

# The Convergence Initiative

*A framework to strengthen synergetic action between food systems transformation and climate action agendas.*

## The Origins of the Convergence Initiative

The convergence Initiative is based upon two essential milestones of global processes related to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris agreement that achieved during 2023, namely the following:

- The UN Secretary-General's [Call to Action for Accelerated Food Systems Transformation](#) released at the 1<sup>st</sup> UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking (UNFSS+2) in July 2023 emphasizing, inter alia, the need to “align the implementation of national food systems transformation pathways with the continuous updates of National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs) for climate action”.
- The [COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action](#), endorsed by the heads of 159 Member States stressing inter alia that “any path to fully achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement must include agriculture and food system” and affirming that “agriculture and food systems must urgently adapt and transform in order to respond to the imperatives of climate change”.

The FAO Roadmap [Achieving SDG2 without breaching the 1.5°C threshold](#) offers also a strategic framing to Governments as they explore approaches that work best in their own context and provides complimentary elements that link the agenda of food systems transformation and climate action.

To support the implementation of these ambitious purposes, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub has developed the Convergence Initiative which was launched by the UN Deputy Secretary General during the COP28, and the Hub has been entrusted with the implementation of the Initiative.

## Objective and Expected Outcomes

The Convergence Initiative aims to support national efforts to advance the alignment between the “food systems transformation (FST)” and “climate action (CA)” agendas to enable governments and stakeholders at national level, to strengthen synergetic action that will simultaneously support the achievement of the SDGs, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

It is expected that the Convergence Initiative will strategically contribute to change in three different levels:

- **Governance:** Cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms being established or strengthened, and supported by multi-sector monitoring, evaluation and learning processes.

- **Policy:** Convergence Action Plans are developed based on each country's policy mechanisms and tools. The CAPs will be multi-dimensional frameworks with the objective to coordinate action towards improved outcomes. The FST Pathways, NDCs, NAPs, and other relevant national plans will provide the main dimensions to be considered for the CAPs.
- **Implementation:** Programs, projects and initiatives being implemented that reflect convergence and collaboration between multiple stakeholders across different sectors, including agriculture, environment, climate, health and others. The implementation is based on countries' priorities and targeted sectors. This requires defining a voluntary monitoring framework at the country level.

## The Envisaged Convergence Process

The Hub will design a process to operationalize the objective and expected results of the Convergence Initiative based on the following approach:

- **Facilitate** (upon demand) national processes aimed at exploring and identifying alignment between the mandates and priorities of the FST and CA teams as well as opportunities for synergetic action.
- **Empower** the National Food Systems Convenors to advance such alignment through multi-sectoral co-design processes and peer-learning.
- **Safeguard** a whole-society approach to be followed via the active engagement of various stakeholders in an inclusive
- **Nurture** links with relevant global and regional processes to ensure complementarity of action and avoid duplication of efforts and resources.

These four elements will be implemented and incorporated with action at national, regional and global levels. The Hub will coordinate the implementation building upon expertise and capacities of the FAO, WFP, IFAD as well as other UN Agencies that support countries in the areas of food systems transformations and climate action. Details on each of these four elements are provided below.

## Facilitate National Processes

The Convergence Initiative is open to all countries that are covering the following two conditions:

- **A National Food Systems Convenor is in place:** The Hub will keep on engaging with the National Con Food Systems Convenors. Governments who wish to nominate a new Convenor are welcome to consider the person who is well-placed to lead a national convergence process across the government. The Hub will promote the empowerment of women national convenors.
- **Formation of a Convergence Group:** The National Convenor supported by the UN Resident Coordinator, reaches out to existing national focal points for climate action and national groups involved in encouraging convergence across food systems, climate action and biodiversity. A Convergence Group is formed to advance the Convergence Initiative at country level.

In general, the country level process could follow four concrete and interconnected stages as follows

- **Preparation:** Identifying existing elements of convergence and the essential participants in national processes and establishing a Convergence Group; Assembling information and analysis on the extent of cross sector convergence in food systems policymaking, implementation and governance; Developing a work plan with objectives for the national convergence process.
- **Dialogues:** Convening multi-level, cross-sector, and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues to surface different perspectives within and among diverse stakeholder groups: use dialogues to examine challenges and priorities from different points of view, harnessing interdisciplinary science and local insights.
- **Opportunities** Exploring options for greater convergence: Work in sub-groups to establish synergies, expose difficult choices, and test new arrangements for intensifying convergence in a politically contested context.
- **Consolidation:** Design convergence action plans and incorporate arrangements that lead to greater convergence across agriculture, food, climate, biodiversity and nutrition through governance shifts and changes in policies and implementation.

It is expected that each country will decide on its own implementation arrangements and specific planning process.

A note on the Convergence Action Plans. The CAPs are not intended to be frameworks that will substitute, or merge, existing national development frameworks related to FST and CA. They will rather be voluntary frameworks that will focus on identifying implementation modalities and outputs that can promote synergetic action that will simultaneously support the achievement of the SDGs, and the Paris Climate Agreement. To this extend there will be no prescribed outline of such plans and no prescribed policy tools to be used. Each national Convergence Group will define the outline and the content of the CAPs on the basis of the national process.

Through the Convergence Initiative, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub supports National Food Systems Convenors in direct coordination with the UN Resident Coordinators and UNCTs, with:

- **Convenor connection moments:** There will be periodic orientation sessions and regional meetings where National Convenors and their teams will be invited to share the progress and challenges they face to advance the national convergence processes.
- **Upon demand facilitation of national dialogues:** Regular liaison with National Convenors and the Convergence Group to respond to questions and offer country specific coaching as needed.
- **Bespoke (and upon demand) support for convergence action plans.** Planning workshops and peer-learning sessions, provision of technical and financial support.
- **Progress reporting:** Synthesis reports on country progress ahead of COP29, UNFSS+4 and COP30.

### **Empower the National Food Systems Convenors**

The Hub acts as the connector of the National Food Systems Convenors and it has been positioned to supporting them on implementing their National Food Systems Transformation Pathways. Within these efforts the Hub will be using a set of coordination

activities that will aim to increase their operational capacity to advance the alignment of FST and CA processes through multi-sectoral co-design processes and peer-learning. Towards this objective the Hub will provide the following coordination services.

- **Regional meetings** for the National Convenors focusing on the convergence initiative inclusive of participation of climate action focal points.
- **Knowledge support and materials:** Convergence Framework, Dialogue guidance, tools for advancing food system transformation through NDCs, NAPs and other frameworks and vice versa.
- **Integration in climate fora:** Support the participation of national convenors to relevant regional or global climate action fora and peer-learning events to enhance their capacity and links with the climate action ecosystems.

### Safeguarding a whole-society approach

While the national level work will be led by governments, the Hub will advocate towards ensuring that stakeholders and the ecosystem of support will be included in this work with a particular focus on food producers, consumers, businesses, cooperatives, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, women, young people (in schools and universities), youth organizations, caregivers, private sector associations, research institutions, and more, and ensure that meaningful commitments for action coming from these dialogues are included in the government strategies.

At the global level the Hub will continue and enhance its engagement with stakeholder groups that can provide added value to national convergence processes. The Hub will also link the Convergence Initiative to other initiatives that contribute to the implementation of the UN Secretary Call to Action of the UNFSS+2. To this extend the Hub will coordinate work with partners to ensure that the convergence initiative creates value on achieving the following aspect of the Call:

- **Investing in research, data, innovation, and technology** capacities including stronger connections to science, experience and expertise.
- **Deepening joined-up participatory design** and implementation inclusive of women, young people and indigenous peoples at the local level, with knowledge sharing, cross-sector programming, multi-stakeholder partnering, context and place-based actions, stronger and more diverse production, and mutual accountability.
- **Promoting increased engagement of businesses**, including through public private partnerships, to shape the sustainability of food systems and establish and strengthen accountability mechanisms, recognizing their centrality for food systems.

### Nurturing links

The long-term success of the Convergence Initiative will depend, inter alia, on ensuring that synergetic food systems transformation and climate action is featured at the regional and global levels as a solution on achieving the SDGs the Paris agreement and related development objectives. To achieve this the convergence initiative needs to be linked to global and regional processes and fora that are central to these objectives. These processes or/and fora include, but are not limited, to the following:

- The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
- UNFSS Stocktaking Moments
- Climate COPs
- Biodiversity COPs
- N4G Process
- Global Health Summits
- Global Environmental Assembly
- ECOSOC sessions and particularly the Partnerships Forum
- The sessions of the World Committee on Food Security
- The World Food Forum
- The Regional Fora on Sustainable Development

The Hub in coordination with the UN Agencies supporting the Hub will prioritize engagement with these processes and design with partners key interventions that will advance the convergence agenda and will showcase successes and results from countries.

### Monitoring progress

The proposed framework to monitor the convergence process at the country level comprises 10 indicators and it represents a starting point that will be further reviewed and aligned with recommendations that will be coming from national processes. Some of these indicators will include a set of data points for each indicator, combining yes and no answers with a qualitative description. The collected quantitative data could be supplemented with qualitative data gathered from National Convenors and other in-country focal points. This information will be cross-referenced with other sources, including the United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) and other organizations within the Ecosystem of Support (EoS), the convening team, and potentially climate focal points. It is expected that the information tracked throughout the process will provide not only quantitative indicators but also trends. It is expected that this framework might be modified following consultation with relevant actors especially at the country level.

Monitoring Country Convergence Process		
<b>Governance shifts</b> - Are there cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder mechanisms established that include relevant sectors (e.g. agriculture, climate, nutrition, environment, health, and others)? How do they function?	<b>Policy shifts</b> – Are food systems issues integrated into Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, Long-term Strategies, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and other related strategies within the coming two years, in time for COP30?	<b>Implementation shifts</b> - Are programs, projects and initiatives being implemented that reflect convergence and collaboration between multiple stakeholders across different sectors, including agriculture, environment, climate and nutrition?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of countries establishing <b>functional connections</b> between the National Convenor and the Climate Focal Point.</li> <li>2. Number of countries with established <b>cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder committees / mechanisms</b> that include relevant sectors (e.g. agriculture, climate, environment, health and others) and the <b>voice and interest of diverse stakeholders</b>.</li> <li>3. Number of countries conducting <b>multi-stakeholder dialogues</b> and/or other consultative processes to identify trade-offs and synergies in related policies across sectors including agriculture, environment, climate, health and others.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of countries conducting <b>analysis</b>, including gap assessments, on <b>trade-offs and synergies</b> in related policies across sectors to inform the policy making process.</li> <li>2. Number of countries reporting <b>updated food systems transformation pathways</b> or other similar documents to integrate national priorities for action on climate and nature.</li> <li>3. Number of countries in which <b>food systems</b> have been integrated <b>into their NAPs, NDCs 3.0, Long-term Strategies, NBSAPs</b>, and other related strategies before the convening of COP30.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of countries reporting <b>implementation plans developed</b> to operationalize food system transformation and climate action at national and subnational levels.</li> <li>2. Number of countries reporting <b>programs, projects and initiatives being implemented</b> that involve collaboration between multiple stakeholders across sectors, including agriculture, environment and climate sectors.</li> <li>3. Number of countries setting up and/or aligning <b>monitoring and evaluation mechanisms / systems</b> to track convergence of food systems and climate action.</li> <li>4. Number of countries reporting on <b>interdisciplinary research projects</b> to advance food systems transformation and climate action.</li> </ol>
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### Implementation modalities

- The Hub will coordinate the implementation of the initiative building upon expertise and capacities of the FAO, WFP, IFAD as well as other UN Agencies that support countries in the areas of food systems transformations and climate action.
- The Hub will ensure that the work under the convergence initiative will be drawing on references such as the FAO Roadmap to SDG2, will work closely and collaborative with the NDC partnership, and associated process aiming to update policy instruments such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). The Convergence Initiative will also explore at the national level opportunities to link with the work of the teams that develop and implement

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), and other related strategies.

- The convening of national level dialogues will be under the auspices of the UN Resident Coordinators who will be enabled to support the process at national level.
- Regional level work will be done in direct collaboration with the UN Regional Commissions and the regional offices of FAO, WFP and IFAD as well as other Agencies that will provide support for the Initiative.
- The Hub will also partner with knowledge organizations to ensure that state-of-the art knowledge and capacity development services are provided to the national level.
- The development of convergence action plans at the national level will respect national policies and operational modalities and will be based on a modular approach that will lead to bespoke and demand-driven support at the country level. It is expected that each country will decide on the exact implementation modality for the initiative at the national level under the overall guidance and quality assurance outline of the Convergence Framework.
- The Hub will collaborate with the 4SD Foundation for the facilitation of national processes building on the experience of 4SD on supporting the national food systems dialogues and relevant processes. The 4SD will act as a service provider for the Hub to ensure that a central node for the national dialogues is in place supporting their organization, tracking progress on the dialogues, compiling summaries and other relevant deliverables that will help to present the results of the initiative.