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# PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

**Hundred and Thirtieth Session**

**22-26 March 2021**

**Progress Report on the UN Food Systems Summit and FAO's work in  
Food Systems**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The document provides an update on the status of preparations towards the UN Food Systems Summit, of FAO's role in supporting the Summit, and of developments of relevance to FAO's broader support to Members in the development of their food systems.
- The Third meeting of the Advisory Committee held in December 2020 appreciated the significant progress made under each component of the process towards the Summit and made a number of suggestions to strengthen engagement and to avoid prescriptive solutions and recommendations. The Advisory Committee also considered a proposed approach to the pre-Summit event to be held in Rome in the Summer of 2021, hosted by the Government of Italy.
- The Scientific Group, which now meets monthly, is preparing a series of research papers with partner organizations in order to bring the breadth of existing science on a range of food systems issues to underpin the work towards the Summit.
- Action Track leadership teams have focused on collating, refining and initiating the process of operationalizing a set of game changing solutions that are impactful at scale, actionable and sustainable, to advance the transformation of food systems.
- National Convenors have been nominated by many UN Members and Food Systems Summit Dialogues designed to support countries in the preparation of national roadmaps to action game changing solutions appropriate to their contexts and aspirations.
- FAO continues to provide its full support to the Special Envoy in the preparatory process towards the Food Systems Summit. As UN Anchor Organization for Action Track 1, FAO is coordinating the engagement of UN Agencies and will assist in the positioning of the UN system as a key partner in the implementation of the Summit Outcomes. FAO is increasingly requested to support the national level Food Systems Summit Dialogues.
- The development of FAO's new Strategic Framework fully encapsulates a food systems approach to provide a solid basis for the Organization to provide its support to Members as they implement the actions and solutions developed in the context of the Summit.

### GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

The Programme Committee is invited to provide guidance on:

- the status of preparations towards the Food Systems Summit, inter alia, the work of the governance structures and the two main components of the process towards the Summit: the Action Tracks and the Food Systems Summit Dialogues;
- the support being provided by the Organization to the Special Envoy in the preparatory process towards the Food Systems Summit;
- the mechanisms that will need to be implemented by FAO and its partners to ensure that the outcomes of the Summit are fully realized; and
- the importance of maintaining the centrality of a food systems approach as a basis for the new FAO Strategic Framework and the need to structure this Framework in a way that ensures substantive support to post-Summit implementation.

**Draft Advice****The Committee:**

- **acknowledged the significant progress that is being made by the teams supporting the preparatory process towards the Food Systems Summit, recognizing the substantive technical and logistical support that FAO is providing to this process, and requested FAO to continue to work towards the successful conclusion of this process;**
- **noted the importance of establishing substantive implementation and accountability mechanisms to ensure follow-up on the outcomes of the Summit; and**
- **in that respect, requested FAO to reflect the centrality of food systems transformation in its new Strategic Framework as a way to facilitate substantive support to Members in their post-Summit implementation efforts.**

## I. Introduction

1. This document provides an update to documents [PC 128/7](#) and [PC 129/INF/2](#) presented to the 128<sup>th</sup> and 129<sup>th</sup> Sessions of Programme Committee in June and November 2020, respectively. Those documents elaborated the objectives of the UN Food Systems Summit, the governance structures that had been established to support the development and implementation of the process towards the Summit and the key components of this process, the five Action Tracks, the Scientific Group and the Food Systems Summit Dialogues.
2. This document provides a brief update on each component of the Summit governance structures, as well as details of progress made in the establishment of, and work conducted within, the five Action Tracks, before briefly summarizing progress on the Food Systems Summit Dialogues<sup>1</sup>. The document concludes with an update on FAO's support to the Summit process.

## II. Update on Summit Governance Structures

3. The third meeting of the Advisory Committee was held on 11 December 2020. Committee Members, which now include the Chair of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the Chair of the Summit Champions Network, were first provided with updates on progress by the respective Chairs on each of the major areas of work including, *inter alia*, the Scientific Group, Action Tracks and Food Systems Summit dialogues, and by the Advisory Committee representatives of indigenous peoples, producer organizations and the private sector. Subsequent discussions highlighted the Committee Members' appreciation of the significant progress made under each component of the process towards the Summit; the need to strengthen engagement with Permanent Missions in New York and the connections between New York and Rome; the importance of ensuring that national level dialogues are well grounded in local realities and of avoiding prescriptive solutions and recommendations. In addition, the need to clarify the criteria by which game changing solutions are being identified and prioritized by the Action Track teams was stressed.
4. A suggested approach to the pre-Summit and Summit events and to the expected outcomes was also presented to the Advisory Committee. The Government of Italy confirmed that it will host, and support financially, the pre-Summit event which will be convened at Ministerial level, and that Italy would coordinate with the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) in the preparation of the pre-Summit event. In relation to the Summit event, which will be convened at Head of State level, it was noted that priority would be given to speakers taking forward concrete and actionable commitments. The Deputy Secretary-General further indicated that the post-Summit accountability mechanisms will need to be based on existing institutions and structures.
5. In December 2020, the Scientific Group completed revised drafts of scientific papers that have been prepared to underpin each Action Track. These papers have been made publically available. In addition, a series of papers to be developed with key partner organizations have been identified as a way of drawing on the research of the extensive networks of scientists with which the Scientific Group is connected.
6. In December 2020, the Executive Director of the Global Alliance for the Future of Food was appointed Chair of the Champions Network, working with a group of nine Vice-Chairs. The Network will ensure that the voices of individuals and communities that are often not heard are brought forward. The Champions will also work to advance game changing solutions identified through the Action Tracks and to support Food Systems Summit Dialogues at all levels.
7. To help ensure integration across the different components of the governance structure and with the Action Tracks and Food Systems Summit Dialogues, the respective Chairs and Custodians of the four levers of change meet with the Special Envoy and her Secretariat team on a monthly basis.

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<sup>1</sup> The updates are provided as of 15 January 2021. Further updates will be provided during the 130<sup>th</sup> Session of the Programme Committee. Members are also encouraged to consult the Summit website on which all publically available material is posted: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>.

8. An open online platform has been developed to facilitate the dissemination of materials prepared in the process towards the Summit and to provide a forum for the global community to engage with this process. The online platform is accessible at: <https://foodsystems.community>.

### III. Progress on the Action Tracks and Food Systems Summit Dialogues

9. In the latter part of 2020, the composition of the five Action Track Teams was finalized. Each Action Track has a core team comprising the Chairs and Vice-Chairs, leads of Action Tracks' working groups and the UN Anchor Organization. These teams meet on a bi-weekly basis. A leadership team comprising members of the core team, in addition to representatives from the Scientific Group, private sector networks, and civil society and representatives of the levers of change meet on a monthly basis.

10. Recognizing that Members will engage at different levels of intensity, each Action Track has established a group of closely engaged Members connected to the leadership team. This includes all Members that have expressed their interest in a specific Action Track, allowing for an equitable level of interaction between those Members and the leadership team. It implies full membership of the Action Track and provides the possibility for Members to input to the Action Track leadership meetings which are held in full transparency. Some Members are also engaging more intensively within one or more of the three working groups that have been established by each Action Track.

11. The Action Tracks are tasked with identifying game changing solutions with the goal of supporting a multi-stakeholder alignment on actions for transforming food systems. A game changing solution has been defined by the Action Track Chairs as a feasible action, existing or new, based on evidence, best practice, or a thorough conceptual framework that would shift operational models or underlying rules, incentives, and structures that shape food systems, acting on multiple parts of, or across, the food system, to advance global goals which can be sustained over time.

12. During a first phase, Action Track teams have been adopting an inclusive approach to identifying potential game changing solutions. This has been promoted through a series of open *fora*, an online form through which to submit ideas, engagement with key public and private organizations and with the Scientific Group. Action Track teams will then define a more limited set of potential solutions according to criteria: impact at scale, actionability and sustainability. The Action Track teams will then work together and with food systems' stakeholders to operationalize these solutions.

13. To ensure that the key cross-cutting issues of gender empowerment, human rights, innovation, and finance are properly accounted for in the development and operationalization of the game changing solutions, four Levers of Change have been established. Although different in nature, each Lever of Change is coordinated by a custodian appointed by the Special Envoy. The Custodian works with representatives of the Action Track teams who are experts in these areas. In addition, they work to leverage existing mechanisms and approaches in support of the Action Tracks.

14. Food Systems Summit Dialogues are taking place at three levels, as documented in PC 129/7. By the end of 2020, many countries had initiated the process of identifying a National Convener with a view to starting the series of three dialogues early in 2021. In supporting the process, a significant number of training sessions and briefings have been provided for Members and UN agencies engaging almost 2000 participants by mid-January. A toolkit for conveners has been developed and is available on the Food Systems Summit Dialogues website ([www.summitdialogues.org](http://www.summitdialogues.org)).

15. The national level dialogues have been designed to draw upon the work of the Action Tracks in framing the dialogues and in contextualizing and prioritizing the solutions being generated through the Action Tracks as components of national roadmaps for food systems transformation.

16. Organized on behalf of the Summit Secretariat, a set of global dialogues are being convened at high-level international events to explore the interconnections of food systems with global action on issues such as good nutrition, climate action, biodiversity, the ocean, and finance against desertification. The first of these dialogues was successfully convened during the One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme's 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Conference in November 2020.

#### **IV. FAO's support to the Summit process**

17. FAO continues to provide its full support to the Special Envoy in the preparatory process towards the Food Systems Summit. The Organization is fully represented in the governance structures outlined above with the Director-General being a member of the Advisory Committee, the Chief Economist a member of the Scientific Group, and the Director, Food Systems and Food Safety Division, representing the Organization at the UN Taskforce and the Food Systems Summit Secretariat.

18. As the UN Anchor Organization for Action Track 1 on “Ensuring access to safe and nutritious food”, FAO is coordinating engagement with other UN Agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the UN World Food Programme (WFP), as well as with the World Trade Organization (WTO), to ensure that the Action Track working groups are informed of, and build from, existing knowledge and experience and to assist in positioning the UN System as a key partner in the implementation of the Summit outcomes. FAO is actively engaged in the Action Track 1 working groups and is supporting the assessment of potential game changing solutions through the FAO led modeling approach.

19. FAO has also appointed focal points for each of the remaining Action Tracks at Director level, to ensure that the expertise and contributions of the Organization can be appropriately drawn upon. Further, FAO has appointed focal points for each of the cross cutting levers of change.

20. As the national level dialogues are initiated, FAO's technical support is increasingly being requested by Members, notably in the provision of data, evidence and assessments of food systems to inform the dialogues.

#### **V. FAO's Broader Work in Support of Agro-Food Systems Transformation**

21. FAO continues to play a lead role in the definition of approaches to food systems transformation and in advocating for greater attention to the way in which interventions in food systems are designed and implemented. Extra budgetary projects supportive of food systems transformation, particularly those funded through the Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism, are allowing the Organization to support Members in the identification of pathways towards more sustainable food systems and in implementing the policy and institutional changes required to foster their operationalization.

22. The development of FAO's new Strategic Framework fully encapsulates a food systems approach to ensure that the global community is “Leaving no-one behind through sustainable, inclusive and resilient agro-food systems”. Proposed priority programmes align well with the areas of work identified in the process towards the Food Systems Summit, ensuring that the Strategic Framework will provide a solid basis for the Organization to provide its support to Members as they implement the actions and solutions developed in the context of the Summit.