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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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Progress report on the preparation for the UNSG Food Systems Summit

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The 2030 Agenda has heightened awareness of the key role that future food systems will play in meeting the global challenges of malnutrition, poverty, use of biodiversity and ecosystems services, and climate change. Food systems stakeholders are beginning to take action and to change behaviour, but their many independent initiatives lack a common framing of the complex interactions, dependencies and trade-offs intrinsic to food systems. This is constraining the ability of societies to identify and implement appropriate pathways towards more sustainable food systems.
- There has been a growing demand for FAO to better integrate its long-standing support to the development of agricultural and food systems. FAO is playing a lead role in the definition of approaches to food systems transformation and in advocating, at the highest level, for greater attention to the way in which interventions in food systems are designed and implemented. Increasingly, new FAO strategies and initiatives are informed by and supportive of the transformation to more sustainable food systems.
- The UN Food Systems Summit to be convened by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2021 provides a major opportunity for FAO to project what it is doing, increase the visibility of, and deliver on, its leadership role in achieving the overarching goal of the Summit - to help stakeholders to better understand and manage the complex choices that affect the future of food systems.
- Structured around engagement at national, regional and global levels, the preparatory process for the Summit will enable stakeholders to develop, test and adapt frameworks and decision-making tools and will provide platforms for the innovative partnerships and initiatives needed to catalyse significant commitments for action and investment towards more sustainable food systems.
- The United Nations Secretary-General has put in place a governance structure comprising a Summit Advisory Committee chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, which is responsible for oversight of the preparatory process and for defining the Summit Outcomes; a Scientific Group to ensure that the foremost knowledge and evidence inform the Summit; and a Champions Group responsible for providing the political and financial support necessary to deliver a successful outcome.
- A Summit Secretariat, the technical branch of which will be hosted at FAO, will be responsible for supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit, Dr Agnes Kalibata, who will provide leadership, guidance and strategic direction of the Summit.
- Dr Kalibata briefed Member States in Rome on 10 February 2020, alongside the Principals of the Rome-based Agencies and has subsequently consulted widely on the Summit's preparatory process.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

The Programme Committee is invited to:

- affirm the critical importance of greater coordination of action and investment towards more sustainable food systems for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda;
- acknowledge the long-standing role of FAO in supporting the development of agricultural and food systems and recognize the recent efforts, through the development of more holistic strategies and initiatives, to promote more systemic delivery of FAO's support to the transformation of food systems, where deemed appropriate;
- affirm the critical need for improved frameworks and decision-making tools to guide interventions in support of more sustainable food systems;
- support the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General to convene a Food Systems Summit in 2021 and provide guidance on the Summit's objectives and preparatory process;
- recognize the inclusive, consultative process that has informed the approach to the Summit and provide guidance on opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement during the Summit's preparatory process; and
- share experiences of initiatives that have been taken to ensure that food systems developments contribute to an acceleration in the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Draft Advice

The Committee:

- **acknowledged the recent efforts of FAO, through the development of more holistic strategies and initiatives, to promote a more systemic delivery of FAO's support to the transformation of food systems, where deemed appropriate;**
- **commended the Secretary-General on his initiative to convene a Food Systems Summit in 2021 as a key event in catalysing increased and more coordinated efforts to ensure that food systems deliver as a potential entry point to accelerating progress towards the SDGs;**
- **acknowledged the lead role that the Organization will need to play in supporting the Summit's preparatory process, *inter alia*, leading the Evidence and Knowledge workstream, facilitating dialogue to enhance the science-policy interface, and in developing the capacities of food systems stakeholders to identify, design and scale-up coordinated initiatives to catalyse meaningful food systems transformation, appropriate to local contexts;**
- **requested the FAO Council to provide broader guidance on the opportunities that countries and their development partners can use for amplifying the impact of the Summit; and**
- **requested that a further progress report be presented to the 129th Session of the Programme Committee.**

I. Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has heightened awareness of the key role that food systems transformation can play as an entry point for accelerating progress to achieve the SDGs. It challenges countries to eliminate hunger and all other forms of malnutrition by ensuring that sufficient quantities of safe, nutritious and affordable food are available to all while promoting sustainable agriculture. However, the 2030 Agenda also emphasizes the inter-connectedness of the SDGs, and requires that Member States achieve this while creating the growth and employment opportunities needed to eradicate poverty, sustain biodiversity and the natural resource environment, and address the growing pressures of climate change.
2. To play their critical role, food systems will need to deliver reliable food security and nutrition for all and be economically profitable, but they will also need to have a positive or neutral impact on the climate, biodiversity and the natural resource environment and will need to evolve in ways that ensure that those least advantaged consumers and producers are not left behind.
3. Food systems stakeholders are beginning to take action and to change behavior; producers are experimenting with alternative practices to reduce impact on biodiversity, natural resources and climate; the food industry is engaging in more sustainable sourcing, product reformulation and reduction of losses; consumers, where they can, are seeking out better information on food for healthier diets and advocating for more environmentally friendly food products as well as reduction and better handling of waste.
4. However, the many independent initiatives of governments, private sector and civil society that have emerged in support of more sustainable food systems lack a common framing of the complex interactions, dependencies and trade-offs intrinsic to food systems. This is constraining the ability of societies with different priorities, observing different trends and having different agro-ecological and institutional potentials to identify and implement appropriate pathways towards more sustainable food systems.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic only reinforces the importance of the transformation of food systems. It highlights many of the challenges and the fragility of food systems, particularly for the most marginalized populations in all countries. It has also highlighted the interconnectedness of global challenges and their impacts on people, planet, and prosperity.

II. FAO's support to food systems transformation

6. The reality of food systems development as a key driver for food and agriculture development has long been recognized in FAO's work, featuring in FAO technical and policy work in many different ways. The emergence of a distinctive food systems approach to many of FAO's long-standing concerns, for example agricultural sustainability, poverty reduction, improved access to investment and finance, and especially the significance of food systems transformation as a theme linking different aspects of FAO's work in a more holistic frame are more recent phenomena.
7. More recently, however, there has been a growing demand for better integration of FAO analytical work across multiple domains through integration of data and analysis using a food systems lens. The common agenda of technical programmes across a wide range of disciplines and activities ranging from markets and trade to plant and livestock genetic resources, and from work on poverty and malnutrition to work on land, soil and water resources, and climate change appears to be converging around the central importance of "food systems transformation" as a principal driver of sustainable development. Food systems transformation is therefore becoming an increasingly central theme in shaping FAO's future role and work in food and agriculture.
8. To facilitate this convergence, FAO is supporting the development of a common understanding of Sustainable Food Systems and the pathways required to transition towards more sustainable systems. FAO has also played a lead role in defining approaches to food systems transformation through, for example, its technical support to the One Planet Network's Sustainable Food Systems Programme, in the formulation of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Food Systems Impact Programme, through the Committee on Food Security (CFS) Voluntary Guidelines on

Food Systems and Nutrition, and in co-leading a taskforce on Food Systems in preparation for the Nutrition for Growth Summit.

9. FAO, through its Director-General has also been at the forefront of recent high-level events advocating for greater attention to the way in which interventions in food systems are designed and implemented. These include the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) (2018 and 2019), United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2019, COP25 and most recently, Davos 2020.

10. In parallel, FAO has been working to clarify the concept of food systems, for example through its Governing Body meetings, Committee on Agriculture (COAG) 2018 item on Sustainable Food Systems, and through the issuance of briefs, for example FAO (2018) Sustainable Food Systems: Concept and framework. FAO is also building the staff capacity in adopting a food systems approach through a face-to-face capacity development programme soon to be launched as an e-learning course.

11. Improved data, analysis and decision-making tools are urgently needed to help countries and their populations to prioritize food system outcomes, work their way through the complex trade-offs, and to identify critical bottlenecks and investment gaps. The technical platform for data sharing and analysis that is being developed for the Hand-in-Hand Initiative has been designed to examine key policy and investment issues through a food systems transformation perspective. The Hand-in-Hand technical platform supports scenario-based analysis of alternative food systems transformation pathways and helps stakeholders evaluate means of reducing trade-offs among alternative policy and investment mixes. It recognizes the need to identify and evaluate the interactions, inter-dependencies and trade-offs among different investment and policy choices, and then, after selection of a package of innovations, investments, policy and institutional changes, using food systems analysis to examine the impacts of those policies on the 2030 Agenda objectives

12. The food systems approach has informed on the development of several recent initiatives which provide an entry point to support countries in the transformation of their food systems. Examples of these include:

- a) the promotion of increased and better quality investment in sustainable food value chains through the establishment of the AgrInvest initiative now active in several African countries, and the successful piloting of the 3ADI+ with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The initiative provides opportunities for increased mobilization of private sector investment aligned to international standards and guidelines;
- b) the launch of FAO's Framework for the Urban Food Agenda has positioned the Organization to support municipalities in strengthening their capacities to develop sustainable food systems with a particular focus on capitalizing on urban-rural linkages; and
- c) the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST) programme, has established a series of policy guides on different aspects of food systems development. FAO needs to increase its capacity to provide grounded policy advice and the FIRST model provides an excellent example of how this can be done.

III. How will the Summit accelerate progress in addressing the constraints to food systems transformation?

13. Although not an end in itself, the process towards the Food Systems Summit to be convened by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General as a key contribution to the UN Decade of Action, provides a major opportunity for FAO to project what it is doing, increase the visibility of, and deliver on, its leadership role. The process can be used to move towards common understanding of food system approaches/transformation; develop improved frameworks and tools and to add value to existing initiatives through strengthened collaboration and partnership. It gives FAO the opportunity to convene, provide data, and improve understanding of the critical importance of trade-offs.

14. The overarching goal of the Food Systems Summit is to help stakeholders and leaders of transformation initiatives better understand and manage the complex choices that affect the future of food systems and accelerate progress toward the SDGs. This will be achieved by working towards a series of objectives which will help to define the different elements of the Food Systems Summit preparatory process:

- a) affirming, through an inclusive process of consultation, the centrality of food systems to the sustainable development agenda and the urgency of investing in more sustainable food systems;
- b) aligning stakeholders around a common definition of a practical food systems framework as a foundation for concerted action;
- c) developing strengthened evidence and tools for improved measurement, analysis and management of trade-offs in specific contexts by providing open data sharing platforms for modelling and analysis to empower stakeholders who actively and appropriately support food systems transformation at all levels;
- d) strengthening the science/policy interface to allow for the identification of realistic, inclusive and innovative solutions; and
- e) catalysing and accelerating multi-stakeholder action for the transformation of food systems to ensure that the Summit provides the opportunity to endorse effective and intensified action including scaled-up investment and innovation and rapid dissemination of experience and knowledge based on increased science-based policy dialogue.

IV. What does the process towards the Summit look like?

15. The Summit will bring together leaders from all regions and sectors. It will be advised by an inclusive, far-reaching preparatory process supported by robust and independent evidence to work through the complex linked, or nexus, challenges that must be addressed if more sustainable food systems are to be achieved.

16. The process will engage governments, private sector, research institutions and think tanks, implementing agencies, civil society, farmers, and individuals who have most to gain or lose from the way food systems function in the future. The Summit will be bold, will be science-driven, and will have connectivity, investment and action among its guiding principles.

17. Structured around engagement at national, regional and global levels, it will enable diverse stakeholders to develop, test and adopt decision-making tools in a variety of contexts and will provide a platform to strengthen existing and spark new partnerships and initiatives. At national level, stakeholders will receive support to develop action plans for change. A series of regional consultations will allow knowledge and experience sharing. Engagement with existing global platforms and contemporaneous events will ensure improved alignment of understanding and coherence of action.

18. To facilitate this process, the UN Secretary-General has put in place a governance structure to work with existing capacities, structures and facilities around the world:

- a) The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit, Dr Agnes Kalibata, will provide leadership, guidance and strategic direction of the Summit. She will be responsible for cooperating with key leaders, including governments and other strategic stakeholder groups, to galvanize action and leadership for the Food Systems Summit, and will also assist with outreach and will represent the Secretary-General in the many global and regional consultative events focused on food system transformation planned during 2020 and 2021.

- b) The Summit Advisory Committee will be responsible for oversight of the preparatory process and provision of guidance to Dr Kalibata. Chaired by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, the Committee will provide input on key considerations and decisions related to the Summit's vision, development, and implementation, as well as provide strategic leadership across the areas of action to ensure the Summit achieves its intended outcomes.
- c) The Scientific Group is responsible for ensuring the Summit will bring to bear the foremost knowledge and evidence and helps expand the base of shared knowledge on experiences, approaches, and tools for driving sustainable food systems that will inform the future. The work of the Scientific Group will ensure the robustness and independence of the science underpinning dialogue of food system policy and investment decisions. It will also advise on the content, recommended outcomes and commitments that emerge from the Summit.
- d) The Champions Group is responsible for supporting the development, delivery, amplification, and political and financial support of the Summit in order to help ensure it achieves its intended outcomes. The Champions Group members will give key input, feedback, and reflection to the Summit Secretariat and Advisory Committee during the preparatory process and help to ensure it engages all key global constituencies to drive a new coalition for change and collective action that will chart transformative change for sustainable food systems for the future.
- e) The Summit Secretariat will be responsible for supporting the efforts of the Special-Envoy and all governance mechanisms of the Summit. The Secretariat headquarters will be in Nairobi where the Special Envoy will be based, but it will also include offices in Rome and New York to facilitate key connections with the UN system, Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), Permanent Representatives, and other stakeholders. The RBAs have committed support to the Secretariat in both staff and financial resources.

19. Following an initial briefing with Member States in Rome on 10 February 2020, Dr Kalibata has consulted widely with different constituencies on the process of engagement. She has committed to preparing a proposal for the preparatory process to be tabled at the first meeting of the Advisory Committee scheduled to be held around the end of April.

20. The Summit's preparatory process will build on the many existing global events and platforms that are supporting the transformation towards more sustainable food systems. It will look to build on agreements, commitments, and collaborative actions defined through these other global events and processes, including relevant UN system governing body processes (e.g. the RBAs Governing bodies; UN General Assembly; World Health Assembly, etc.), multi-stakeholder meetings and platforms *e.g.* G20, CFS, etc.

21. The process will also build synergies between the multiple regional and national initiatives and alliances that already exist or are forming to support the transformation of food systems.