



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

OUTCOMES OF

# THE UNITED NATIONS FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

**A STOCKTAKE**





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# **THE UNITED NATIONS FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT**

IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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# ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

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<b>ECA</b>	Europe and Central Asia
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>IBC-SFS</b>	United Nations Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>MSDs</b>	Member State Dialogues
<b>NPs</b>	National Pathways
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<b>UNFSS</b>	United Nations Food Systems Summit
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WMO</b>	World Meteorological Organization

# FOREWORD

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The discussion at and results of the Thirty-third Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe in May 2022 were influenced by the impacts of multiple crises and unprecedented challenges in the European and Central Asia (ECA) region. Members reaffirmed the importance of adopting sustainable food systems to deliver healthy diets and improve food security and nutrition while maximizing contributions to the three dimensions (environmental, economic and social) of sustainable development.

This commitment and vision build on the assumption that food systems transformation is one of the key levers for realizing the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). If the SDGs are to be met, “business as usual” models cannot persist. With aspirations for better nutrition, better production, better environment and a better life, the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031 facilitates the transformation of food systems. This global vision is deeply embedded in the regional programme of work of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

The first-ever United Nations Food Systems Pre-Summit and Summit (UNFSS) in July and September 2021 and the preceding national and regional dialogues agreed on innovative solutions, strategies and tangible actions to shape agrifood systems to provide healthy, affordable food for all while addressing climate change concerns and enabling all agrifood systems actors – with special attention to women, youth and the most vulnerable and marginalized – and value chain operators to be custodians of nature with decent incomes and livelihoods. The UNFSS agreed to take regular stock of the progress.

FAO, together with regional partners and all relevant stakeholders, is continuing its work with Member States to capitalize on the results of the UNFSS, providing technical expertise, enabling holistic and systematic thinking, and leveraging instruments and processes to support national transformative plans.

While governments must take this important transformational step, a multilateral architecture must be in place to support it. In the ECA region, the United Nations Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems (IBC-SFS) in Europe and Central Asia facilitates coordinated multidisciplinary and multistakeholder support to United Nations Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams – developing paradigm shifts and avoiding siloed interventions – in holistically analysing essential sustainable agrifood systems. The IBC-SFS works closely with the UNFSS Coordination Hub hosted by FAO headquarters in Rome.

Ahead of the 2023 Stocktaking Moment, the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia – in collaboration with The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House – has prepared *Outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems Summit in Europe and Central Asia: A stocktake*.

The report contributes to the body of evidence and forges new insights for agrifood system transformation in the region. It investigates the depth and breadth of work in the ECA region in the leadup to and during the UNFSS, and it summarizes the key findings and results. The analysis helps explain priorities, systemic realities and constraints and outlines subnational dynamics and nuances in the policy priorities for European Union Member States and other ECA countries.

The report provides recommendations for additional action based on two core principles: first, a recognition of the multidimensionality of the food system and of the importance of adopting a truly holistic approach to food-related policy; and second, a prioritization of collaboration, cooperation and learning in order to accelerate progress at national, regional and global levels on this shared agenda.

We must not be limited by what seems possible today.

Food systems transformation requires new and better solutions at all scales, and 2023 will be a crucial year for food systems.

The United Nations Food Systems Stocktaking Moment in July 2023 and the regional preparatory meetings will provide opportunities to intensify the momentum for transformation and create space for countries to review commitments to action, share examples of success and early signs of transformation, and maintain the momentum for action to further the adaptation of food systems to climate change, ensuring that they help communities build resilience to further shocks and crises. The Stocktaking Moment will pave the way towards the 2023 SDG Summit in September.

The global reality we face today is more complicated and challenging than any period most of us can remember. Yet, we also have a historic opportunity to come together and transform our food systems in a way that will improve the lives of people today and tomorrow.

We hope this report will provide a useful reference on agrifood systems transformation in the ECA region and allow countries to build on the important work completed in recent years to inform food systems transformation. It should serve to support efforts by governments and other stakeholders in taking appropriate action to the benefit of our societies.



**Vladimir Rakhmanin**

Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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This publication was prepared under the direction of Raimund Jehle, Regional Programme Leader, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, and Mary Kenny, Food Safety and Consumer Protection Officer and Regional Initiative Coordinator on transforming food systems and facilitating market access and integration.

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1

# INTRODUCTION



## 1. Introduction

Food systems encompass “all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes” (HLPE, 2017). These systems are under increasing pressure from a growing and increasingly urban population, rising incomes and changing demand, the overexploitation of natural resources, environmental pollution, increasing climate variability and more frequent climate extremes, social and economic imbalances, instability and conflict, among other factors and forces. They also contribute to the most serious challenges facing us globally – climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, the triple burden of malnutrition, a growing diet-related disease burden, and social inequity.<sup>1</sup>

While food systems around the world are highly diverse, these challenges are common across all settings. In this paper, we focus on Europe and Central Asia (ECA), a vast and highly diverse region in which countries face many shared issues. The ECA region encompasses 53 countries, both high-income and middle-income, across a number of subregions.<sup>2</sup> Within the bounds of the ECA region are many agroclimatic zones, including the Mediterranean plains, the temperate lowlands and uplands of Western and Central Europe, the mountains and temperate plains of the Caucasus and the desert and mountains of Central Asia.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Benton *et al.* (2021), IPCC (2019, 2022) and Willett *et al.* (2019).

<sup>2</sup> The European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Free Trade Association countries, the Western Balkans and Türkiye, the Caucasus and Ukraine, and Central Asia.

Food systems across the region vary markedly in many aspects – including development status, natural resource availability and structural characteristics – but are subject to many of the same pressures, including: rural-to-urban migration and a rural–urban social divide, both of which threaten the livelihoods of the small-scale actors who dominate production (FAO, 2020); increasing resource stress resulting from overexploitation, unsustainable farming practices and the changing climate;<sup>3</sup> a growing and increasingly complex malnutrition burden contributing to declining public health, evinced by rapidly rising overweight and obesity rates and the presence of stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies (FAO *et al.*, 2021); and insecurity and conflict, which directly and indirectly impact critical food supply chains and which, as is being seen in the wake of the war in Ukraine, can lead to reverberations in food markets around the world.

### 1.1. The United Nations Food Systems Summit

In September 2021, in response to the urgency of global challenges surrounding food systems, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres convened the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in New York. The Summit – the first of its kind – was convened to “raise global awareness and land global commitments and actions that transform food systems to resolve not only hunger, but to reduce diet-related disease and heal the planet” (United Nations, 2021a).

Recognizing the centrality of food systems to our lives and their relevance to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a wide gamut of policy spheres – including agriculture, health, environment, transport, finance and social inclusion – the Summit placed multistakeholder inclusivity front and

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Zou *et al.* (2019) and Županić, Radić and Podbregar (2021).

centre among its objectives. In the 18 months leading up to the Summit, representatives of United Nations Member States, industry, civil society, youth groups, Indigenous Peoples and United Nations agencies participated in a series of Food Systems Summit Dialogues, with space for the open discussion of aspirations for food systems transformation, challenges to be overcome, and collaborations to be nurtured. In total, 1664 such dialogues took place, 77 of which were Member State Dialogues (MSDs) throughout the ECA region.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2. The purpose of this stocktake

In this paper, we aim to synthesize and analyse the focus, results and main issues emanating from the UNFSS in the Europe and Central Asia region. In particular, the focus is on the 17 FAO programme countries in the region: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan,<sup>5</sup> hereinafter referred to as the ECA-17. We offer a stocktake of the outcomes from a subset of these dialogues – those convened by national governments, referred to under the UNFSS process as MSDs – and of the pathways for food systems transformation submitted by 11 of the 17 governments.<sup>6</sup> These pathways, known as National Pathways (NPs), were informed by the MSDs and are intended as a blueprint to guide action beyond the UNFSS.

<sup>4</sup> This is the number held as of 1 April 2022. See United Nations (2021i).

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the analysis was completed on documents produced before the war in Ukraine began, and resulting impacts on the commitments made in the NP and MSD by Ukraine have not been reviewed.

<sup>6</sup> Our analysis covers National Pathways submitted by 13 January 2022. See Annex I for details on those governments that submitted a National Pathway.

This paper is intended to provide a succinct overview of country priorities and issues common among the ECA-17 countries and to inform national governments and food system stakeholders as they look to build on outcomes from the UNFSS and advance food systems transformation at the national level. This paper does not offer a broader overview of the state of food system-related policy in the region, nor does it draw on material beyond that submitted as part of the formal UNFSS process.

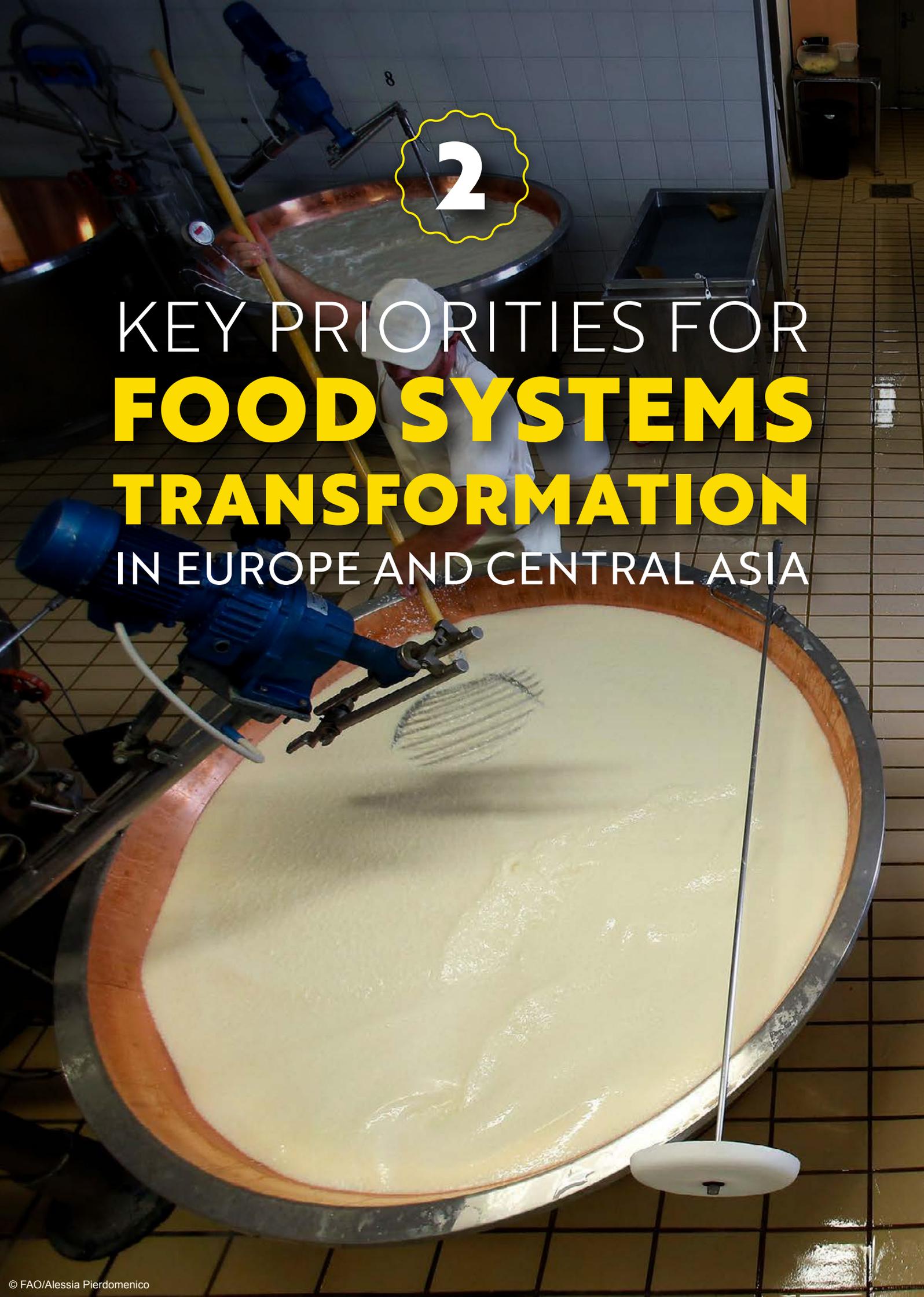
## 1.3. Structure of the paper

In Section 2, we outline the key policy priorities outlined in the MSDs and NPs submitted by 11 of the 17 FAO programme countries in the region, focusing on regional trends and commonalities.

In Section 3, we discuss a number of sub-regional nuances that emerge from the NPs, together with subnational dynamics noted in the MSD reports for certain countries. We also briefly outline the policy priorities indicated in European Union Member State National Pathways and the common priority document of the European Union as a bloc (European Commission, 2021) and explore the extent to which these align with those of the ECA-17.

In Section 4, we discuss the importance of coordination and cooperation in support of food systems transformation, considering the benefits to be realized through cross-government policy coordination at the national level, inter-country exchanges of best practices and lessons learned, and cooperation with subnational actors to deliver national plans through locally tailored solutions.

Finally, in Section 5, we summarize the region's plans for taking forwards the outcomes of the UNFSS process and identify opportunities for advancing progress towards food systems transformation.

A worker in a white uniform and cap is stirring a large vat of yellow liquid in a factory setting. The vat is equipped with a blue motor and a long wooden handle. The floor is tiled, and there are other industrial equipment visible in the background.

2

# KEY PRIORITIES FOR **FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION** IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

## 2. Key priorities for food systems transformation in Europe and Central Asia

Of the 17 FAO programme countries in the ECA region, 11 submitted a National Pathway and held Member State Dialogues (NPs and MSDs) as part of the UNFSS process. The analysis is based on the data from 11 countries representing the main subgeographical areas of the region (Figure 1). While national differences certainly exist, the priorities they identify for food systems transformation broadly reflect wider interests and concerns across the region. Please note that a detailed review of the NPs and MSDs in the European Union countries was not included in the analysis.

Figure 1	COUNTRIES INCLUDED IN OUR ANALYSIS
	<b>WESTERN BALKANS AND TÜRKIYE</b> Albania, Serbia, Türkiye
	<b>CAUCASUS AND UKRAINE</b> Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine
	<b>CENTRAL ASIA</b> Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

While representing diverse agroclimatic, political and socioeconomic conditions, these countries show a large degree of commonality in their visions for food systems transformation. Both official plans for national food system change, as laid out in the NPs, and the more informal discussions during the MSDs are shaped by six overarching priorities, common across the ECA-17 (Figure 2). These priorities are closely aligned to the Action Tracks underpinning the UNFSS framework but reflect in their articulation the challenges, opportunities and visions particular to countries in the region. Below, the six priority areas for action are presented in more detail, along

with the main interventions and approaches discussed by stakeholders in the context of each.

Figure 2	KEY PRIORITIES FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE ECA-17
	Managing resources sustainably and responsibly
	Empowering and enabling small-scale producers
	Empowering women and attracting young talent
	Improving food safety and quality
	Delivering nutrition security
	Mitigating and adapting to climate change

### 2.1. Managing resources sustainably and responsibly

One of the top priorities among the countries in the region is more rational, sustainable and coordinated use of finite natural resources, namely water and land. The poor management of limited water resources for agriculture has emerged from the NPs and MSDs as a primary area for policy action. In addition to the threat posed by climate change to water availability, wasteful and inefficient water use is a common problem across the region. Much of the region's agricultural land remains dependent on rainwater, and the NPs and MSDs describe irrigation systems that are rudimentary, poorly maintained or simply not available.

Central to the proposed actions from these countries is **the modernization of irrigation systems** through the conversion of open

channel systems to closed systems, the adoption of new technologies to support drip irrigation, and the rehabilitation of existing systems. However, cutting across discussions of the need for improved water resource management is an equally strong emphasis on the **importance of strong water governance and cooperation**. Highlighted as potential contributors to more rational and sustainable water resource management at local and national levels are improved coordination among agencies with a stake in water management (including water use associations), greater awareness-raising efforts to upskill producers on sustainable water use, and more accurate statistics on water usage. Cooperation beyond national borders also is an important objective; regional diplomacy is noted as central to ensuring a sustainable water supply in Azerbaijan and Türkiye – two countries fed by the Kura-Araks River Basin that also spans Armenia, Georgia and Iran – and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which depend on the Aral Sea Basin, along with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (UNECE, 2017). For countries fed by both basins, the destructive effects of historic mismanagement on the quality and availability of water are well recognized, and cross-border cooperation is seen as essential to effective management going forwards.

**Governance and cooperation** also are central threads running through discussions around land use in the region's NPs and MSDs. There are myriad challenges shared across the analysed countries in terms of the exploitation and management of agricultural land, from degradation and soil erosion, through poorly managed land use planning to a lack of understanding around how best to manage pasture, forests and soil in a way that benefits both productivity and nature. While the policy levers and interventions identified in the NPs and MSDs differ slightly from country to country, what emerges from the regional picture is a move towards the reform of both farm structures and land use planning.

The small and medium-sized farms that dominate agricultural production across the region are recognized consistently as being of central importance to national food systems; significant space is given in the NPs and MSDs to discussions regarding how producers on these farms can be better supported and empowered. The formal registration of land ownership and the clarification of land use rights are seen as important to this, particularly for women farmers whose ownership of farms is often not recognized by law. The **aggregation or unification of small farms** into larger units – either cooperatives or farmers' associations – is nevertheless regarded as a key step in moving towards more efficient and productive land use. Greater plot sizes and fiscal incentives to encourage integration into cooperatives are among the strategies proposed to achieve this aggregation and move away from a fragmented land use system towards one that is well planned and well managed.

Across much of the region there is a call for more **coordinated and strategic land use planning**, led by the state. The NPs and MSDs identify a range of tools and mechanisms that aim to enable more centralized oversight, including the review and strengthening of legal frameworks governing land allocation and use; a unified database of the country's land resources; the creation of a national land bank and digital land trading platforms; the zoning of production according to subnational agro-climatic conditions; the elaboration and dissemination of sustainable production guidance; and new state policies on sustainable production and sustainable food systems more broadly.

Alongside land use reform, **more responsible use of chemical inputs** – specifically pesticides and fertilizers – is a dominant and common theme in the NPs and MSDs in the region, where usage rates are high. Proposed solutions centre heavily on a **transition from**

**input-intensive production to organic production:** certification schemes, organic branding, fiscal incentives for organic production, and even new laws to stimulate organic farming are among the levers put forward in the NPs and MSDs to stimulate this shift.

## 2.2. Empowering and enabling small-scale producers

Small and medium-sized enterprises and family farms dominate agricultural production in the ECA-17 but do not enjoy equal access to food markets. A strong rural-urban divide is described throughout the region, with rural communities facing many obstacles to market access and poverty reduction. Basic transport, processing and storage infrastructure are lacking, access to finance and insurance is limited, extension services and training are inadequate, and talented youth are migrating to urban centres because of poor employment prospects in the rural economy.

While consolidation among these small producers is, as noted above, an objective common to many countries in the region, so too is a drive to **empower small-scale producers** and create an enabling environment for their meaningful participation in value chains. Priority actions identified in the NPs and MSDs reflect conventional approaches to knowledge transfer and capacity building – there is a strong emphasis on **enhancing extension services and improving financial and legal literacy** – and to **increased access to financing and insurance** through arrangements such as concessional loans, input subsidies and microinsurance models. But there also is a focus on digitalization as a means of facilitating access to both extension services and financial support; the Electronic Agricultural Information System<sup>7</sup> in Azerbaijan and

<sup>7</sup> More information on the Electronic Agricultural Information System is available in FAO (2021).

Agromart<sup>8</sup> in Uzbekistan are examples of digital platforms through which farmers may access extension and financial services and, in the case of the Electronic Agricultural Information System, sell their goods.

Cooperatives and farmers' associations are considered a vehicle through which small-scale farmers may **secure greater agency in value chains**, offering strength in numbers to leverage better prices from intermediaries and participate in multistakeholder dialogues and decision-making processes in ways they could not if acting alone. In addition to tax incentives and preferential loans to encourage participation in cooperatives, the MSDs and NPs also indicate the importance of a clear legal framework for cooperatives and their activities; of training and capacity building, including around advocacy; and of lesson sharing to identify and scale up examples of best practices in the organization and management of cooperatives. Regional processing hubs (at the subnational level) and shared ownership models for machinery offer further collaborative means of strengthening market access. In Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Ukraine, the development of short value chains is seen as an important avenue to generate value for small-scale producers.

For most countries in the region, support for small-scale producers is one part of a broader objective to accelerate rural development and close the rural-urban divide. Areas for intervention are not, therefore, limited to production and market access alone; **income diversification** also is noted as a priority, particularly through the promotion of agritourism, as is **investment in educational and vocational training opportunities** to support entrepreneurship and the growth of technical expertise among rural populations, especially women and youth.

<sup>8</sup> More information on Agromart is available in F6S (2022).

### 2.3. Empowering women and attracting young talent

Inequities and inequalities between the position of men and women in food value chains are a common thread through the NPs and MSDs in the region. Women do not enjoy equal access to financial support, extension services, education, technology, or decision-making; each of the focus countries sets equal access as a priority. The NPs outline a **commitment to supporting women's access to finance, technology and decision-making processes**, though they lack specificity on how this will be achieved. The focus also rests largely on women in agricultural production, with little recognition of the central role that women play along the food chain, for example in processing or retail, and in decision-making, governance and research institutions involved in the food system.

More developed are plans in the NPs and MSDs to **improve access to extension services and business support services for women**, for example through fiscal incentives for the inclusion of women in cooperatives, targeted support programmes to boost entrepreneurship among women's cooperatives, and tailored schemes to boost women's financial literacy. The NPs and MSDs from Tajikistan indicate a particularly comprehensive approach to empowering women in the food system, including through education programmes specifically for women, a public awareness campaign to encourage the greater participation of women in food supply chains, and "guaranteed access to financial services and business development support for female-run farms and businesses."

Greater emphasis is placed in NPs and MSDs across the region on the **inclusion of young people in food value chains**. The migration of rural youth to urban centres or neighbouring countries is found to have resulted in an ageing farmer population and a lack of skilled

professionals to support modernized food value chains. To attract more young professionals to the sector, countries in the region propose to **invest in the quality of educational and training institutes** and to link education and research programmes more closely to the needs of farmers and agribusinesses, taking account of the varying interests and responsibilities of young women and young men.

### 2.4. Improving food safety and quality

Inadequate food safety provisions are a major concern noted in the NPs and MSDs. Weak laws and enforcement, minimal monitoring, a lack of laboratory capacity and skilled personnel, inadequate post-harvest storage, and a lack of clear rules and guidance are highlighted as problems undermining food safety that require urgent attention to protect human health and pave the way for export growth.

**Strengthening food safety standards in line with international norms** is a top priority for countries in the region. Good agricultural practices, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System, and the International Organization for Standardization are safety standards identified throughout the region's NPs and MSDs as those to implement and with which to comply. In support of this, several countries in the region outline plans to implement new – or revise existing – legislation pertaining to food safety, to simplify bureaucratic processes and the distribution of roles and responsibilities among competent authorities, to boost monitoring and traceability – including for those smaller-scale actors most liable to be overlooked, such as family farms and small-scale slaughterhouses – and to standardize guidance and policies at the national level.

**Investments in human capital** are seen as necessary to deliver on these objectives, not only at the administrative level but among per-

sonnel in laboratories and among producers and operators along the entire value chain. **Addressing infrastructure gaps** also is identified as an area for urgent action; greater cold chain connectivity in rural areas and more modern post-harvest storage facilities are proposed as enablers of more stringent food safety standards, while digitalized systems for phytosanitary certificates are an example of how digital literacy and access to technology could further support a modernized traceability system.

In addition to aligning with international food safety standards, several countries in the region also highlight the importance of **forging stronger cooperation with international partners** across multiple sectors, both to finance the necessary investments in human capital and infrastructure and to deliver coordinated action on food safety, disease management, antimicrobial resistance and environmental health through a One Health approach.<sup>9</sup>

Linked in the region's MSDs to the central focus on guaranteeing food safety is an emphasis on **delivering high-quality goods**. Weaved through the NPs and MSDs is a celebration of the rich food traditions and unique local products in the region and a commitment to generating further demand for national goods in local and global markets through an increased focus on quality. In order to achieve this, the NPs and MSDs foresee **increased mechanization and the growth of an "agro-industrial complex"** and/or a drive to market national goods using **organic certification** and **country-of-origin branding**, the latter effort enabled by investment in the upskilling of small-scale

producers and processors and support for their participation in certification schemes.

## 2.5. Delivering nutrition security

Ensuring access for all to safe, nutritious and affordable food is a fundamental ambition across all of the sampled countries in the region. However, the NPs and MSDs show that many countries are now reckoning with an increasingly complex burden of malnutrition among their populations. Undernutrition remains a very real challenge but now exists alongside worsening dietary quality, overconsumption of junk food, and high rates of overweight and obesity among children and adults.

Among the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), **public policy interventions to safeguard food security** in a narrow sense – to mitigate high food prices, deliver food fortification and encourage stability in food access through homestead gardens – are still seen as necessary. Infants and young children, women of reproductive age, the elderly and infirm, and internally displaced peoples are identified as vulnerable populations to whom special attention should be paid. But these countries, and those across the wider region, also signal a need for concerted efforts to tackle overconsumption and foster healthier, more sustainable diets.

**The raising of awareness to improve food literacy**, particularly among younger generations, is central to plans laid out in the NPs and MSDs. More specifically, **the expansion of school nutrition programmes** – both healthy meal delivery and education on basic nutrition – is a high priority, with the aim of embedding good dietary habits at a young age. Other initiatives are aimed at **improving the food environment** – for example, labelling requirements and restrictions on the advertising of foods high in sugar, salt and fat – or **increasing access to, and the visibility of,**

<sup>9</sup> One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent.

**nutritious foods** (through the promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption, for example, or the growth of short value chains and local markets that enable small-scale producers to sell their goods to local populations).

Alongside plans to influence dietary choices, the NPs and MSDs in the region underline an urgent need to **tackle food loss and waste**. The modernization of supply chains and investment in infrastructure is one element of this – for example, the above-mentioned expansion of cold chain logistics and storage, along with investment in more robust waste management and recycling logistics – but a number of countries in the region put forward demand-side approaches to encourage more responsible consumption among households and food retailers. These include national strategies to reduce food waste, national campaigns to raise awareness of food waste (such as the Save Your Food and the Preventing Bread Waste campaigns in Türkiye), and community infrastructure such as food banks, community fridges and redistribution networks through which retailers may divert food that otherwise would be wasted to those most in need.

Core to efforts to improve food security and nutrition and tackle food waste is **greater availability and accuracy of food statistics**. More data on food basket affordability and the costs of a healthy diet, more accurate agricultural and food price statistics, and more analysis of national consumption and waste behaviours are all noted as necessary to improving the efficacy of public policies and monitoring their impact over time.

## 2.6. Mitigating and adapting to climate change

There are few explicit mentions of climate adaptation measures, such as investing in climate-smart agriculture and drought-resistant crops, but the emphasis on sustainable land and

water management indicates that stakeholders are cognizant of how resource stress may increase in the coming years and of the need to act now to ensure that the agricultural sector does not further exacerbate this. **Building resilience among producers to disaster risk** is a common theme, pointing to high levels of exposure and vulnerability in the sector, particularly among small-scale farmers. A key component of resilience-building in the region is improved access to disaster risk insurance; many of the NPs and MSDs indicate a need for more comprehensive state protection in this space.

**Raising awareness of the nature of climate risk**, the drivers of climate change and options for mitigating its worst impacts is noted as a priority in some of the countries sampled. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, Serbia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan all point to the need to **reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions**, and Türkiye and Ukraine indicate more comprehensive mitigation efforts, including through the expansion of the bioeconomy, low-carbon and climate-smart farming practices, modal shifts to lower-emission transport (Ukraine) and carbon sequestration (Türkiye).

## 2.7. Enablers of change

In addition to the thematic priorities discussed above, there emerge from the NPs and MSDs in the region a common set of enablers of transformation in the agricultural sector and broader food system: cooperation and coordination, finance and investment, trade, and data and analysis. Each of these is discussed briefly in this section.

### Cooperation and coordination

Reflecting the aims and approach of the UNFSS process, the NPs and MSDs in the region indicate a common intention to continue **multistakeholder dialogue and collaborative decision-making** at

multiple levels. At the national level, Albania, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye and Tajikistan all signal an intention to adopt a systems approach at the level of national policy, ensuring **policy coherence across** multiple interrelated policy areas including agriculture, nutrition, One Health and disease control, and climate mitigation. Stronger **collaboration and exchange between the policy and scientific communities** is a further recurrent theme, aimed at bolstering science-led policy and fostering a research agenda that responds to market needs, while more formalized cooperation between the state and the private sector – particularly through public-private partnerships – is identified as an important component in modernizing the region's value chains and infrastructure.

**Regional cooperation** is also key for many of the countries in the region on specific issues of cross-border importance (water management and disease control, for example). Additionally, in line with European Union Association Agreements (indicated in the NPs and MSDs of Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Türkiye and Ukraine), it is part of a broader agenda to harmonize policies and legislation with the European Union relating to, for example, water management, biodiversity and sustainability (in particular, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Green Deal).

### Finance and investment

Fostering a **greater flow of investment into the agriculture sector** and **improving access to finance** for small-scale farmers and enterprises is presented as a central enabler to delivering on the policy priorities discussed above. Preferential finance and insurance models for smallholders and women are advocated by most countries as a means of building a more inclusive agricultural sector, and sustainable or green financing – which embeds principles of envi-

ronmental sustainability as criteria for access to funds – is identified by Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan as an important lever for positive change.

### Trade

**Greater participation in regional and international trade** is presented implicitly as an essential component of food systems transformation in the region. Improved trade logistics – including cross-border transport connections – are noted as an important enabler of export growth and of a more economically productive agricultural sector, as is a diversification of international trade relationships and penetration of new export markets.

The strong emphasis on bolstering food safety procedures and infrastructure is underpinned by a commitment to **aligning with international standards and best practices** and thus addressing an important non-tariff barrier to trade with international partners. The simplification and harmonization of customs procedures is an area for further action noted by several countries in the region.

### Data and analysis

Discussions in the region's NPs and MSDs indicate that inadequate or inaccurate data on existing agricultural resources – land, production and reserves, for example – and on nutrition status and consumption patterns are significant impediments to effective policymaking and impact evaluation. **Improved data coverage, accuracy, transparency and access and use of data** are consistently noted as priorities across the region, as is better analysis of the sustainability and quality of domestic production (for example, the climate and land footprint of production, levels of pesticide and chemical use, the affordability of a healthy diet, and the effectiveness of past policies in delivering more sustainable and inclusive value chains).

3

COMMONALITY AND DIVERSITY IN VISIONS FOR

# FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

ACROSS EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA



### 3. Commonality and diversity in visions for food systems transformation across Europe and Central Asia

In this paper, we focus on the National Pathways submitted by 11 countries from the ECA-17, but many of the priorities for food systems transformation outlined in those NPs are mirrored across the wider Europe and Central Asia region. At the same time, cross-regional commonalities in high-level priority areas do not equate to homogeneity in visions for food systems. Important nuances exist at subregional and subnational levels, evident in Member State Dialogues from certain ECA-17 countries. Below we discuss notable commonalities and points of diversity among the European Union and ECA-17 countries, among subregions of the ECA-17, and at the subnational level in Albania, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

#### 3.1. Convergence and divergence with priorities in the European Union

In preparation for the UNFSS, 15 European Union Member States<sup>10</sup> collectively convened a total of 19 Member State Dialogues, while an additional five official dialogues were convened by the European Commission.

A set of common priorities were agreed upon at the European Union level and outlined in the Council of the European Union's Council

<sup>10</sup> Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Poland, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden had submitted NPs as of the time of writing (early March 2022).

conclusions on the European Union's priorities for the 2021 UNFSS. While eight European Union Member States submitted their own National Pathways,<sup>11</sup> these are broadly reflective of the European Union's overarching agenda for food systems transformation, which comprises six high-level priorities:

**1 • Strengthening sustainability and resilience through nature-based and ecosystem-based approaches** to production and resource management, both in agriculture and in fisheries and aquaculture; **strong policy frameworks to govern chemical input use; biodiversity conservation, agro-ecological practices, organic farming and the protection of forest resources; climate-smart food systems** that are adaptive to climate impacts and that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions; **circular value chains and reduced food loss and waste; inclusive food systems** that ensure equitable access to markets, finance and resources for smallholders, women, young people and Indigenous Peoples; and more efficient mechanisms to deliver **humanitarian food assistance**.

**2 • Promoting healthy diets through sustainable food systems** via a shift to more **sustainable diets**, encouraged and supported by **improvements to the food environment** (such as front-of-pack labelling, awareness-raising and nutrition education); **interventions to tackle malnutrition** in all its forms, including improved monitoring and coherent policy frameworks; and **business-led action** on responsible marketing and pricing policies, transparency and sustainable procurement.

<sup>11</sup> These eight countries are Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

**3 • Strengthening food safety and public health through traceable and transparent food value chains and multilateral coordination on food safety standards, One Health and the management of antimicrobials** and associated antimicrobial resistance.

**4 • Contributing to the sustainability and resilience of food systems through trade** via multilateral cooperation to ensure **open, transparent and rules-based international trade** that incorporates sustainability objectives, together with **investment in regional and local markets**.

**5 • New finance solutions and business models** to **support smaller-scale actors along the value chain** through innovative approaches to finance, risk-sharing and insurance; and **“green” investment** through natural capital accounting.

**6 • Improving scientific knowledge and ensuring a strong science–policy interface** through growing the body of **science-and evidence-based assessments of food systems**, their impacts and the opportunities for their transformation; the **equitable transfer of knowledge, innovation and technology**; and a **strong science–policy interface**, including through multilateral mechanisms such as the Committee on World Food Security and its High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition.

The priorities set by the European Union reflect a high degree of alignment with those of the 11 countries from the ECA-17 to submit NPs: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, hereinafter referred to as the ECA-11. This alignment was also evident in a region-wide independent dialogue hosted by the

United Nations Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems (IBC-SFS) in Europe and Central Asia in the run-up to the UNFSS, at which governments from the ECA region, including from the European Union, were represented (United Nations, 2021c). Central policy issues raised in that dialogue included improved nutrition among vulnerable groups, support for small-scale actors (with an emphasis on improving access to resources, finance, information and digital technologies), nature-positive production, and “greener” value chains (with significant reductions in food loss and waste). Many of the enablers of change discussed in that dialogue mirror those identified by ECA-11 stakeholders, including improved data collection and access; more research to understand current and evolving trends, especially those relating to dietary patterns and nutritional status; and peer-to-peer learning, multistakeholder engagement and cooperation. Further evidence of alignment is evident in a recent stocktake of MSDs and independent dialogues convened by countries in the Mediterranean, including Albania and Türkiye; priorities common across these countries included sustainable resource management, healthy and sustainable consumption, inclusive rural development and food safety (FAO, CIHEAM and UfM, 2021).

In many cases, shared priorities across the ECA region are framed in similar ways in NPs from European Union and ECA-11 countries, indicating common visions for the outcomes of intended interventions. For example, sustainable resource management is intended not only to reduce stress on finite water and land resources but also to contribute to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem protection. Similarly, investment in rural production and rural communities is outlined as an

Table 1

## SELECTED PRIORITIES AND KEY ELEMENTS IDENTIFIED IN THE NATIONAL PATHWAYS OF ECA-11 AND EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

PRIORITY AREA	Entry points identified by both ECA-11 and the European Union	
<b>Sustainable resource management</b>	More sustainable and responsible management of land and water resources, conservation of biodiversity, responsible management of chemical inputs to maintain soil health	
<b>Food loss and waste</b>	Tackling food losses and waste along the supply chain, encouraging the recycling of food waste and the use of by-products, improved monitoring and measurement of food loss and waste	
<b>Improved nutrition</b>	Measures to boost the availability and affordability of nutritious, diverse diets to tackle micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, and diet-related disease (particularly among women and children, the infirm, the elderly and the economically vulnerable), efforts to improve nutrition education, awareness-raising and the provision of school meals	
<b>Rural development</b>	Investment in employment opportunities to attract skilled workers – particularly young people – to the rural economy, improvements to living standards, efforts to tackle the rural–urban divide	
<b>Support for small-scale actors</b>	Policies, investments and products to ensure access to finance, risk insurance, secure tenure, information and data services, extension services, education and training opportunities, payment for environmental stewardship	
	Entry points identified by ECA-11	Entry points identified by the European Union
<b>Nature-positive production</b>	Incentives for organic production, efforts to preserve ecosystems	Organic production, agro-ecological approaches, commitment to post-2020 global biodiversity framework, removal of harmful financial subsidies and incentives, precision technologies to minimize pollution
<b>Water management</b>	Modernized irrigation systems to improve efficiency and expand irrigated area, good governance of transboundary water resources	Preventing the pollution of water from chemical inputs, minimizing water use along value chains, protecting groundwater
<b>Climate-smart policies</b>	Building awareness among producers and the wider population of the nature and scale of climate risk, reducing agricultural emissions, improving access to climate risk insurance, boosting producers' resilience to climate impacts	Transitioning to a climate-neutral food system, phasing out incentives that are not aligned with climate mitigation targets, channelling climate finance to support sustainable agriculture, boosting producers' resilience to climate impacts
<b>Circular economy</b>	Broad commitment to implement circular economy principles	Just transition to a circular economy, investment in bio-based sectors, development of alternative protein sources, circular designs in food packaging
<b>Food safety</b>	Investment in modern food safety systems – including laboratory capacity and expertise – to meet international standards	Investment in robust systems of surveillance to mitigate food fraud and identify potential zoonotic risks
<b>Dietary change</b>	Improving understanding of the principles of a diet that is balanced and nutritious, encouraging greater consumption of fruit and vegetables	Promoting healthy diets from sustainable production within planetary boundaries, mainstreaming sustainability in food-based dietary guidelines, encouraging the reduced consumption of animal-sourced foods, supporting the sustainable contributions of fisheries and aquaculture to a nutritious and sustainable diet
<b>Changes to the food environment</b>	Responsible marketing of unhealthy foods, improved food labelling	Responsible marketing and pricing to encourage healthy choices, sustainable public and private procurement, development of nutrition and sustainability labelling

Notes: As noted earlier, the National Pathways available from European Union Member States – and thus analysed in this report – are from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden, together with European Union priorities as laid out in the Council conclusions on the European Union's priorities for the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (European Commission, 2021).

avenue not only to improved productivity, market connectivity and value chain efficiency but also to improved living standards for rural populations and the closing of the rural–urban social divide.

In other cases, the intended outcome of shared priority intervention areas differ between the ECA-11 and the European Union. Measures identified by the ECA-11 to achieve more nature-friendly production, for example, are focused heavily on reducing the level of chemical inputs used in agriculture, while the European Union priorities and the NPs of European Union Member States place greater emphasis on the need to tackle harmful financial subsidies and incentives that drive unsustainable and damaging agricultural practices. Dietary change is another common priority across the ECA region, but while the focus among the ECA-11 is largely on increasing vegetable consumption and reducing the consumption of food high in fat, salt and sugar, the European Union stresses the need to move to healthy and sustainable diets through reducing demand for goods with large environmental footprints (meat, in particular) and boosting investment in plant-based proteins.

Table 1 offers a summary overview of priority areas common across the ECA region and key entry points identified under these priority areas in NPs from the ECA-11 on the one hand and the European Union and its Member States on the other.

### 3.2. Subregional nuances evident in National Pathways among ECA-11 countries

As discussed in Section 2, the countries analysed in this report show significant alignment in terms of the policy priorities

and areas for action identified through the NPs and MSDs. Nonetheless, important differences. The NPs of the three subregions – the Caucasus and Ukraine; the Western Balkans and Türkiye; and Central Asia – differ in the prominence they afford to different entry points for food systems transformation.

The NPs of the countries from the Caucasus and Ukraine region included in our sample – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine – broadly outline an agenda of modernization in food value chains, supported by digital technologies and innovation. There is a heavy emphasis on creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship, supporting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, and investing in education, research and institutional capacity to boost competitiveness. There is recognition of the importance of resilience among producers in the face of climate risks and environmental degradation and a commitment to strengthening food and nutrition security across the population.

Among the countries of the Western Balkans (Albania and Serbia) and Türkiye, food and nutrition security are given prominence in the NPs, as is food safety. Investment in modernized and strengthened food safety infrastructure is outlined as a key step to greater competitiveness of national food value chains. Rural development is a high priority, aimed at ensuring inclusive food systems and growing short value chains and local markets in support of small-scale producers. Sustainable resource management, nature-positive production and climate adaptation and mitigation are recognized as central to food systems transformation.

For the Central Asian countries included in the sample (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), national priorities centre around developing the “agro-industrial complex” through increasing both the institutional and technical capacities of food system actors and the levels of domestic production. Improved management of water and land resources is a key part of this agenda, reflecting the degree of resource stress in the region. There is an emphasis on the social outcomes of food system development, including improved nutrition, employment among rural communities, and greater inclusion of women and young people in the rural economy.

### 3.3. Subnational nuances evident in Member State Dialogues

For several countries in the region, the NPs and MSDs exposed and explored divergences at a subnational level in terms of challenges faced by actors along food value chains and priorities for food systems transformation. These divergences are, in part, the product of differing geographies, varying agroclimatic conditions and degrees of connectivity, but they also reflect distinct contexts in terms of livelihoods, socioeconomic circumstances and associated lifestyles.



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In Uzbekistan, for example, discussions held in Nukus, in the Republic of Karakalpakstan – an arid autonomous republic in the northwest of the country – speak to very particular challenges of the local population: low productivity among farmers owing to historic overexploitation of the Aral Sea and high use of chemical inputs to compensate for low soil fertility; high food prices resulting from the region's dependence on imported goods and issues with unfair pricing owing to a lack of transparency along value chains and the profit-seeking tactics of intermediate agents; and poor health and nutrition, in part the result of excessive consumption of meat, vegetable oil and *karachay*, which is black tea drunk with milk. In Namangan, a city in eastern Uzbekistan, unsustainable resource use also was a concern, but greater emphasis was placed on the need to tackle an obesogenic food environment – TV advertising of unhealthy food to children, excessive consumption of palm oil and junk food, and low food safety standards, for example – and inadequate social safety nets for low-income families.

In Albania, subregional dialogues highlighted the significant disparities that exist within national borders, in terms of the primary economic activities within the food system, and the differing trajectories for food systems transformation that result. In lowland and coastal areas of Albania, aquaculture and fisheries, field and greenhouse-based vegetables, meat and dairy, and olives and olive oil dominate. In mountainous areas, agrotourism, fruit and nuts, small ruminants, viticulture, beekeeping, aromatic and medicinal plants, and traditional foods are the main outputs. While Albania's National Pathway lays out a set of common priority areas for action, on-the-ground implementation of the pathway will clearly look very different in coastal and mountainous settings.

In Tajikistan, discussions held in the Gorno-Badakhshan region – an autonomous region in the Pamir Mountains, in the east of the country – emphasized the importance of tailoring plans for food system development to local contexts. For example, the region's agroclimatic conditions require not only the careful selection of crops, seed varieties and livestock but also coordinated investment in risk mitigation and supporting infrastructure. Fruit production can thrive in the region, but only if pest management is improved. Yaks and fine-wool sheep are well suited to the conditions, but unregulated grazing contributes to pasture degradation, while the lack of slaughter facilities presents a logistical challenge for owners of pasture-raised herds.

These subnational dynamics point to the diversity of contexts and food system challenges that exist within national borders and that will necessitate tailored approaches to the implementation of National Pathways in the region. While overarching plans outlined in the NPs – to more sustainable land management, for example, and to greater support for small-scale producers – provide the guiding principles for food systems transformation, solutions and programmes on the ground will need to be informed by consideration of local conditions and by ongoing engagement with local communities if they are to be meaningful, sustainable and effective.

4

THE IMPORTANCE OF  
**POLICY COHERENCE**  
AND  
**REGIONAL**  
**COOPERATION**



## 4. The importance of policy coherence and regional cooperation

As ECA-17 countries look to harness the momentum around food systems transformation generated at national and regional level by the UNFSS process, two core principles of the UNFSS framework should guide their next steps: first, a recognition of the multidimensionality of the food system and of the importance of adopting a truly holistic approach to food-related policy; and second, a prioritization of collaboration, cooperation and learning in order to accelerate progress at national, regional and global levels on this shared agenda.

### 4.1. Cultivating policy coherence and coordination on food systems transformation

The National Pathways of countries in the ECA-17 cover a broad range of issues relating to multiple dimensions of the food system – not only agricultural production, but environmental sustainability, health and nutrition, education and knowledge building, and inclusive growth.

Certain NPs explicitly recognize this multidimensionality and demonstrate a cross-government approach to their preparation. The Tajikistan NP, for example, explicitly recognizes the need for the country's food transformation strategy to align not only with the country's National Development Strategy 2030 and with SDG implementation but also with a broad range of other national policies and programmes that relate, directly or indirectly, to the food system. Those listed in the Tajikistan NP include strategies related to nutrition and physical activity, breastfeeding and breastmilk substitute regulation, health, antimicrobial resistance, tax and gender equality. The NP includes a commitment to establishing a multistakeholder National

Food Systems Pathway Coordination Council under the country's Committee for Food Security to oversee coordination across these many policy areas in support of the successful implementation of the NP.

Opportunities exist to integrate the plans set out in the National Pathways more fully across government ministries in recognition of the important interdependencies among the many dimensions of food systems. In addition to that of Tajikistan, the National Pathways of Türkiye and Ukraine indicate strong cross-government coordination in their preparation, while other NPs in the region are narrower in scope and include limited reference to national planning documents and strategies beyond the realm of agriculture and agribusiness.

Greater alignment of national strategies for food systems transformation with those for economic development, climate mitigation, public health and energy – among others – has the potential to yield significant co-benefits both to the food system agenda and to wider national policy priorities, in line with the 2030 agenda. Take the example of modernized irrigation systems, a top priority across the region: Few National Pathways outline plans to invest in renewable energy (such as solar power) to support these systems, yet doing so could serve not only to reduce the carbon intensity of irrigation for agriculture (and so reduce sectoral emissions) but also to deliver a more reliable source of energy for farmers in remote locations, lower farmers' operational and input costs, reduce farmers' exposure to energy price hikes such as are being seen in the wake of the war in Ukraine, and lower the fiscal burden of input subsidies where they are in place, thus releasing public finances that can be allocated to other economic sectors.

Cross-government coordination and coherent policymaking are also critical to supporting delivery on the ambitious plans for food system development laid out in the region's

National Pathways. Two common goals in the region are greater inclusivity in food systems – particularly for smaller-scale actors, women and young people working in remote rural locations – and the development of a diverse rural economy. Key to achieving these goals will be improved connectivity, particularly in the mountainous countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, where poor transport logistics are an important barrier to trade both within national borders and with regional and international markets (a challenge noted by Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan).<sup>12</sup> The feasibility of improving market access for those in rural areas is thus contingent upon investment in transportation and trade infrastructure and on the removal of non-tariff barriers to cross-border trade, such as inefficient customs procedures. However, national planning documents related to transport and trade are not noted in the National Pathways – with the exception of Ukraine, where the national transport strategy up to 2030 and the strategy for the development of exports of agricultural products, food and processing industry up to 2030 are both noted as strategic documents of relevance to the NP (United Nations, 2021d).

## 4.2. Fostering inter-country cooperation to achieve shared goals

The UNFSS has created a framework for longer-term cooperation among countries on food systems transformation. Ongoing dialogue at national, regional and multilateral levels will be crucial to supporting this cooperation, and dialogues held in preparation for the UNFSS already present a number of promising opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and best practices which, if seized, could accelerate progress in the ECA-17 countries.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, ITF (2019).

This is particularly true for the more complex and politically challenging areas of food systems transformation, such as the governance of transboundary water resources. Managing transboundary water resources sustainably and equitably, for example, will not be possible without effective intergovernmental coordination, and a number of regional initiatives already are in place to support this. Nevertheless, an independent dialogue held in preparation for the UNFSS among Central Asian countries pointed to difficulties in fostering the level of cross-sectoral engagement required to successfully integrate policy planning across water management, agriculture, food value chains and energy as a means of ensuring a sustainable water supply for the future (United Nations, 2021e).

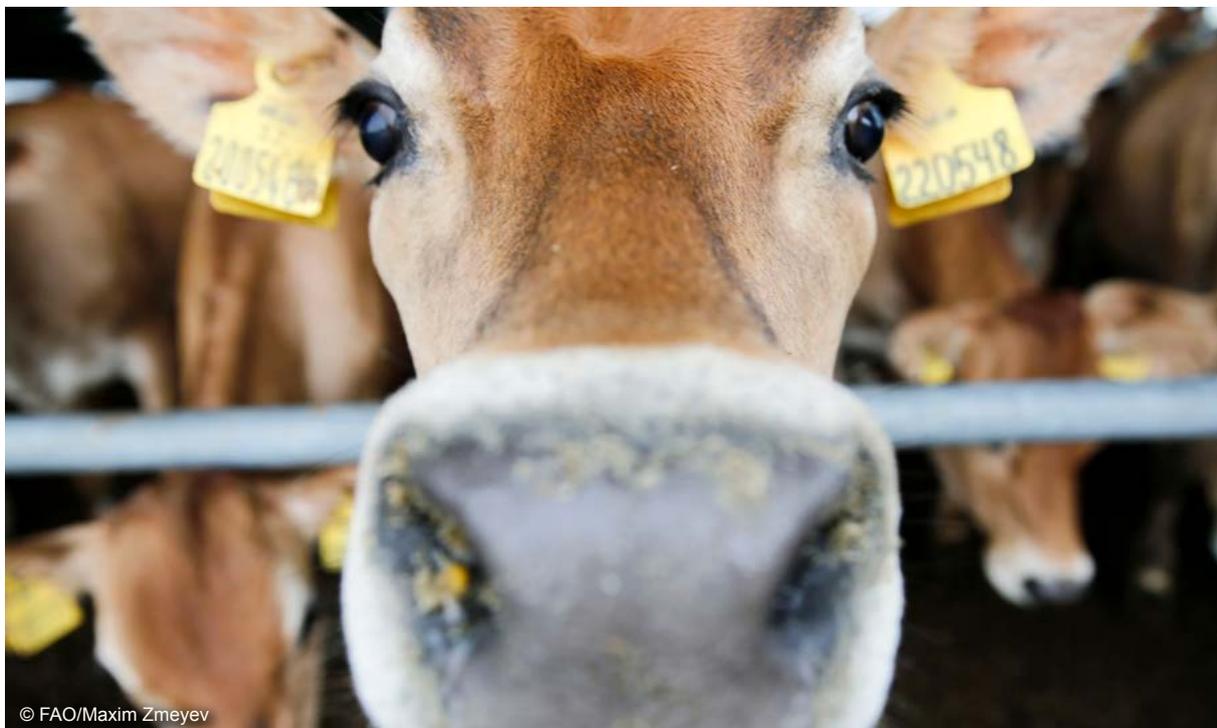
In Southern Africa, an independent dialogue on water use in food systems raised similar challenges and outlined a number of potential strategies to overcome these, including the exchange of information and best practices on programme design through an existing regional knowledge hub and the involvement of financiers in sharing lessons learned and identifying opportunities for joint investments (United Nations, 2021f). As countries in the ECA region look to better manage stressed water resources and their use in food systems, ongoing dialogue with international stakeholders could provide valuable insights on successful – and unsuccessful – policies and strategies. The importance of international exchange and cooperation of this kind was emphasized in a further independent dialogue focused on water ethics among countries of the Mediterranean – including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye (United Nations, 2021g). These countries underlined the need for governments to move beyond nationalism and the potential value of “ambassadors” in facilitating dialogue among national governments whose goals are aligned but whose realities differ significantly and between whom a lack of understanding or

effective communication may be hampering effective water management.

For other shared goals, regional dialogues can yield rich opportunities for lesson sharing and the exchange of best practices. All countries in the region identified the inclusion and empowerment of small-scale producers as a priority, for example, and pointed to difficulties faced by these producers in accessing knowledge and information related to market conditions, climate conditions and financial support mechanisms. Some of these countries have begun to address these difficulties through digital knowledge platforms. In Azerbaijan, for example, the Electronic Agricultural Information System comprises a free, digital platform providing geospatial data on producers and enterprises, land use and land use changes, and agricultural conditions (such as salinized areas), among other data points; an online marketplace for the management and sale of inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers; and a portal through which farmers may apply for, and manage, government subsidies and insurance services (Republic of Azerbaijan,

2021; FAO, 2021; ITU and FAO, 2021). A similar platform in Uzbekistan – Agromart.uz – provides online extension services to farmers along with a digital marketplace for goods and services and up-to-date information on prices and market conditions (United Nations, 2021h). Countries that noted the need for improved data access and digital trading platforms – such as Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Türkiye – should look to engage with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan to understand the strengths and weaknesses of these existing platforms as they work to establish their own.

The establishment of an Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System in Uzbekistan, in collaboration with (and with support from) the European Union, offers a further opportunity for learning lessons on inclusive knowledge-sharing initiatives (United Nations, 2021i). An independent dialogue convened by Ireland’s Agriculture and Food Development Authority, as part of the UNFSS process, shared important insights on the successful implementation of an effective Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation



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System in European Union Member States (United Nations, 2021j). The partnership between Uzbekistan and the European Union can provide a conduit for channelling best practices not only from the country's own experience but from the wider region into subregional dialogues going forwards.

More broadly, countries should look to examples from throughout the region of fostering effective cross-sectoral collaboration in the implementation of policies and programmes to foster more inclusive food systems. Dialogues in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, for example, highlighted partnerships with agricultural universities or research centres (in the case of Uzbekistan, supported by the United States Agency for International Development),<sup>13</sup> aimed at improving the quality and coverage of education and training opportunities for food system actors and at strengthening the science-policy interface. In Uzbekistan, stakeholders discussed a partnership between the government and the Association of Women Agrarians to develop a gender strategy in agriculture and explore ways to “visibly mainstream gender issues” (United Nations, 2021h), while in Azerbaijan, the National Pathway outlines plans to deploy a “smart agriculture” approach to develop food systems in the liberated territories as part of the “smart village” reconstruction programme, at the heart of which lies close partnerships with local government agencies and the private sector (Republic of Azerbaijan, 2021).<sup>14</sup>

An important partner with whom countries should collaborate, through the United Nations Country Teams, as they look to build on regional experience and nurture

multistakeholder, cross-sectoral coordination in food systems transformation will be the United Nations Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems (IBC-SFS) in Europe and Central Asia. The IBC-SFS, established in 2020, comprises eight United Nations agencies with a stake in food systems – FAO, UNICEF and WHO (the three co-chairs), with IFAD, UNECE, UNDP, WFP and WMO – and aims to “strengthen multi-sectoral collaboration and programmatic support to countries for all 17 SDGs and enhance the focus on sustainable food systems for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level.” The IBC-SFS played an important role in supporting national and regional dialogues in preparation for the UNFSS and – through coordinating discussions horizontally across United Nations agencies, vertically between central United Nations agencies and regional and country offices, and between state, private sector and civil society actors at the national level – is uniquely placed to support the integrated planning and implementation of the National Pathways.

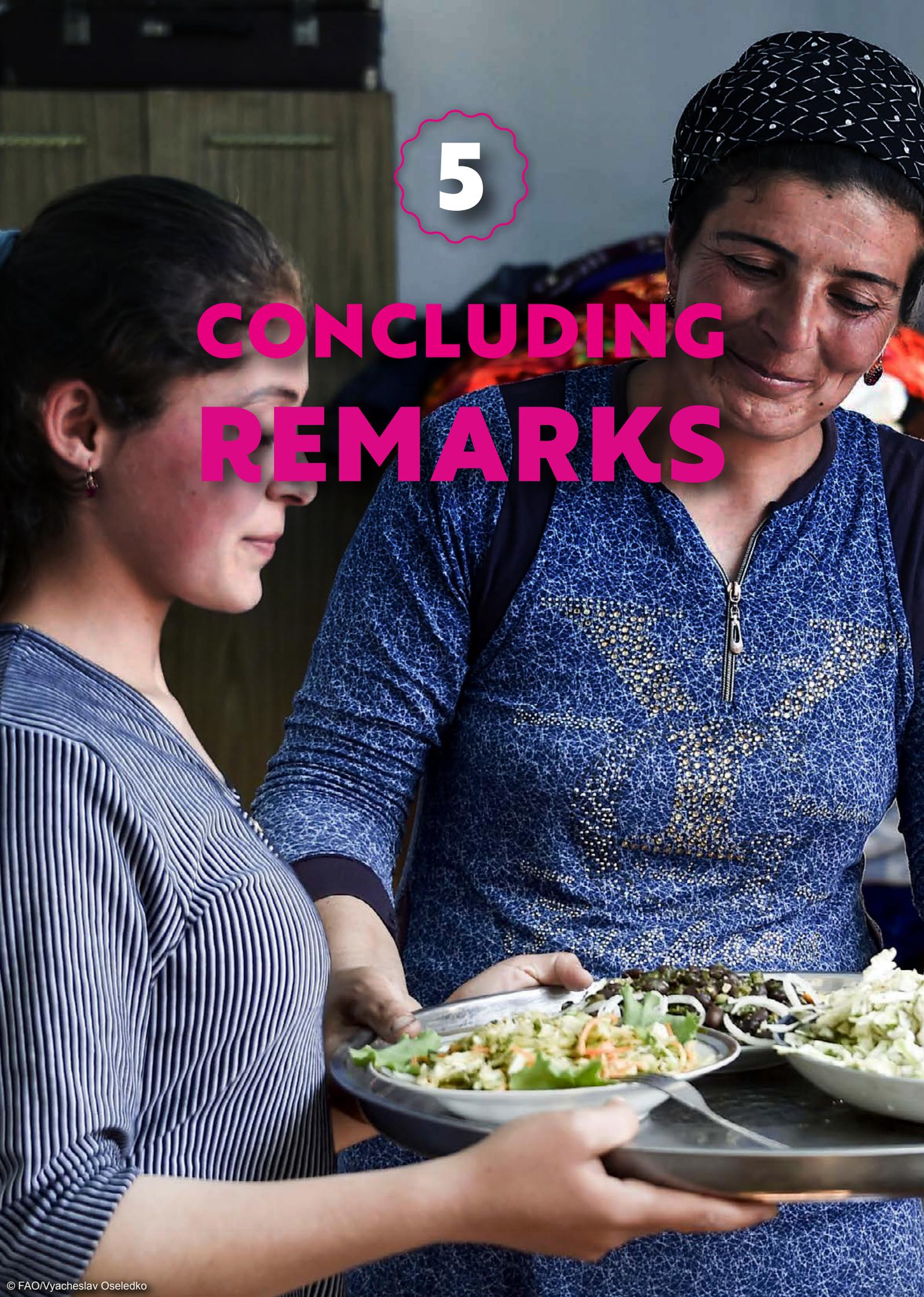


13 Armenian National Agrarian University was mentioned in United Nations (2021k). Centre for Agrarian Research in Azerbaijan was mentioned in United Nations (2021l). Uzbek Agricultural University and Institute was mentioned in United Nations (2021i).

14 See also World Bank (2021).

5

# CONCLUDING REMARKS



## 5. Concluding remarks

The next steps outlined in the National Pathways in the region indicate that countries are at differing stages in the process of their implementation. For some, the near-term objective is to continue with the work of integrating existing national programmes and strategies into the National Pathway, generating the cross-government communication and cooperation needed to embed a systems approach to food-related policy. Tajikistan, for example, intends to establish a Coordination Council for the National Food Systems Pathway under the existing Committee for Food Security, tasked with coordinating activities in support of pathway implementation throughout government.

For others, the emphasis is on continuing cross-sectoral dialogue and working to include a range of stakeholders in food-related decision-making. Azerbaijan plans to establish a national platform to facilitate continued dialogue at the strategic and operational level, and Albania, Georgia and Serbia all stress the importance of civil society and private sector involvement in the policy implementation process. For others still, concrete measures are being taken to operationalize the goals set out in the National Pathways. Azerbaijan and Ukraine have both begun the process of developing an action plan or roadmap for food systems transformation, while Kyrgyzstan has outlined plans to agree on an annual allocation of central funds to support food systems transformation through 2030.

The detailed analysis in Section 2 on key priorities for food systems transformation in the region presents convincing insights on the importance of transforming food systems through a holistic lens that aids in the understanding of the different elements that need to be addressed and the interlinkages among them that are at stake. Efforts to translate the National Pathways into comprehensive action plans and concrete interventions will

need to involve continued dialogue with subnational actors. As discussed in Section 4, feedback from Member State Dialogues held in Albania, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan offers insight into subnational variations in local food systems, particularly where national borders unite very different agroclimatic zones. If food systems transformations are to be inclusive in their design and their outcomes, governments throughout the ECA-17 will need to ensure that priorities outlined in National Pathways are implemented through locally tailored solutions, recognizing the variety in contexts, challenges and opportunities that exist at the subnational level.

Whatever the stage of implementation, countries across the region will now be moving forwards with national action amid heightened political uncertainty, market instability and social insecurity. The war in Ukraine has already had significant impacts on food and fertilizer markets across the ECA and beyond (FAO, 2022), and rising prices and supply disruptions – to food, fertilizer and energy – are adding further to an existing cost-of-living crisis borne from the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic recovery (Benton, Froggatt and Wellesley, 2022). New threats to food security, nutrition, natural resources and social inclusion now exist and require urgent, coordinated and cross-government policy decisions. Governments must maintain their focus on holistic policy planning and participatory dialogue in order to ensure that decisions taken in response to these new threats do not undermine long-term action on food systems transformation.





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# ANNEXES

## Annex I: Methodology

Of the FAO's 17 programme countries in the ECA region (referred to as the "ECA-17" in our paper), 11 submitted National Pathways under the UNFSS framework; the remaining six countries did not and are not included in our analysis (Table A1.1).

In order to identify prominent, common priority areas arising from the UNFSS process in these 11 countries (referred to as the "ECA-11" in our paper), presented in Section 2, we undertook a desk-based review of the National Pathways submitted by those countries and of the available official feedback forms from the Member State Dialogues convened in those countries. The authors undertook a thematic analysis of these documents, developing and applying a set of thematic labels to the text. The authors then reviewed the

annotated documents for a second time and mapped the incidence of the thematic labels in each. This mapping was then reviewed to identify the prominence of themes and arrive at a set of common priority areas across the 11 countries. In the writing of this analysis, the mapping and original texts were reviewed for a third time to gauge common subthemes noted in the context of each priority area. The analysis presented in Section 2 is thus based on a review of both the National Pathways and the Member State Dialogues and is considered representative of the ECA-17.

The analysis of European Union Member State National Pathways, presented in Section 3, was undertaken through the same approach, and the comparison of ECA-11 and European Union priority areas and subcomponents in Table 1 is based on the National Pathways of the European Union Member States, the Council of the European Union's conclusions on the Eu-

Table A1.1

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN DESK-BASED ANALYSIS

PROGRAMME COUNTRY	Member State Dialogues	National Pathway
Albania	4	Yes
Armenia	2	Yes
Azerbaijan	2	Yes
Belarus	n/a	n/a
Bosnia and Herzegovina	n/a	n/a
Georgia	3	Yes
Kazakhstan	1	Yes
Kyrgyzstan	3	Yes
Montenegro	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a
Republic of Moldova	n/a	n/a
Serbia	1	Yes
Tajikistan	4	Yes
Türkiye	2	Yes
Turkmenistan	n/a	n/a
Ukraine	4	Yes
Uzbekistan	4	Yes
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>

Notes: Not all countries held Member State Dialogues or submitted National Pathways, pre-Summit statements or Summit statements. The term "n/a" indicates that no document was submitted.

ropean Union’s priorities (European Commission, 2021), and the National Pathways of the ECA-11. The analysis of subregional nuances across the ECA-11 presented in Section 3 is based on plans and priorities outlined in the countries’ National Pathways, while analysis of subnational nuances in Albania, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – also presented in Section 3 – is based on selected Member State Dialogues convened in those countries.

## Annex II: Participant analysis

This analysis is gathered from data in 30 official feedback forms published by the programme countries (ECA-17) of the FAO’s Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, listed in [Table A2.1](#). As not all National Convenors completed all sections of the feedback forms in full, the analysis

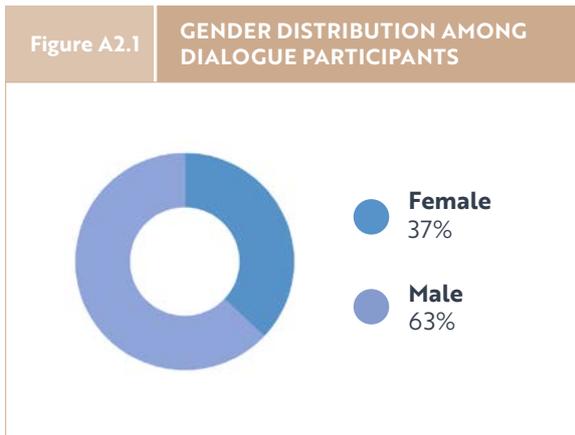
below reflects the data made available by the ECA-11, specifically. For this reason, total numbers vary across sections and the overall numbers of participants are likely higher.

Out of 405 official feedback forms published by National Convenors globally, 30 were published by the ECA-11. From these forms, we can establish that at least 1686 people participated in Member State Dialogues in the region.

In the categories below, we provide an indication of absolute numbers, but also of averages at a country level, in order to most accurately reflect the representation of different groups on the day and to account for the fact that certain countries held a greater number of, and/or much larger-scale, dialogues than others.

Table A2.1 PARTICIPATION IN MEMBER STATE DIALOGUES

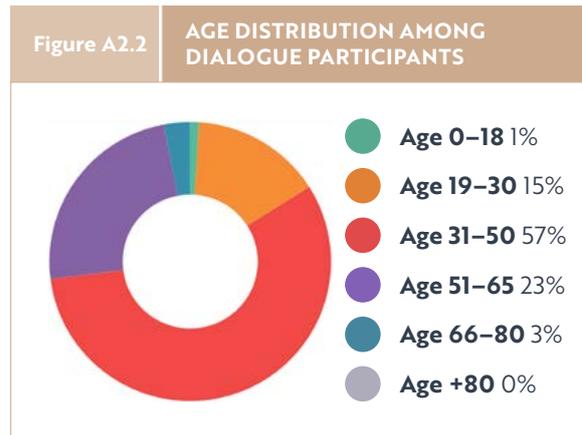
PROGRAMME COUNTRY	Member State Dialogues	Official feedback forms available and analysed	Total number of participants
Albania	4	4	372
Armenia	2	2	70
Azerbaijan	2	2	89
Belarus	n/a	0	n/a
Bosnia and Herzegovina	n/a	0	n/a
Georgia	3	3	128
Kazakhstan	1	1	48
Kyrgyzstan	3	3	120
Montenegro	n/a	0	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	0	n/a
Republic of Moldova	n/a	0	n/a
Serbia	4	1	72
Tajikistan	4	4	113
Türkiye	2	2	269
Turkmenistan	n/a	0	n/a
Ukraine	4	4	187
Uzbekistan	4	4	218
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1686</b>



## Gender

Looking at the gender distribution of participants as an average across all countries in the region, 37 percent reported as female and 63 percent as male (Figure A2.1).

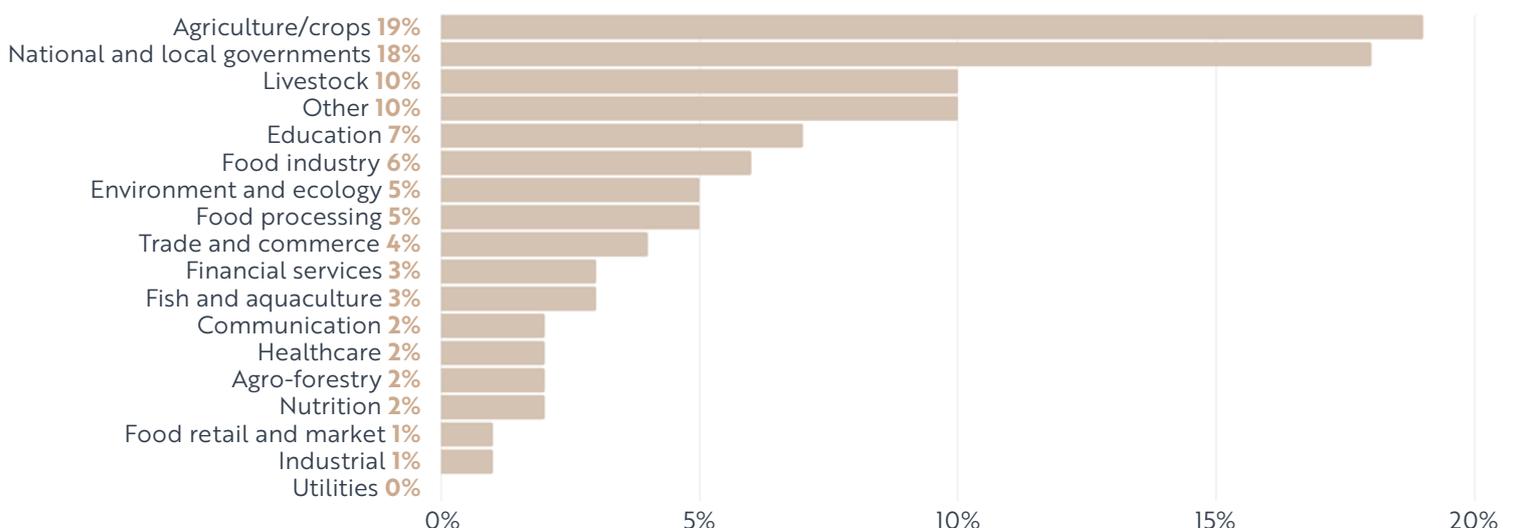
Compared to global reporting on gender balance across Member State Dialogues (where 50 percent identify as male, 48 percent identify as female and 2 percent prefer not to say), the region's dialogues were less balanced.



## Age

A clear majority of participants in dialogues in the ECA-11 (57 percent) were in the 31–50 age range, with the next largest group, the 51–65 age range, accounting for 24 percent of participants. Sixteen percent of participants were under the age of 30, with particularly low representation among those younger than 19 or older than 65. This distribution is relatively aligned with participation by age at the global level.

**Figure A2.3 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY SECTOR**



## Participation by sector

As a caveat, nine of the 11 programme countries that submitted feedback forms reported on this category. In most instances, the data sets were incomplete, with overall numbers falling short of those reported in the gender and age distribution sections. That said, the distribution conveyed in the data we have is, we hope, relatively reflective of the distribution.

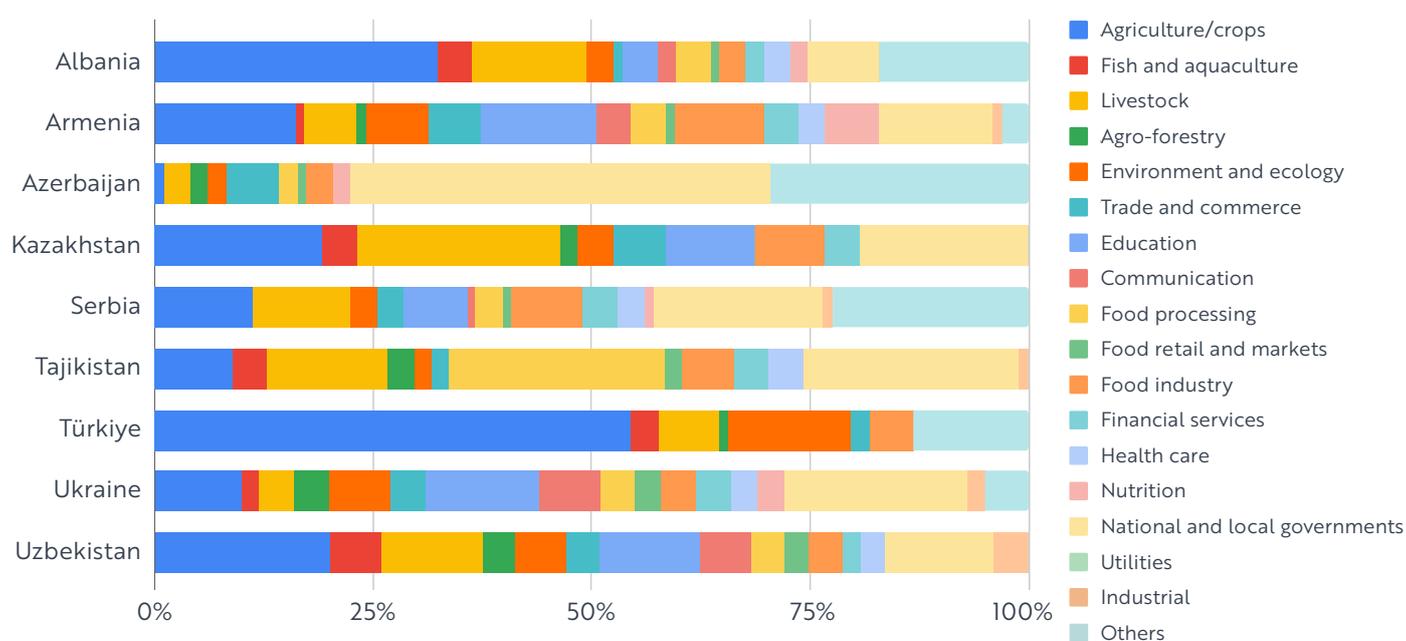
Figure A2.3 outlines the distribution of participants by sector, as classified by the UNFSS, as an average across the ECA-11. The dialogues involved a mix of stakeholders from numerous sectors relevant to food systems, succeeding to bring representatives from national and local governments together with representatives from agriculture/crops, livestock and various food-related sectors. Representation in the utilities, industrial, retail, nutrition,

agro-forestry, healthcare and communications sectors was relatively low, however, and could be improved in future dialogues.

At a global level, “agriculture and crops” and “national or local government” also provide the largest single groupings of participants. Overall however, there is a more even spread across sectors at the global level compared to the ECA-11, with no stakeholder group falling under 6 percent representation globally, while 13 sectors at the ECA-11 level were represented at a level of 6 percent or less.

Figure A2.4 shows the distribution of participants by sector at the country level. In some cases, representation by individual sectors is high. For example, more than half of the participants in the two dialogues in Türkiye represented the agriculture/crops sector, and almost half of the participants in the two dialogues in Azerbaijan represented national and local governments.

Figure A2.4 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY SECTOR AND COUNTRY



### Participation by stakeholder group

Ten of the ECA-11 countries submitted feedback forms in this category. As with the sector analysis above, in most instances the data sets were incomplete, with overall numbers falling short of those reported in the gender and age distribution sections. That said, the distribution conveyed in the feedback forms and relayed in this report is, we hope, relatively reflective of the distribution.

Figure A2.5 demonstrates the distribution of participants by stakeholder group as an average across the countries that reported on this section. The dialogues across the ECA-11 included a diverse set of stakeholders from numerous sectors relevant to food systems.

Inclusion could, however, be pushed further in future dialogues in order

for participation numbers to point to a truly inclusive, multistakeholder, multidisciplinary approach to the UNFSS process. On average, twice as many representatives from government and national institutions participated (24 percent) than the next largest group, local authority representatives (12 percent). Few representatives from Indigenous Peoples, members of parliament, regional economic communities, consumer groups, transnational corporations, workers and trade unions, private foundations/ partnerships/alliances or international financial institutions were included (5 percent representation, collectively, for the aforementioned groups).

At the global level, the highest numbers of representatives also came from government and national institutions, science and academia and local non-governmental organizations.

Figure A2.5 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP

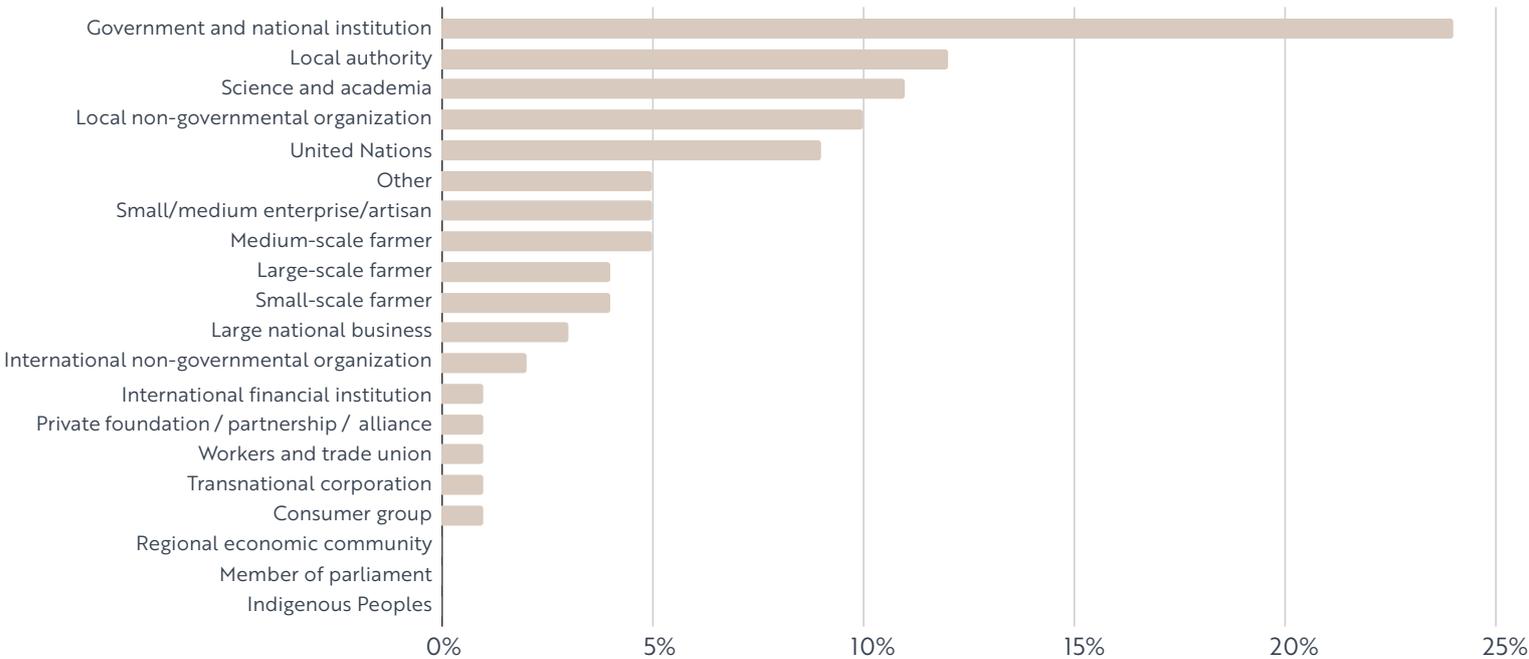
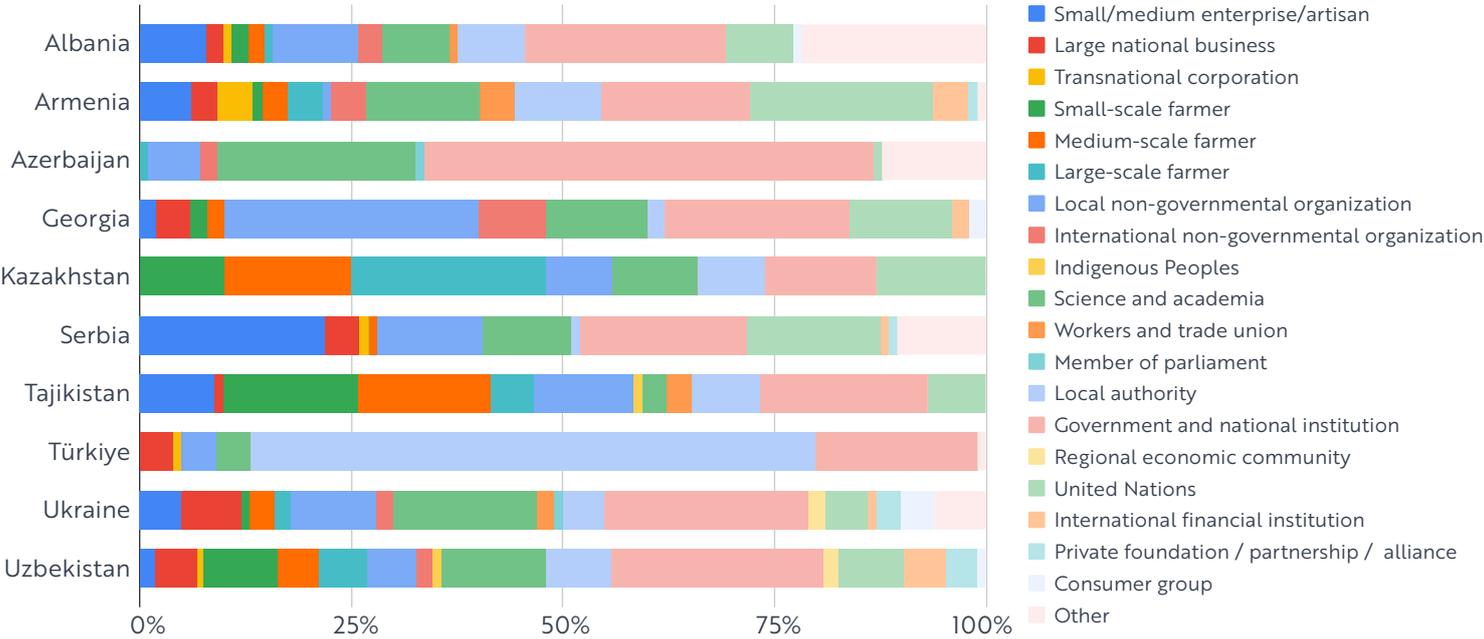


Figure A2.6 outlines the distribution of participants by stakeholder group at the country level. In some cases, representation by individual stakeholder groups is particularly high. In Azerbaijan, 52 percent of participants represented government and national institutions, and 23 percent represented science and

academia, with a relatively low inclusion of farmers, workers and small-scale enterprises. In Türkiye, 85 percent of participants represented a combination of local authorities (66 percent) and government and national institutions (19 percent), with low levels of representation from other sectors.

Figure A2.6 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP AND COUNTRY





OUTCOMES OF  
**THE UNITED NATIONS  
FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT**  
IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA:  
**A STOCKTAKE**