

FOOD SYSTEMS SOLUTIONS DIALOGUES

Engaging for Food Systems Transformation: Building Multistakeholder Collaboration

Wednesday 12 April 2023

Summary report

Introduction

On 12 April 2023, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub hosted the "Engaging for Food Systems Transformation: Building Multistakeholder Collaboration" session as part of the Food Systems Solutions Dialogues. The following represents a summary of the two meeting sessions held in the morning and afternoon to accommodate different time zones.

Stefanos Fotiou, Director of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub), opened the dialogue. Mr. Fotiou indicated that the purpose of the meeting is to update and exchange with the National Convenors on establishing the Stakeholder Engagement and Networking Advisory Group (SENA Group). He explained that the SENA Group has been instituted to effectively support leveraging stakeholders' recommendations and contributions to enhance national pathways implementation. He underscored that the SENA is a self-managed group comprised of 15 representatives of the youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, the private sector, and producers' communities. He closed by stressing the importance of maintaining shared accountability to benefit multistakeholder processes.

Discussion

Following Mr. Fotiou's introduction to the work of the SENA Group, the dialogue hosted a panel discussion moderated by Ms. Lina Mahy (morning) and Ms. Nicole De Paula (afternoon). In the morning session, Mr. Martin Hoppe, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, emphasized Germany's commitment to sustainable food systems by outlining two key priorities: developing a national plan for sustainable food systems and engaging partners in inclusive and meaningful dialogue. He highlighted the importance of Germany's regional food systems councils, which bring together stakeholders to improve food systems. At the international level, Mr. Hoppe stressed the importance of using existing multistakeholder structures or organizations, such as the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and using policy products developed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

Mr. Michael Keller, International Seed Federation, representing the Agrifood Network, stressed the need to acknowledge diversity in private sector engagement, as small and medium-sized enterprises have different needs and expectations. He also noted that the private sector, being diverse, must involve many actors to be efficient. He added that effective national coordination is paramount to the success of on-the-ground efforts. He advocated not to politicize discussions that should be built on trust.

Ms. Lucrezia Ducci, one of the three youth representatives from SENA, stressed the importance of youth representation in food systems transformation, inviting National Convenors to include youth representatives in their delegations at the Stocktaking Moment. She mentioned the increased frequency of drought and sea level rise predicted in the future, which will compromise soil health and increase the pressure of pests and diseases.

In her intervention, Ms. Mega Desai from the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) highlighted that women play an essential role in the entire food value chain. She explained the work of SEWA, including how SEWA facilitates the coordination of multistakeholder platforms across the different levels. She explained how her organization advocates for small and marginalized women farmers, noting the efforts to alleviate constraints to land ownership and food security that continue to disproportionately affect women in rural areas. She reported on their work on increasing wages, integrating women into the supply chain, and developing a women's climate resilience fund. She also explained that the UN could support enhancing their work's visibility at the national level to strengthen family farming.

In the afternoon session, Ms. Sanne Moller Jensen, Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, highlighted a success story of a public-private partnership that successfully increased the consumption of whole grain products to levels above the ones recommended by the WHO. To promote healthier diets, she noted the importance of engaging multiple partners early on; focusing on strategic communication; setting clear goals; and developing safeguard mechanisms to promote accountability of all actors and avoid conflict of interest.

Ms. Elizabeth Mwendu, one of the three SENA youth representatives, requested National Convenors to share practices for engaging youth, underlining that youth inclusion in developing policy priorities is critical as they represent upcoming leaders in the agricultural sector.

Ms. Emeline Fellus, on behalf of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), stressed the critical role businesses play in addressing the food sector's responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions. At the Stocktaking Moment, she called for more significant synergies between governments and the private sector.

To conclude the panel session, Ms. Irish Baguilat, Asia Farmers Association, stressed the importance of multistakeholder engagement in advocating for pro-farmer policies and strengthening farmer organizations to support their income and, consequently, more resilient food systems.

The SENA Group's ability to liaise with diverse stakeholders at different levels will be an important value-add during the Stocktaking Moment. The session demonstrated the relevance of meaningfully engaging youth, women, smallholders, and Indigenous Peoples for effective food systems transformation. Panelists touched on the importance of food systems for climate change mitigation and adaptation, among other essential topics debated globally. Engaging farmers in climate action is thus vital. In addition, policymakers have a crucial role in incentivizing behavior change, for example, through repurposing subsidies.

During the dialogue, National Convenors demonstrated commitment to a multistakeholder, multi-sectoral engagement model in tackling issues around food systems transformation. Many noted efforts in increasing multistakeholder engagement via the creation of steering and advisory committees to increase communication between sectors and improve the governance of the food systems. A Convenor said they also work with media representatives and human rights activists on nutrition issues. In addition, countries facing conflict highlighted the need for systems strengthening and funding for rehabilitation efforts.

Moreover, it was reported that some countries have designated national teams for this global agenda. In addition, countries have requested UN agencies "*to bring stakeholders to the table and to strengthen the work of the government in these contexts.*" Additionally, participants raised the issue of accountability from external stakeholders, and governments are interested in tackling this specific issue as some countries face challenges in regulation enforcement.

The way forward

In closing the dialogue, Mr. Fotiou expressed satisfaction with the discussion. He acknowledged that multiple stakeholder dialogues are happening in various countries. He reiterated the added value youth could bring to governments. Further, he encouraged the establishment of local and national SENA Groups. He concluded by providing updates on the preparation process of the Stocktaking Moment and assured that the Hub would share information with all the stakeholders. Finally, he underlined the importance of cross-communication among countries to learn about their established stakeholders' networks.

Background

FAO hosts the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub on behalf of the UN system. It is supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO). The Hub's mission is to support the follow-up to the 2021 Food Systems Summit and stimulate and support action for SDGs-based food systems transformations towards accelerating the 2030 Agenda.