
 - c) Provide technical support as per request from countries and subject to availability of resources.
 - d) Prepare information reports to be shared at the upcoming High Level Political Forum in New York in July 2022;

- e) Establish a stakeholders' engagement and networking group;
- f) Develop a peer-learning and cooperation platform between coalitions of support and countries; and
- g) In cooperation with WFP, liaise with donors in an effort to transfer projected surplus of the WFP-hosted Food Systems Summit Trust Fund, to the FAO-hosted trust fund to support operations of the Hub.

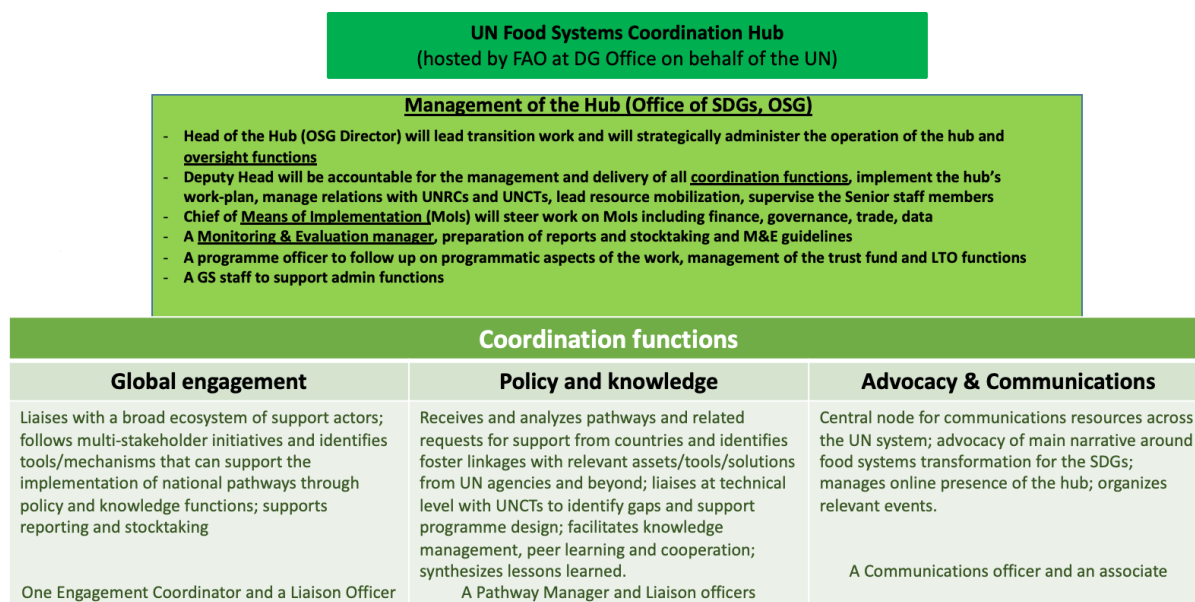


Figure 1: Preliminary organizational structure of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub