

Side Event Draft Concept Note
Europe and Central Asia Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2024
March 13. 08:15 – 09:45
UNECE office - Room H- 207/208/209
Geneva, Switzerland
Hybrid format

1. Title:

“Food Systems Transformation as an Accelerator for the SDGs Implementation and Climate Action”

2. Background:

The UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) in 2023 marked a pivotal juncture, offering a unique opportunity to harness the potential of sustainable, inclusive, nutritious, and resilient food systems as driving forces for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recognizing the transformative power of food systems, the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report underscores their crucial role in fostering sustainability across individuals, the environment, and economic realms. The Secretary-General Report of the Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) emphasized interlinkages between food systems transformation (FST) and climate action, underscoring that current food systems continue to generate soil, water, and air pollution. Moreover, food systems contribute to over one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, are responsible for up to 80 percent of biodiversity loss, and consume as much as 70 percent of freshwater resources. In response to these challenges, the UNFSS+2 “Call to Action” encourages leaders to incorporate food systems strategies into their national policies, including those related to climate action and nature.

In preparation for the UNFSS+2 Stocktaking Moment, a [Regional Preparatory Meeting](#) in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) was organized in collaboration with the Issue-Based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems on 28 March 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting engaged National Convenors in identifying key challenges, priorities, and key messages for the Stocktaking Moment. Despite the wide variety of topographies, climates, and food systems, National Convenors in the region reported interconnectedness and the need for opportunities for peer learning and inspiration. The crisis in Ukraine, COVID-19, persistent nutritional challenges, and the impacts of climate change necessitate a paradigm shift to build back better through the transformation of food systems. They also stressed the importance of adopting a **nexus approach** that combines crisis response, mid-term development needs, and long-term structural changes to transform while building resilience to future shocks and threats. Member States advocate for a systemic approach that deals with the interlinkages between food systems, and climate change including in climate change conferences, food security, water scarcity, and other areas.

Within the framework of the Strategic Partnership between the Hub and the UAE COP28 Presidency, the Hub and 4SD are designing the [Convergence Initiative](#) which aims to support countries fully capitalize on the synergies between food systems transformation, climate action, and as well as nutrition, resilience and so on. The overarching goal is to stimulate progress and accompany countries between December 2023 and December 2025 (coinciding with COP 30 and UNFSS+4). It is anticipated that this will encourage progress towards climate-smart, people-centered, and nature-positive food systems at the local, national, and regional levels. Ultimately, the initiative supports the realization of the right to food and participation

in a just, equitable, sustainable, and resilient future, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Food Systems Coordination Hub plays a crucial role in collaborating with the broader United Nations System and other stakeholders, to foster and coordinate support to national convenors for their pathway implementation. Its focus is on ensuring that the transformation of food systems occurs at both national and regional levels, effectively addressing challenges and establishing vital linkages between food systems and the urgent agenda of climate action.

A regional meeting is scheduled to occur before the Sustainable Development Forum, bringing together National Convenors from the region to build on the momentum generated by the UNFSS Stocktaking Moment and Regional Preparatory Meeting in 2023. During this Meeting, convenors will delve into regional priorities and exemplary practices aimed at transforming the food system. They will draw upon current data and policy briefs to inform their discussions, and the resulting insights will feed into the subsequent side event at the Forum.

The Side Event would be co-organized by the UN Food Systems Hub and the UN Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems for Europe and Central Asia which opens to the regional UN agencies, UNRCs, and UNCTs to drive food systems transformation across multiple disciplines and sectors.

3. Session objective:

The main objective of the event will be:

- Exchange on the essential steps required at both national and regional levels to effect transformative changes in food systems. Emphasis will be placed on aligning these efforts with climate action, fostering resilience, and enhancing food security and nutrition.
- Build strategically upon the conclusions drawn from global processes such as UNFSS+2, the SDGs Summit, and COP28, while also leveraging insights and interconnectedness from regional conferences and frameworks such as the EU Farm to Fork, and [Samarkand Declaration](#) and the [recent communique](#) from the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in Berlin.
- Discuss the possible expected outcomes of COP29 in Azerbaijan, to prepare countries in the region, following the momentum of food systems announcements aligned to the [Emirates Declaration](#).
- Foster regional knowledge sharing and collaboration using policy convergence, tools available, and case studies for the implementation of national pathways.
- Serve as a platform for governments, national convenors, and the wider stakeholder ecosystem to spotlight the strides they've taken in fulfilling their commitments to transform food systems and climate action.

4. Proposed format of session:

- Keynotes followed by a moderated panel discussion with diverse stakeholders from ECA Countries, Government, National Convenors, CSO, and Private Sector, and live Q&A.
- Hybrid connection: Connection details will be share it in due time.

5. Key SDG(s) to be addressed in the proposed session:

SDG1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate), SDG 17 (Partnerships)

6. Contribution to the theme of the forum – what transformative solution(s) will be presented?

- **Addressing the Food-Climate-Biodiversity nexus:** Hub Food and Climate Convergence Initiative – supporting low and middle-income countries to link food systems national pathways to the NDCs and NAPs. **Linking the Emirates Declaration and the SG Call to Action.**

7. Key topics/questions to be addressed by the session:

- What are implications of the Emirates Declaration and suggested entry points for better aligning the food systems and climate agendas at country level? What are the existing opportunities in regional and national frameworks?
- What are the available tools that governments and stakeholders can tap into to accelerate food systems transformation?
- What are the considerations to enable and overcome barriers to converging food, climate, and nutrition goals/objectives?
- What are the expected next steps and opportunities in preparing for COP 29 and COP30?

8. Which stakeholder groups will be included in the session? (youth groups, CSOs, etc.):

- Governments, UN representatives, Youth, CSOs; private sector

9. Will this session relate to any regional or global processes/summits?

- Follow-up to 2023 – SDG Summit, COP28, UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment, International Conference "Cooperation on food security in the context of climate change" 2023, (Ashgabat, Turkmenistan); International Conference on Food Security, 2023 (Samarkand, Uzbekistan); Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, 2024 (Berlin, Germany).
- Preparation for 2024 – Summit of the Future, UN Regional Forums, CBD COP 16, UNCCD COP 16, COP29 and beyond, Nutrition for Growth Summit.

10. Organizing partner(s):

Food Systems Coordination Hub with co-organizer Issue-based Coalition for Sustainable Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia, with inputs from other regional and UN partners.

11. Focal point and email contact (only one person please):

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