

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR CONVERGENCE DIALOGUES

This guidance note is designed to help National Convenors, UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, and the Ecosystem of Support to design and implement in-country Convergence Dialogues. It is expected that the Convergence Dialogue method is adapted in line with national priorities and local circumstances.

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1. WHAT IS THE CONVERGENCE INITIATIVE?

The Convergence Initiative was launched by the UN Deputy Secretary-General at COP28 (2023) and bridges two global milestones: the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Accelerated Food Systems Transformation (UNFSS+2) and the COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action. Together, these highlight the urgency of aligning food systems transformation with climate action to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement goals.

By linking national food systems transformation pathways (or other relevant strategic plans or policies) with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), the Convergence Initiative aims to drive synergetic action at the country level in pursuit of both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.

Recognizing that convergence actions are already taking place in countries, along with ongoing international initiatives already supporting the transition of food and other sustainable development efforts in line with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, the Convergence Initiative builds upon and strengthens existing cross-sector convergence processes and mechanisms by co-identifying gaps and interventions to ensure greater coherence and collaboration, and reduce duplication and burdens on country-level engagement.

1.1 CONVERGENCE PROCESS

The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub), has developed a process to operationalize the Convergence Initiative. It is based on the following approach:

The Convergence Process

Our approach is built on four key steps to ensure effective alignment and synergies between food systems and climate actions.



Facilitate

Support national efforts to align priorities between food systems transformation and climate action teams.



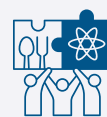
Empower

Equip National Convenors to lead alignment through multi-sector co-design and peer-learning initiatives.



Nurture

Connect national efforts with global and regional actions to maximize impact and optimize resources.



Safeguard

Ensure an inclusive approach by engaging diverse stakeholders in a collaborative, whole-society co-design process.

1.2 CONVERGENCE DIALOGUES

At the heart of the convergence process are Convergence Dialogues designed to examine challenges and priorities on converging food systems transformation and climate action from different perspectives.

1.2.1 Why use dialogues to explore convergence?

Multistakeholder dialogues are increasingly recognized as a valuable approach for engaging multiple actors to work together, using their combined knowledge, to resolve systems challenges.

The Dialogues are moments for:

- Engaging multiple actors in unusual ways;
- Enabling them to explore ideas together;
- Encouraging creativity, emphasising equity;
- Emerging more powerfully through connections;
- Elaborating pathways, intentions, and commitments together.

This is why dialogues were widely used in advance of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. Almost 1,700 Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSDs) were convened, many of them by National Convenors. The outcomes of these dialogues included the development of national food systems pathways.

The Convergence Dialogues are built from the FSSDs and are adapted from the standard method. They offer the space and opportunity at the country level to bring together various policymakers as well as the broader ecosystem of support to learn about each other's processes and programmes. Together, all stakeholders can co-define a collaborative way forward to avoid duplication of work and fragmentation and to maximize synergies and parallel processes. Moreover, they are a unique opportunity for a frank and direct conversation on trade-offs and synergies between different sectors and stakeholders.

1.3 ORGANISING CONVERGENCE DIALOGUES

1.3.1 Who is responsible for organizing the Convergence Dialogues?

The National Convenor is the primary person responsible for initiating the national convergence process. The National Convenor is expected to connect and work closely with the National Climate Focal Point (NDC/NAP) to establish or enhance an existing Convergence Action Group – a multistakeholder platform that will oversee and encourage convergence working. The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub will provide guidance for these dialogues, with the 4SD Foundation providing additional support via the Hub.

1.3.2 What support is available to countries organizing Convergence Dialogues?

A range of support is available to countries organising Convergence Dialogues:

- Individual support to National Convenors and their support teams from the UN Country Team, the Hub, and the 4SD Foundation during the period of the Convergence Initiative.
- Online connection sessions for National Convenors and their support teams, as well as potential regional meetings for sharing and learning.
- Through submission of requests, financial and logistical support to conduct dialogues within the approved budget. The allocation of resources is disbursed through the FAO or other UN Country Offices.
- Support to mobilize the Ecosystem of Support and facilitate connections for additional technical assistance at the country level.

1.3.3 What is the timeline for the Convergence Initiative?

Pilot Convergence Dialogue country workshops are to be organized between May 2025 – Dec 2025.



2. GETTING STARTED - INTRODUCTION MEETING BETWEEN NATIONAL CONVENOR, THE HUB AND 4SD

- 2.1 Upon confirmation from the National Convenor that their country wishes to be a 'Dialogue Country', the Hub will organize a meeting with 4SD, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) and UN Country Team.
- 2.2 In this meeting, the purpose and expected implementation modalities, including the three stages of work, will be presented in more detail, as well as the support available.
- 2.3 National Convenors and their representatives will be invited to share any information and processes that are already taking place relevant to the convergence process.
- 2.4 Additional invitees may include the National Climate Focal Point should be invited to participate (see box 1 below), relevant government colleagues (focusing on environment, climate, nutrition, local government, etc.), UN RC and country team, other relevant organizations that have been actively engaged. The National Convenor should define the list of invitees to be included in this initial introductory call.
- 2.5 After this preparatory meeting, the National Convenor will initiate work for Stage 1: Preparation and formation of the Convergence Action Group.

Connecting with National Climate Focal Points

In some countries, there may be existing programs of work that aim to foster convergence between food systems transformation and climate action. There may also be working relationships in place between the National Convenor and National Climate Focal Points. In some countries there may be multiple Climate and Environment Focal Points (for mitigation, adaptation as well as for nature) that should be engaged.

In countries where such relationships do not yet exist, National Convenors are encouraged to reach out to National Climate Focal Points, inviting them to co-lead this convergence process. This can also be explored in the preparatory call. The UN Resident Coordinator and/or relevant member of the UN Country Team or Convergence Initiative partner will facilitate this connection if needed.

3. STAGE 1: PREPARATION AND FORMATION OF CONVERGENCE ACTION GROUP

After the preparatory call, the National Convenor assembles a Convergence Action Group (CAG), which is suggested to be composed of participants involved in the introductory call and any other missing actors and organizations. The CAG can be built on an existing coordination group or mechanism and is encouraged to be co-led by the National Convenor and the National Climate Focal Point.

3.1 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CAG?

Based on the existing extent and functioning of cross-sector convergence, the CAG is established to support the National Convenor and National Climate Focal Point to:

- Support in the preparation of the Convergence Dialogue. This includes:
 - Developing an outline programme for the Convergence Dialogues, as well as their anticipated outcomes.
 - Designing a process that includes convening multistakeholder dialogue event(s) and identifying possible actions and interventions that will improve the functioning of cross-sector working arrangements.
- Contribute to the country analysis/assessment of ongoing convergence activities:
 - Assemble information on the current extent and functioning of cross-sector convergence of food-climate policymaking, implementation and governance.
 - Identify existing synergies and potential trade-offs – which will be location and issue specific.
 - Explore the gaps in existing convergence arrangements.
- Following the dialogue, develop and support the implementation of a Convergence Implementation Plan, which identifies convergence actions, means of implementation, resources needed, expected progress milestones, and means for monitoring them.

The role and composition of the CAG will evolve during the course of the convergence process.

3.2 WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE CAG?

The CAG should include the main government stakeholders that need to be involved. It is anticipated that in most countries, the group is co-led by the National Convenor and National Climate Focal Point, but the actual leadership arrangements may vary from country to country. Other group members may include relevant representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Environment, Local Government, Social Welfare, Women and Youth. The National Nutrition Focal Point, as well as officials responsible for coordinating action on water and the environment, will also be requested to take part.

Consideration should also be given to inviting, when relevant, **representatives of the major stakeholder groups**, including family farmers, women, youth and Indigenous Peoples. Key entities in the in-country ecosystem of support may also be invited including persons from the Office of UN RC, UN entities in-country (the UN Country Team), development banks, and other national and international technical partners with active or upcoming initiatives.

3.3 WHAT ARE THE MODALITIES OF WORKING FOR THE CAG?

The Convergence Group shall determine its modalities of work.

Stage 1 main output: Formation of the CAG.

4. STAGE 2: CONVENE CONVERGENCE DIALOGUES

This stage involves the convening the first Convergence Dialogue. A progression of two or three dialogues, over time, may be considered - for continued dialogue, follow-up and transparent monitoring to ensure accountability. The subsequent dialogues are to be determined by the National Convenor and CAG.

Recommendation: The Convergence Dialogue is to be built upon past dialogues by specific stakeholder groups or dialogues at the sub-national and local levels.

4.1 THE CONVERGENCE DIALOGUE METHOD

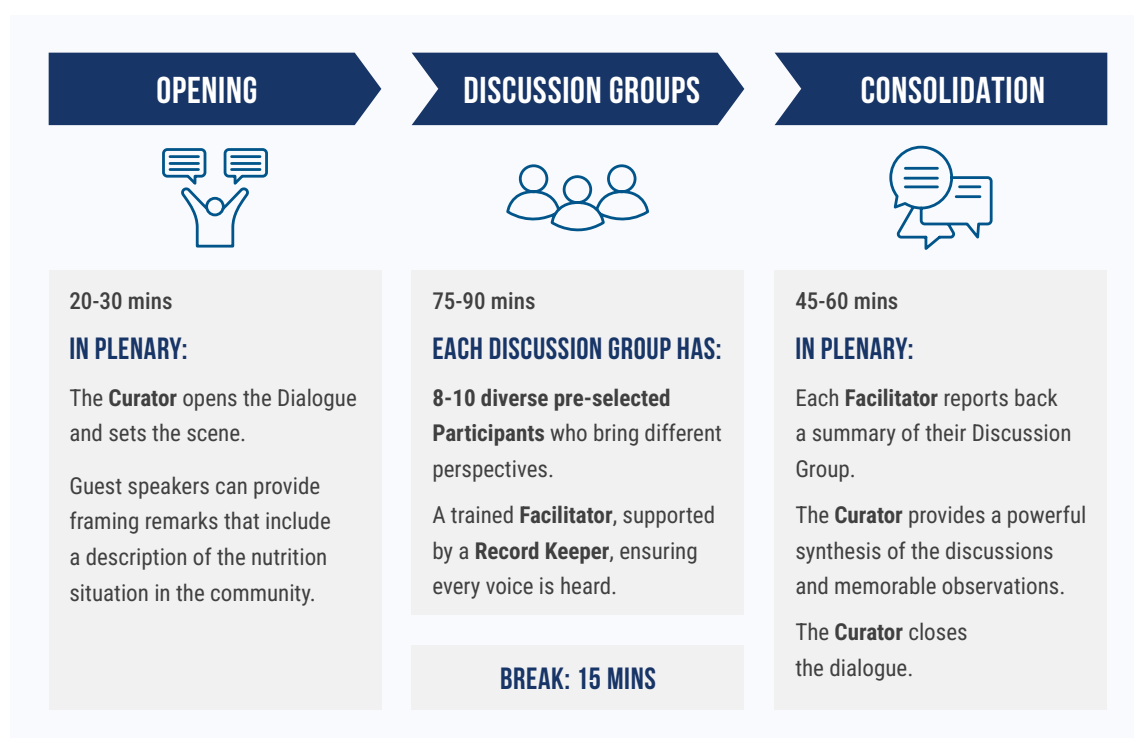
The standard method is presented here but is to be flexible and be adapted to local contexts. It is designed to ensure that each dialogue:

- Engages a diversity of participants from across various sectors;
- Uses a standardized format, which facilitates purposeful and productive discussions and the recording of outcomes;
- Has a clear focus and offers topics for discussion that relate to the objectives of the Convergence Initiative.

4.2 WHAT IS THE STANDARD FORMAT OF A CONVERGENCE DIALOGUE?

A Convergence Dialogue event typically includes a **short** opening segment by the National Convenor, presenting the meeting objectives and expected output. This is followed by discussion groups, reporting back from each group, and the consolidation segment, where outcomes are synthesised. Each section is described in more detail below.

Convenors can adapt the method to respond to their needs and context. The objective should always be to encourage meaningful exchanges between all participants.



4.2.1 Opening: The opening of a Convergence Dialogue is essential to setting the tone of the dialogue, explaining its purpose, and clarifying its aim and expectations. It is a crucial moment where participants are helped to feel included and excited. This is why choosing the right master of ceremonies (or curator) for the dialogue event is important. The opening should be short and tight but should include some succinct framing to describe the existing national convergence situation.

4.2.2 Discussion groups: The most important element of a Convergence Dialogue event is the facilitated exchange between participants that takes place in discussion groups. The composition of discussion groups is important. The participants in each group need to have diverse profiles to make the dialogue effective. It is best if they are not familiar with each other's perspectives. The duration of discussion groups should be a minimum of 75 minutes. Facilitators are allocated to each group to support participants as they consider their discussion topic, exchange views with each other, and identify interventions that will improve convergent working. The facilitator ensures inclusive participation and encourages a focus on emerging outcomes.



4.2.3 A **discussion topic** is used to help participants focus on a future (say five years ahead) where convergence across sectors is functioning well and where actions on agriculture, food systems, and climate mutually reinforce each other. The convergence would be reflected at local and national levels and would contribute to the goals of the 2030 development agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement. The discussion topic acts as a shared objective for each discussion group, provoking participants to think beyond their existing situation towards achieving something altogether better for all.

Here is an example discussion topic: In two years, policies on agriculture, food systems, and climate change have been developed through the close cooperation of officials and stakeholders from different sectors in well-functioning committees and/or coordination arrangements.

4.2.4 Consolidation: In the consolidation stage of a Convergence Dialogue, the master of ceremony invites each discussion group facilitator to summarize the ideas that emerged in the discussion group, and actions to be prioritized, including those on which there is disagreement. The facilitator is also encouraged to reflect on the mood in the discussion group and how it may have evolved during the exchanges. The master of ceremonies then summarizes the main points that have been shared by the facilitators, highlighting patterns, making connections and identifying actions to be prioritized. The master of ceremonies may encourage participants to continue connecting and propose follow-up actions that they could take.

4.3 WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES OF THE CONVERGENCE DIALOGUES?

In addition to building connections between diverse stakeholders, the Convergence Dialogues help establish:

- An agreed vision of convergence by cross-sector, interdisciplinary and stakeholder groups
- Interventions for achieving these results
- Timed milestones
- Monitoring and evaluation

5. STAGE 3: PROPOSALS AND PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD

In this stage, members of the CAG, with the National Convenor and the National Climate Focal Point, review the outcomes of the Stage 2 dialogues and consider how best to incorporate these outcomes within local and national convergence processes and strategies

During stage three, the CAG develops a Convergence Implementation Plan, which describes the convergence process and identifies the next steps.

This plan may include the following sections:

1. The **purpose and vision** of converging food systems and climate action. This will include changes to be made and decisions that must be worked through to achieve this vision.
2. Identification of a) new (institutional) **arrangements** of working together, b) **policy connections** that need to be reinforced, notably between the national pathway (or similar food systems policy documents) and other key planning including NDCs, NAPs and NBSAPs and c) which **stakeholders** need to be included and ways they can work well together for collective action.
3. **Timeline, key milestones and monitoring.**
4. Concrete **next steps.**

The CAG is encouraged to establish and own the following working modality, to ensure that the identified actions are carried out, and to maintain communication for transparency and trust building. The Hub may support in framing/identifying relevant actors for the next steps.



ANNEX: SIMPLIFIED TIMELINE/CHECKLIST OF ACTION ITEMS:

STAGE 1: PREPARATION AND FORMATION OF CAG KEY ACTION STEPS:

1. Preparatory call & stakeholder mapping

- Hold a preparatory call with the National Convenor, National Climate Focal Point, and UN Country Team.
- Map key stakeholders, including relevant ministries, civil society organizations, Indigenous groups, and technical partners.
- **Establish the CAG:** Define membership and roles within the CAG.
- Invite and confirm participation from government and key stakeholders.
- Set up a coordination mechanism (e.g., regular virtual meetings, communication channels).

2. Baseline assessment

- Collect data on current food-climate policy convergence, including past dialogues by stakeholder groups and at subnational levels.
- Identify synergies and gaps in cross-sector coordination.
- Summarize findings in a baseline assessment report.

3. Develop a plan for the Convergence Dialogues

- Design the structure, objectives, and expected outcomes of the dialogues.
- Draft an agenda and proposed discussion topics.
- Share plans with the Hub and 4SD for feedback.

Outcome of Stage 1:

- CAG established and operational.
- Baseline assessment completed.
- Convergence Dialogues plan finalized.

STAGE 2: CONVENE CONVERGENCE DIALOGUES

Key action steps:

1. First Convergence Dialogue

- Hold an initial multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- Identify convergence interventions and prioritize key actions.

2. Follow-up dialogues

- Conduct additional dialogues at national/subnational levels as needed.
- Refine convergence interventions and define potential policy connections.

3. Synthesis and validation

- Summarize findings and align them with national policies (e.g., NDCs, NAPs, national food systems pathways).
- Share a summary of agreed-upon actions with stakeholders for feedback.

Outcome of Stage 2:

- Conduct the Convergence Dialogue.
 - Identified priority convergence interventions.
 - Stakeholder consensus on action areas.
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STAGE 3: PROPOSALS AND PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD

Key action steps:

1. Draft the Convergence Implementation Plan

- Outline the vision, policy connections, and institutional arrangements.
- Define key milestones, monitoring indicators, and resource needs.

2. Stakeholder review and refinement

- Engage stakeholders in reviewing and refining the implementation plan.
- Adjust based on feasibility and national policy alignment.

3. Finalize and launch implementation plan

- Secure high-level endorsement from relevant ministries.
- Present the plan to key stakeholders and development partners.
- Develop a communication strategy for dissemination.

4. Ongoing monitoring and adaptive implementation

- CAG to meet bi-monthly to track progress and address challenges.
- Continue Convergence Dialogues periodically to sustain momentum.
- Adjust strategies based on feedback and implementation progress.

Outcome of Stage 3:

- Convergence Implementation Plan finalized and endorsed.
- Clear roadmap for institutionalizing food-climate convergence.
- Established mechanism for ongoing monitoring and adaptation.