

UNITED NATIONS
FOOD SYSTEMS COORDINATION HUB

Country Needs Survey Analysis

Understanding country needs to accelerate food
systems transformation for the SDGs

2022



UNITED NATIONS
FOOD SYSTEMS
COORDINATION HUB

COUNTRY NEEDS SURVEY ANALYSIS

*Understanding country needs to accelerate
food systems transformations for the SDGs*

(July 2022)



Country Needs Survey Analysis

I. Understanding post-Summit country needs to shape an effective Coordination Hub

1. The Food Systems Summit journey and the way forward

The Food Systems Summit (hereinafter FSS), held during the 2021 UN General Assembly, cemented the global realization that transformative action in food systems is fundamental to achieving all the SDGs.

In total, 163 Member States, including 77 Heads of State and Government, made statements at the Summit speaking to the importance of food systems in advancing the 2030 Agenda nationally and globally. 148 Member States appointed Convenors leading national dialogues, and 117 have so far submitted National Pathways for food systems transformation that offer a basis for realizing the vision of the 2030 Agenda at country level, with a range of stakeholders.

Post-Summit, countries will have to engage in the critical work of translating their pathways into actionable strategies, investment plans, flagship programs, and other actions anchored to their national development strategy to convert the aspirations into concrete action and ensure sustainable impact by 2030.

Keeping this momentum and realizing this promise will require sustained action at the country level, which is the reason why, as a follow up to The Food Systems Summit, the UN Secretary-General has committed the UN system to establish a UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (hereafter the Hub) to provide needs-informed and demand-driven support to countries implementing food system transformation pathways.

This report presents the results of the Country Needs Survey conducted by the Hub in February 2022 to allow national governments to express their priority needs and expectations for support as well their perspective on the value addition of the Hub to provide concrete and effective support to the follow-up of the Summit at a country level. More than 80% of the countries that have submitted a pathway responded to the survey. The results of this survey significantly informed and shaped the Hub's 2022-2023 Work Plan.

It is encouraging to note that commitment at the country level remained strong post-Summit. More than half (52%) of the responding countries reported having already endorsed their pathway at the time of the survey, with implementation already underway for many. Of the surveyed countries, 25% reported a pathway under political consideration likely to be swiftly endorsed.

The survey reveals that, in many countries, having invested individuals, dedicated teams and the involvement of various government departments and national stakeholder groups made a fundamental difference. The UN contribution was also positively acknowledged with

respondents in nearly all countries indicating that the UN played a key role to help governments navigate challenges related to the complexity of the food systems approach.

Countries particularly valued dedicated funding made available through UN Resident Coordinator Offices for the organisation of dialogues, together with experts and resources often provided by specialized agencies (notably FAO, WFP, IFAD) in countries.

The global-level support through guidance, tools, tailored accompaniment, and activities was offered on behalf of the Food Systems Summit Secretariat by 4SD.

Countries are moving from vision and consultations to action

The development of national food systems transformation pathways is a non-linear process. Thus, most countries (57%) approach their pathway as a “living document”, fed by consecutive virtuous circles of sectoral, multisectoral and supra-sectoral visioning, policy reform, implementation as well as stock-take towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Pathways” correspond to different realities in countries and stand for various levels of ambition for systemic policy development. Approaches adopted by responding countries range from updating sectorial (often food security or agricultural) frameworks, connecting multiple ongoing sectoral policies and planning cycles, to developing new national food systems strategies, connecting to national economic and social development plans, up to national 2030 agenda strategies and voluntary national reviews.

Some countries have decided to reconduct the National Convenor function while others might discontinue it. Dialogues are valued in both the inception of pathways and in various stages of the follow-up. With food systems spanning across many ministries and agencies in all countries (up to 27), inter-ministerial coordination will continue playing an important role in most countries post-Summit. A few countries reported establishing new inter-ministerial taskforces for the Summit or as follow-up. However, due to network fatigue or resource constraints, most chose to build on or re-align pre-existing coordination entities (generally, national multisectoral food security and nutrition platforms are already established and institutionalised, connected and positioned to lead coordination efforts). In several countries, measures are taken to engage with national non-governmental actors more permanently.

2. Which areas of support are sought the most?

Areas of support presented in the questionnaire were all found to be generally relevant. However, some vital takeaways emerged:

- Countries appear to be prioritizing advocacy-driven systemic policy and institutional strengthening as the first step towards the 2023 stock-take.
- Finance is the area with the highest Hub support request from countries (74%).
- The Hub is expected to leverage the connections, existing tools, knowledge, and networks which will play a key role in national implementation. The request for the Hub to facilitate access connections and M&E tools is also very high (71% and 68%).

3. Within each area, what is needed?

#1 Funding and financing



Access to funding appears as the primary challenge for countries to advance their national food systems pathways. Funding-related support needs range from providing human and financial support to building local capacities and finalising a national vision (national consultants to support pathway coordinator, dialogue process, draft implementation plan). Other focus areas include supporting technical capacity, cost plans and actions, map funding, embedding in sectoral and subnational budget programming, and track spending.



New “implementation” funding is sought for pathway actions identified as particularly catalytic. National resource mobilisation needs strengthening to effectively secure domestic funding (in the face of pandemic-related budget cuts) as well as to better engage International Financial Institutions (such as the World Bank) and external partners.

Several countries call for a specific global funding mechanism (SDG fund; credit facility; SDG investment fair) for accelerating national pathway interventions, priming the national private sector competitiveness pump, bridging temporary funding gaps of projects, or providing start-up funding. Some donor countries are interested in aligning financial support behind national implementation of pathways in other countries that meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

#2 Connections: better leveraging the ecosystem of support



Countries call for a decisive role for the Hub in fast-tracking support needs, matching implementation needs to solutions, and promoting coordination between implementing partners aligned behind national food systems agendas. For this, **coalitions** particularly stand out to support the implementation of specific pathway actions, facilitate access to knowledge and tools, or to unlock through global advocacy, transboundary or normative obstacles to more sustainable food systems.

Most countries are in the process of identifying coalitions of national interest, defining their own involvement, and requesting more information. Promisingly, some clear asks to coalitions are emerging in the final stages of independent national assessments of needs and planning processes. Hence, the Hub has a role to play in stimulating coalitions, encouraging linkages, improving coherence between coalitions, and providing a common platform for coordination and information sharing.

Another ask to the Hub is to encourage continued **UN System** leadership and coordination. Countries identified a greater need for enhanced synchronisation of UN Country Teams on food systems under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator supported by the technical

lead (often FAO, but not systematically). Nevertheless, some countries reported exemplary UN coordination and government support, at times facilitated by existing UN coordination mechanisms (UN Nutrition) and new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) cycles. Specialised agencies and programmes are called upon to step up support on implementation and acceleration of pilots and innovations.

Globally, countries expect the Hub to help ensure that the new sustainable food systems narrative permeate specialized agencies’ work and programmes, set a consistent direction for relevant intergovernmental processes, and effectively promote behavioural change for the UN family to act as one. In some countries, **donors** (bilateral and some funding mechanisms) are already coming around governments to plan implementation support or requesting guidance from the Hub on how to support other countries’ pathways. Increased collaboration is often sought with the **private sector** around infrastructure and technologies for rapid sustainability gains in agricultural production or pathway implementation more generally.

Continued **civil society** support is expected around awareness raising, advocacy, implementation and tracking where relevant to national actors’ commitments, with interest expressed for north/south civil society cooperation. Several responses call for a prominent role of **regional organisations** to access more context-specific support such as joint programming, contextualised evidence, or peer-to-peer learning. Accelerated implementation objectives also imply strengthening connections to **(networks of) subnational actors** committed to food systems transformation.

#3 Monitoring progress



A few countries are already actively planning the 2023 stock-take (stock-taking dialogues, annual report on pathway implementation, defining national vision for 2023) and connecting to SDG progress review processes (VNRs, etc). Guidance from the Hub is sought by many to clarify the reporting framework and indicators, requirements, and frequency, and to identify **milestones** to keep momentum. Several countries request technical support to create a baseline or to develop nationally relevant monitoring frameworks and tracking systems that integrate measurements of social, economic and environmental impact for sustainability, with several countries already spearheading this effort. A few requests were shared for a common virtual platform and analytical tools to compare countries’ progress in reaching their targets to transform food systems.

#4 Technical expertise and global knowledge sharing for accelerated country-led implementation



A large majority of countries look at the Hub to foster knowledge and learning through **peer-to-peer exchanges of good practices and experiences**. **This is because they value** bringing countries with similar challenges closer to relevant solutions, which also helps in keeping the global political momentum. Such learning can lean on different formats, from south-south and triangular cooperation to regional collaboration, or on north-south exchanges.



A high number of countries have pre-identified topics of interests and sometimes even “learning partners” and have initiated study visits; it has been suggested that the Hub could provide a virtual global platform for such exchanges. Alternatively, the Hub could support the building of regional platforms, where summaries of pathway implementation and lessons learned would be made available.

Hub support is desired to provide easier access to scientific material, data, evidence, and analytical tools to support national (and subnational) actors to apply systems thinking.

Strengthening and funding of national research is a priority, complemented with the integration of the work of the FSS Scientific Group in national efforts, the strengthening of local capacities to produce data, and the availability of context-relevant modelling tools.

The **understanding and ownership of a “food systems” approach** and associated concepts will remain a challenge for decision makers in the immediate future. Hence, some countries expect the Hub’s support to further define standards and concepts, elevate emerging issues and embed them in current plans. The Hub could also help understand or guide behaviour change with multidisciplinary, human rights-based data and analytics (Global Pulse).



#5 Communication and advocacy to advance food systems policy integration



As an immediate post-Summit need, countries **are calling for continued advocacy** support through the elevation of food systems issues to: secure high-level political approval of pathways or of their integration in national development strategies and their uptake in budget planning and other fundraising efforts; support institutional consolidation (cabinet endorsement, validation of decrees, etc.) or unlock institutional and human capital; navigate government changes (numerous elections upcoming in 2022) or address risks to go back to agricultural silos. In fragmented governance contexts, high-level communications from the UN can effectively bridge internal political/technical gaps.

Global-level advocacy is needed to promote convergence towards a common narrative between the FSS process and other related intergovernmental processes (N4G, COP 6/27, CBD, CFS, WTO and other international standard setting bodies). The Hub is seen to have an equally important role to **communicate and share information** by establishing a centralized portal.

II. Understanding the patterns of countries' needs

Disaggregating results by country income group yielded limited statistical differences. This is in line with the 2030 Agenda's vision that all countries, north and south, are confronted with the same major transboundary challenges, which can only be overcome with strengthened international solidarity and multilateral cooperation. Some countries will not require specific support for their national pathway implementation but will be keen to stay connected globally to sustain momentum throughout the Decade of Action, compare progress at regular intervals and intensify international cooperation on issues of particular interest.

Similarly, Hub support needs show limited differences by geographic regions. However, not all regions had sufficient country participation in the survey to necessarily be fully representative of existing regional trends.

III. Implications for the Hub

1. Hub workplan

Support needs from the Hub, as expressed by countries, were carefully assessed, and mapped, informing the Hub workplan's six key functions. These functions were designed to empower the Hub to coordinate multistakeholder, multisectoral and multilevel support for countries to achieve their pathways, respecting principles of subsidiarity and leaving no one behind:

- a) Supporting National Pathways implementation.
- b) Strengthening strategic thought leadership.
- c) Engaging with the ecosystem of support and stakeholders.
- d) Mobilizing adequate means for collective implementation.
- e) Communicating and advocating the food system's approach.
- f) Preparing for the Stocktaking Moment.

2. Hub engagement with the ecosystem of support

To jointly deliver on these priorities, several actors can be expected to play a central role, aligning to government support efforts led by National Convenors,¹ United Nations Resident Coordinators, and a UN Country Team gathered around a lead-agency (in most cases, FAO, but also WFP, IFAD, WHO, UNICEF or UNDP). To be successful, the design of country-focused and context-specific activities will be of utmost importance.

At the country level, support to government-led processes will be driven by UN Resident Coordinators and UN country teams gathered around a lead technical agency. A coordinated UN system in countries can make a critical difference in sustaining political will, advocating for and securing in-country resources for coordination, planning, implementation and stocktakes, pooling knowledge tools and other resources from Headquarters, modelling and inspiring other development partners to align and support a government-driven agenda. Embedding sustainable food systems as a strategic priority of UN SD Cooperation Frameworks is a good practice already emerging in some countries.

¹ The term "National Convenor" is used for national government actors mandated to lead the post-Summit effort.

In order to sustain this much-needed strategic integration of the Food Systems Transformation Agenda in the field as well as to ensure that the implementation of the Hub's workplan is informed by RCs' first-hand knowledge of priorities, expectations and realities in countries, the Hub has launched a **RCs Sounding Board**.

A **globally** coordinated UN system is a precondition for effective UN country support and the Hub will work in close collaboration with all committed organisations to improve UN system delivery for sustainable food systems. The continuation of the work of the **global level UN taskforce for food systems**, convening regularly, would be instrumental in ensuring that food systems remain high on UN agencies' individual and collective agendas. This taskforce would ensure that technical expertise around issues such as advocacy and communication, resource mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation, new knowledge, evidence, and norms for sustainable food systems, are integrated and synchronised for the UN to serve national food systems transformation efforts as ONE.

Summit coalitions – regrouping several Member States, UN agencies, experts, and various stakeholders – can play an essential role in catalysing **national ecosystems of support**. Once expectations on their role are defined by national actors, Summit coalitions can add value by connecting and harnessing the assets of relevant actors and commitments around a collective, nationally owned vision. The Hub has already engaged with coalitions on several occasions to understand what the coalitions can offer to the countries in support of food systems transformation, understand Convenors' needs and expectations, as well as the role of the Hub as a connector between the ecosystem of support and the countries. Readiness already expressed by several **donors** to align financial support behind other countries' pathway implementation bodes well and could call for their inclusion as part of the global ecosystem of support and links between the Hub and (former FSS) donor group.

Stakeholder constituency networks, while active in the Summit process resulting in published pledges or visions, have limited mention in country survey responses, which points to the need to strengthen global networks' focus, links and support with national constituency groups and efforts. Accordingly, the Hub is setting up a **Stakeholder Engagement, Networking and Advisory Platform** to sustain the Summit's commitment to inclusivity for food systems transformation. It will comprise representatives of youth, indigenous people, producers, women, the private sector, and the scientific and technological community.

Regional bodies can be expected to play an increasingly important role in the near future, especially with national political leadership. The establishment of UN regional collaborative platforms (RCPs), with knowledge hubs, SDG gateways for consolidated data, and issue-based coalitions (a Food Systems IBC being piloted by the European RCP), are a promising avenue to explore in the next phase of the Hub to guarantee countries the most effective, contextualised, and adequate support.

Finally, based on the urgency expressed by responding countries when it comes to funding and financing needs, this stream of work will constitute a top priority for the Hub. One of the key objectives will be to operationalize the ambitious new Food Finance Architecture (FFA) launched during the Summit by mobilizing **International Financial Institutions and the private sector**. A Food Finance Consultative Group comprised of experts and leaders from food businesses, leading policy and research institutions, development partner agencies, investors, and small and medium agribusiness co-chaired by IFAD and the World Bank has already been set up to accelerate progress on the FFA agenda. The Hub also started a partnership with the Joint SDG Fund to set up a catalytic funding window for food systems transformation at country level led by the UN-Resident Coordinators.

Finally, the Hub has launched Food Systems Solutions Dialogues that bring together the Hub with National Convenors, UN Country Teams, and the ecosystem of support on current and emerging issues for food systems transformation. To foster country exchanges on how national pathways are affected by the conflict in Ukraine and measures to protect the most vulnerable and build resilience, the Hub also organized regional touch points with National Convenors, the UN Secretary-General's Global Crisis Response Group, and representatives of the Rome-Based Agencies (RBA) and other regional bodies.

3. Hub stock-takes and timeline

In 2023 (mid or later part) the Secretary-General will convene the first global stock-taking meeting to review progress in implementing the outcomes of the FSS and its contributions to achievement of the 2030 Agenda. This will be supported by the RBAs, the broader UN System, and partners. Thanks to the Survey, there is already precious insight into which areas responding countries view as most important to showcase their efforts and progress during this first stock-take. They include policy development; national coordination platforms; advocacy; follow-up and review tool. This will guide the Hub's approach to selecting its themes and review framework, especially in the context of designing voluntary guidelines to support countries in measuring success.

In the lead-up to this moment, two rounds of voluntary national reviews will take place in the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2022 and 2023 on overall SDG progress. The HLPF 2022 Ministerial Declaration included a paragraph (#128) on the UN Food Systems Summit and the Coordination Hub, in which Member States have reaffirmed the high prioritization they give to food systems transformations as SDGs accelerators. The paragraph reads as follows:

We take note with appreciation of the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, convened by the Secretary-General on 23 and 24 September 2021, as well as its pre-Summit, held from 26 to 28 July 2021 in Rome. We note also the Chair's Summary and Statement of Action on the United Nations Food Systems Summit, issued by the Secretary-General. We also take note of the Nutrition for Growth Summit held in December 2021 in Tokyo, Japan. We call upon all actors to implement the respective voluntary commitments of the 2021 Food Systems Summit, including the national pathways and coalitions of action, as appropriate, building on regional and national priorities and respecting national policies and priorities. We take note of the establishment of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, and call upon the United Nations system to work with the Hub in order to support Governments to develop and strengthen Sustainable Development Goal-based national pathways for sustainable food systems transformation, already developed by 117 countries. We encourage the relevant United Nations actors and the Hub to consult with countries on the format and modality of the 2023 stocktaking moment. We look forward to the reporting on the follow-up to the United Nations Food Systems Summit at the sessions of the high-level political forum. We also recall the important role of United Nations Rome-based agencies and of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). We commit to advance integrated, balanced, and holistic food system approaches, through cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and intergenerational dialogue, to ensure food security and nutrition, reduce food loss and waste and build sustainable and resilient food systems.

Equipped with granular information on countries priorities provided by this survey, the Hub, leveraging on the support and expertise of the wider UN System, has already started to support countries to step up their food systems transformation for SDG progress and acceleration of the 2030 Agenda.