

4TH EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION MEETING

23-24 April 2026, Geneva Switzerland

Key messages¹



Background

In 2021, the UN Food Systems Summit, convened by the UN Secretary-General, aimed to accelerate progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a food systems approach. By leveraging the interconnectedness of food systems with global challenges such as hunger, climate change, poverty, and inequality, the Summit showcased national food systems pathways submitted by appointed National Food Systems Convenors. It also facilitated the formation of coalitions of organizations and institutions to support these pathways and saw the announcement of hundreds of commitments from a wide range of actors.

Since 2021, two global Stocktakes have been convened: the first in Rome (2023), Italy, and the second in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (2025). These Stocktakes brought together national delegations and non-state actors to review progress on country-level food systems transformation and to identify needs and priorities for advancing transformation and achieving the SDGs, culminating in the Secretary-General's Call to Action. In addition, annual regional meetings have been convened

¹ Note: This meeting report summarizes the discussions, perspectives, and key messages emerging from the meeting. The views reflected herein are intended to capture the richness of the dialogue and do not necessarily represent the official positions of participating countries, organizations, or partners.

alongside the Regional Sustainable Development Forums, providing platforms for countries and regional actors to exchange best practices and facilitate knowledge sharing.

The UNFSS+4 Secretary-General's Call to Action "From Rome to Addis and Beyond" urged for countries and partners to grow momentum and investments around six priority areas:

1. Urgent Delivery in Complex Settings: Strengthening responses to food insecurity and climate shocks through rapid financing, innovation, and humanitarian support.
2. Dialogue, Policy and Coordination: Deepening implementation of national pathways, enhancing policy coherence, and strengthening inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement.
3. Finance and Investment: Mobilizing domestic resources and expanding access to public, private, and blended finance aligned with national priorities.
4. Integration: Accelerating solutions that link environmental, economic, and social objectives, such as agroecology, regenerative agriculture, sustainable procurement, and school meals.
5. Science, AI and Technology: Enhancing science-policy interfaces, digital and AI-enabled tools, and access to technologies for resilient food systems.
6. Intergenerational Collaboration: Empowering youth as co-leaders of transformation and strengthening their role in policy processes and innovation ecosystems.

The 4th Europe and Central Asia Food Systems Transformation Meeting took place on 23-24 April 2026 in Geneva, Switzerland, and was organized by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, in collaboration with the UN Issue-Based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems (IBC-SFS), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and supported by several other partners.

Building on momentum from the UN Food Systems Summit and UNFSS+4, the meeting brought together over 75 in-person participants (and around 30 online participants), including National Convenors, government representatives, UN Resident Coordinators, UN agencies, and the broader Ecosystem of Support, including Coalitions of Action, Non-Governmental Organizations, Intergovernmental Organizations, academia and youth representatives, to exchange experiences and advance country-led priorities. The meeting was attended by representatives from 23 countries². Discussions focused on translating political commitments into coherent, multisectoral action, strengthening policy coherence, and aligning finance, science, and innovation with national needs. The meeting also provided a platform for peer learning and regional cooperation, enabling participants to share progress, identify challenges, and explore opportunities to scale solutions and mobilize investment toward 2030.

Stakeholders from the Ecosystem of Support, including civil society, the private sector and youth constituencies, contributed to the discussions, as well as a dedicated Stakeholder Solutions Labs session, where partners shared practical lessons learned from implementation, evidence-based solutions, and explored partnerships that enable food systems transformation at the sub-national and local levels. The Solutions Labs featured contributions from the SUN Movement, the

² Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Moldova, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.

Resilient Local Food Supply Chain Alliance, the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

1. Integrated approaches that align policies across sectors are drivers of effective transformation processes

- **Countries are moving from policy to implementation**, including through the development of action plans and strategies, measurable indicators, and coherent regulatory frameworks. In this context, national food systems pathways represent living documents that can guide the long-term transformation agenda at the national level.
- **Food systems transformation requires integrated approaches** that align across agriculture, climate, biodiversity, nutrition, soil, water, social protection and trade policies. With both the **UNFCCC (in Türkiye) and UNCBD (in Armenia) Conferences of the Parties** hosted in the Europe and Central Asia region in 2026, the alignment across food systems, climate and biodiversity agendas is benefitting from enhanced momentum.
- **Food systems and climate change are intrinsically linked, with food systems increasingly being integrated into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)** across the Europe and Central Asia region, reflecting tangible progress in increasing policy coherence across climate and food systems agendas.
- **Water management is particularly important across the region** and requires integrated policies and action across food systems, climate action and biodiversity agendas. Implemented solutions include modernization of irrigation systems, sustainable water management practices, smart and digital solutions as well as incentives for water-saving agricultural practices.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- **Armenia** has adopted a multisectoral Strategy for the Development of the Food Security System and the Food Safety Strategy until 2030 and is currently working on an Action Plan to put these strategic priorities into practice.
- **Hungary** integrated food systems considerations into national strategies, including the Second National Climate Change Strategy, the National Biodiversity Strategy and the Hungarian Forest Strategy, and into implementation action plans, such as the Drought Action Plan. In addition, the country introduced precision irrigation and water management solutions and launched the “Water into the Landscape” programme, as well as a drought protection task force in 2025.
- The **Netherlands** promotes circular farming practices to minimize the use of external raw materials and waste, using natural resources efficiently as well as nature-inclusive agriculture that works with local ecosystems, strengthens soil health, and encourages the reduction of pesticides.
- **Serbia** has been piloting systematic solutions for food systems transformation that contribute to biodiversity conservation through the Kolubara Biodistrict model and has incorporated biodistricts into the 2026–2034 Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy for upscaling.
- **Türkiye** is advancing water management strategies, using agricultural production planning directly linked to basin-level water availability, strategic crops selection, farmer guidance and incentives for water-saving practices.

- Through the Hub's Convergence Initiative, several countries in the region, including **Armenia, Uzbekistan and Türkiye**, have been supported in aligning their food systems and climate policies, strengthening integrated and coherent policy approaches as well as multi-sectoral cooperation and governance.
- **Tajikistan** developed a multisectoral action plan and national food systems programme up to 2030, which integrates food security objectives with measures such as school meals programmes and nutrition guidelines.

2. Inclusive cross-sectoral governance needs strengthening as an enabler of food systems transformation

- **Food systems transformation requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.** The fragmentation of governance structures continues to present a barrier to the effective implementation of food systems transformation in some countries.
- **Cross-sectoral and inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms** can contribute to shared ownership of food systems transformation processes among the public, private sector, and civil society actors. Targeted capacity building activities can strengthen stakeholders' ability to engage meaningfully in such platforms and processes.
- **Local actions, institutions and authorities need to be included in food systems transformation processes**, as they play a crucial role in implementation and delivery, as well as in translating regional and national strategies into local action.
- **Youth were explicitly recognized as playing a key role in co-leading food systems transformation processes** and in multistakeholder governance structures. Considering regional demographic trends, several countries and youth representatives highlighted the need to increase efforts for youth inclusion in agriculture and food systems.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- **Finland** is setting up a National Food Council under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with different thematic working groups, and has put in place citizens' panels to ensure inclusive participation.
- **Latvia** shared examples of how the country is promoting bottom-up inclusive decision-making processes across its food systems to ensure participation of all relevant stakeholder groups.
- **Poland** has started a process to update its national food systems pathway, which includes a strategic process to involve and consult all relevant stakeholders.
- **Serbia** has implemented targeted support measures for women, youth and smallholder farmers through affirmative action, subsidies, consultations and thematic working groups.
- In **Sweden**, regions and municipalities are developing their own food strategies focusing on public meals, food waste and procurement, while recognizing the importance of a systems approach.
- **Switzerland's** work with the Swiss Federal Councils in developing its 2050 vision for the agriculture sector reflects both an inclusive governance approach that integrates local and national levels and the importance of long-term strategic planning for food systems transformation.

3. Building resilience against shocks across food systems is increasingly a regional priority

- **Food systems face increasing, interconnected risks**, including from climate change, biodiversity loss, the impacts of conflicts, supply chain disruptions, price volatility and economic shocks.
- In response to climate, biodiversity and other environmental risks and stresses, **climate-smart, regenerative, agroecological and other nature-based approaches** that address water, land and biodiversity should be scaled up.
- When it comes to **economic shocks and trade disruptions**, measures to increase resilience include shortening supply chains, trade diversification, establishing strategic reserves, early warning systems and the development of viable business models to support resilient food systems.
- **Crisis preparedness and immediate response measures** to shocks should be established **in alignment with long-term sustainability** and food systems transformation strategies.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** is strengthening resilience to the impacts of climate change by promoting more sustainable and climate resilient practices as well as promoting producers' competitiveness and market integration with the EU for long-term stability.
- **Germany** is advancing towards a national goal of 30% organic agriculture by 2030 through the German Organic Strategy, contributing to biodiversity conservation and climate resilience objectives.
- **Hungary** has promoted regenerative practices and organic farming as a means to increase sustainability and resilience to external shocks within its food system.
- **Sweden** updated its national food strategy in 2025 with stronger focus on production and supply chain resilience, reflecting a strengthened focus on aligning strategic priorities with resilience to shocks.
- **Switzerland** is promoting continuous dialogue and is considering voluntary target agreements with the retail sector as well as communication campaigns to strengthen healthier and more sustainable diets.
- **Türkiye** contributed to the Black Sea Grain Initiative on supporting food stocks and logistics hubs to facilitate crisis response measures at regional level.
- **Uzbekistan** has been developing index-based climate risk insurance schemes to provide improved risk management options for farmers.

4. Access to diverse sources of financing needs to be strengthened

- **Financing is a key enabler** of food systems transformation and a prerequisite for ensuring long-term sustainability of food systems.
- In times of increasing competition over scarce resources, the **mobilization of diverse sources of financing**, including public, private and blended finance, needs to be advanced in alignment with country priorities. This can include a **more effective and sustainable use of existing public resources**, for example, through the redesigning or repurposing of fiscal measures and support schemes.

- **Access to finance for SMEs and smallholder farmers** should be improved through de-risking instruments such as concessional finance, credit guarantees and insurance schemes.
- To improve the financing landscape and avoid fragmentation at country level, strategic **collaboration between all relevant actors is needed**, including farmers and local communities, to align national priorities, investment opportunities and financing sources.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- The implementation of the UN Joint Programme, funded through the Joint SDG Fund in **Serbia**, illustrates the positive impact that can be achieved when multiple financing partners collaborate. In the Kolubara Biodistrict, this collaboration facilitated the mobilization of additional private investment through trust building and network effects.
- **Uzbekistan** has improved its use of public resources in agriculture through a large-scale consolidation programme, which promoted integration and simplification across more than 100 different subsidy instruments, reducing costs and improving targeting of financial support schemes. The country also launched an Agriculture Insurance Fund, which supports smallholder farmers in increasing resilience and improving access to capital by covering up to 50% of insurance premiums.
- In **Tajikistan**, funding through the Joint SDG Fund's Food Systems Transformation Window has been mobilized to support the development of integrated dietary guidelines and school feeding programmes, as well as climate-smart agricultural practices.

5. Sustainable food systems require well-functioning rules-based trading systems

- **A universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system**, as well as multilateral and regional cooperation, build the foundation for resilient food systems and sustainable transformation approaches.
- **Food safety standards play a key role in facilitating trade and access to export markets**. To maximize their positive impact, standards should be harmonized at regional level, where appropriate.
- To enable compliance with standards for improved market access and export potential, the **capacities of food systems stakeholders, and smallholder farmers in particular**, should be strengthened.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** reflected on progress in food safety and quality standards that have been achieved in recent years through alignment with EU standards.
- **Georgia** has been promoting alignment with EU standards, including farm accounting data systems and food safety standards, food labelling and sanitary improvements.
- **Moldova** underlined the importance of food safety standards for its export-oriented agricultural sector, outlining progress made in aligning with EU standards and its positive impact on improved access to export markets.

6. Digitalization and the use of innovative technologies can accelerate transformation at scale

- **Digitalization and innovation are key priorities across Europe and Central Asia** and used to increase productivity, enhance the efficacy of extension services for farmers and to support producer organizations and groups, among others.
- **Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being applied to accelerate food systems transformation**, including to scale up innovative approaches, increase efficiency and ease of access to services, improve data analysis and strengthen planning capacity.
- **Data and monitoring systems are crucial for evidence-based decision-making**, creating the need for the collection of data relevant for food systems transformation as well as its effective use in providing strategic evidence for decision-makers.
- **In developing and applying innovative approaches, knowledge of national contexts is critical**, for example to analyse country-specific crises impacts and develop tailored solutions. Therefore, combining knowledge and analysis of local contexts with information and data on global markets is needed.
- **Innovative technologies need to be inclusive, open and fair, ensuring equitable access and responsible data use.** This includes access to digital infrastructure and connectivity as well as education and capacity building to enable technology use.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- **Azerbaijan** has invested approximately €2.5 million in applying AI in agriculture and has developed 33 AI-driven use cases across the agricultural sector, including soil preparation, yield forecasting, crop inventory, irrigation prediction and farmer scoring.
- **Georgia** has strengthened farm registries and digital platforms for applications, payments to farmers and monitoring of food systems-relevant indicators. The country also piloted digital advisory services, climate-smart tools and sensor- and AI-based smart irrigation systems.
- **Hungary's** Digital Agricultural Strategy and the Smart Farmer Program support the integration of modern technologies, data-driven decision-making and digital knowledge into agricultural practice. A recent example is a 3-dimensional modelling tool developed by the University of Sopron supporting more effective forest fire prevention and response.
- **The Russian Federation** has introduced digital IT systems for monitoring grain, seeds, veterinary products and road transport within a unified platform.

7. Local value addition and sustainable, diversified value chains contribute to sustainable, just food systems

- **The position of farmers, especially smallholder farmers, in food supply chains should be strengthened.** For example by supporting local producer organizations and cooperatives to strengthen technical capacities and enable continued competitiveness despite narrow profit margins.
- **Rural areas are crucial for sustainable food systems.** As such, dedicated measures to support their development in a sustainable way are needed.
- **Demographic challenges** such as aging farmers, rural depopulation, and rural-urban disparities are rising in many countries across Europe and Central Asia, underlining the

need for strategic solutions. For example, through measures that can make farming an attractive career path for young people.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- **Hungary** reported increasing the number of young people interested in agriculture through a comprehensive policy framework that facilitates the smooth transfer of family farms between generations and provides targeted support for young farmers starting their own agricultural activities.
- **Moldova** supported access to finance, orchard modernization and integration of small and medium producers into higher-value markets through World Bank and FAO-supported initiatives.
- **Poland** has advocated specific rural targets and rural proofing in EU funds' allocation and earmarks a section of its public budget for support to rural areas.
- **Serbia** has been supporting shorter value chains and organic production through the "From Seed to Sustainability: Food Systems 4 All" project supported by the Joint SDG Fund's Food Systems Transformation Window, focusing on strengthening institutional capacities at local level as well as dedicated trainings for farmers on sustainable practices.
- **Uzbekistan** has introduced a new law on agricultural cooperatives and is making efforts to strengthen territorial approaches by linking national policies with local growth drivers to generate investment opportunities, strengthen value chains and expand private sector engagement.

8. Food needs to be healthy and sustainable, requiring integrated policy approaches

- **Ensuring healthy diets for all remains a key priority and challenge across the region**, particularly reducing increasing overweight and obesity rates. Many countries are considering and elaborating policies to improve food environments and incentives for consumption of healthy diets, including food labelling and public awareness campaigns.
- **Sustainability in consumption patterns is an increasingly important factor** and includes, in some countries, strategies and measures to support the consumption of alternative protein sources.
- **Strategies and policies for reducing food loss and waste** are well advanced in many countries and gaining traction across others.

Examples of progress reported by countries included:

- **Denmark** is placing emphasis on increasing the sustainability of its food systems, which are highly focused on production for export, especially meat, including through the promotion of plant-based food consumption.
- **Georgia** has recently established the first Food Bank in Tbilisi as part of efforts to prevent food loss and waste.
- **Germany** continued the implementation of its National Strategy for Food Waste Reduction and the "Too Good" follow-up initiative to reduce food loss and waste in a systemic manner. In addition, the country established a Centre of Excellence for Food Waste and Food Loss Prevention in 2025. Germany has also been actively promoting

protein crops and national dialogues on sustainable protein feed as well as alternative proteins.

- In the **Netherlands**, increased investment is made in shifting consumption and production towards sustainability, including through alternative protein sources (for example, plant-based and cellular agriculture), to reduce the ecological footprint of traditional meat and dairy. Dietary guidelines are also being revised and will include sustainability as a factor.
- **Norway** introduced regulation in 2025 that prohibits the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks that are specifically targeted at children. In addition, Norway introduced an Act on reducing food loss and waste in 2025.
- **Sweden** uses the Nordic Nutrition Recommendations and national guidelines for school meals to promote healthy and sustainable diets based on scientific evidence.

Conclusions and way forward

The 4th Europe and Central Asia Food Systems Transformation Meeting reaffirmed that countries are moving from commitments to implementation, while underlining that transformation requires coherent, integrated action across food, climate, biodiversity, water, nutrition, health, rural development, trade and finance agendas. National pathways remain important instruments to guide this process, but need to be continuously updated, translated into costed action plans, and supported by clear indicators, inclusive governance and sustained political leadership.

Across discussions, eight priorities emerged for the way forward: strengthen cross-sectoral and multistakeholder governance, including the meaningful engagement of local authorities, youth, women, farmers and civil society; embed resilience in policies and investments through climate-smart, agroecological, regenerative and nature-based approaches, improved water management and crisis preparedness; promote policy coherence across sectors; mobilize and align public, private and blended finance with national priorities, with targeted support for SMEs and smallholder farmers; promote a rules-based trading system and multilateral approaches; invest in data, science, digitalization and responsible innovation to support evidence-based decisions and scale practical solutions; support rural areas, smallholder farmers and SMEs; and advance healthy and sustainable diets through integrated policies on food environments, public procurement, school meals, food safety, sustainable consumption and food loss and waste reduction.

Going forward, countries and partners should focus on moving from fragmented initiatives to systemic implementation, ensuring that support is demand-driven, well-coordinated and results-oriented. Continued regional cooperation, peer learning and engagement across the Ecosystem of Support will be essential to sustain momentum and accelerate food systems transformation toward 2030.