

GLOBAL TOUCHPOINT WITH NATIONAL CONVENORS

A review of UNFSS work of 2024 and preparing for 2025

11 December 2024

Summary Report

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Introduction

On 11 December, a Global Touchpoint with National Convenors was held to provide updates on the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub's workplan implementation and receive inputs and suggestions on the engagement for 2025 towards the 2nd UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+4). The session included updates on the main flagship initiatives of the Hub, including the Convergence Initiative and its linkages to the outcomes of the recently concluded COP29 in Baku, the upscale of the Financing for Food Systems (3FS) work, the Food Systems Window of the UN Joint SDG Fund, the Youth Leadership Programme, the overall support for the operationalization of the national pathways and the continuation of Dialogues and the work on corporate accountability. This summary report reflects the combined discussions from the two sessions (morning and afternoon) held to accommodate different time zones.

Setting the Scene

The Global Touchpoint opened with an introduction by Mr Them bani Malapela, Knowledge Manager at the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, who welcomed participants and outlined the agenda for the sessions. During the first part of the agenda, representatives from the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub provided updates on the Hub's 2024-2026 workplan implementation, including various Hub flagship initiatives.

The morning and afternoon sessions welcomed a panel that included:

- Mr Stefanos Fotiou, Director, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
- Mr Khaled Eltaweel, Senior Coordinator, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
- Ms Sara Radulovic, Food System Finance Specialist, IFAD
- Ms Ophelie Hemonin, Policy Officer, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
- Mr Svante Helms, Pathways Manager, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub
- Ms Nicole de Paula, Technical Officer, UN Food Systems Coordination Hub

Key Insights from Panellists

Mr Stefanos Fotiou opened the session by presenting the Hub's new 2024–2026 workplan, outlining its focus on five interconnected clusters: Landing the Vision, Policy and Governance, Science and Knowledge, Strategic Partnerships, and Finance and Investments. Highlighting the urgency of translating global commitments from the UNFSS+2 into actionable plans, he underscored the Hub's role in maintaining momentum through regional preparatory meetings and advancing flagship initiatives. Fotiou emphasized the need for

coordinated, inclusive action to drive meaningful food systems transformation across all levels in preparation for the UNFSS+4 in 2025.

Mr Khaled Eltaweel provided an update on the Convergence Initiative, which seeks to bridge food systems policies with climate action to address interrelated challenges of climate change and food insecurity. Sharing progress from countries like Kazakhstan, Brazil, Indonesia, and Türkiye, he emphasized the strides made in aligning climate strategies with food systems policies. Looking ahead, he outlined plans to scale the initiative to 20 countries by COP30, stressing the importance of fostering regional collaboration through knowledge-sharing workshops planned for the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development in 2025.

Turning to financing, Ms Sara Radulovic introduced the Financing for Food Systems (3FS) tool, a mechanism designed to track financial flows across domestic, international, and private sectors. She shared insights from pilot projects in Niger, Peru, and Kenya, demonstrating how data-driven approaches can inform strategic investments in food systems transformation. With plans to scale the tool to 11 additional countries, she highlighted its potential to empower governments to better mobilize and align resources with their transformation objectives. The initiative, supported by IFAD, the World Bank, and GAIN, is set to enhance financial transparency and effectiveness.

On the topic of funding pathways, Ms Ophelie Hemonin presented updates on the Joint SDG Fund Food System Window, which supports countries through two targeted funding tracks: seed funding for early-stage solutions and high-impact funding for larger-scale implementation. She shared that USD 15 million has already been mobilized to support 12 seed countries and 6 high-impact countries, including Bolivia, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. Looking ahead, Ms Hemonin announced plans for a second funding round with a stronger emphasis on climate and biodiversity integration, aligning food systems transformation with global sustainability priorities.

The Hub's ongoing efforts to operationalize national pathways were further detailed in both morning and afternoon sessions. The Director emphasized the importance of inclusive governance, investment plans, and cross-sectoral partnerships, alongside tools like the upcoming food systems tracking dashboard and a virtual resource library to assist countries in implementation. In the afternoon session, Mr Svante Helms reinforced these points, focusing on connecting national priorities with global support systems and sharing best practices to strengthen country-level efforts.

Ms Nicole De Paula presented the Youth Leadership Programme (YLP), an initiative empowering young professionals to drive food systems transformation. The programme has engaged 80 leaders from 65 countries, focusing on developing leadership skills and fostering collaboration across the Science-Policy-Society interface. Ms De Paula shared updates on co-created national action plans in six pilot countries, where youth voices are being integrated into policy processes. She emphasized the importance of empowering

young change agents to deliver innovative, inclusive solutions and accelerate progress toward sustainable food systems transformation.

Dialogue with National Convenors

Following the expert panel, the global touchpoint moved into an interactive session with National Convenors, moderated by Ms Mia Madsen, Policy Officer at the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. This interactive session provided a platform for participants to share their priorities for advancing food systems transformation, including suggested recommendations for the upcoming UNFSS+4. The discussion was guided by questions exploring general reflections on the UNFSS follow-up work, its connection with major global events like COP29, the key topics to be discussed at the 2025 regional meetings of National Convenors, and expectations for the UNFSS+4.

Convenors were asked to consider:

1. What is your overall reflection on the UNFSS follow up work including relations with the COP29 and other major events?
2. What should be the main agenda items for the regional meetings of National Convenors of 2025 (back-to-back with the Regional Sustainable Development Fora)?
3. What is your expectation from the 2nd UNFSS Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+4)?

The interactive session with National Convenors provided a platform for in-depth discussions on the practical challenges and strategies for advancing food systems transformation at the national and international level. The discussions emphasized the progress being made in food systems transformation across various countries while acknowledging areas that require further support and attention.

Regional meetings and global platforms, such as UNFSS+4, were seen as opportunities to showcase national progress, identify gaps, and foster alignment between coalitions, national pathways, and global priorities. A recurring theme was the importance of equipping National Convenors with timely and detailed information regarding major global events and related side events to enhance their ability to participate effectively. Furthermore, Convenors expressed the need for stronger global coordination and better linkages between food systems transformation and other international initiatives. There was a shared understanding that cross-border collaboration, and a more integrated global approach are essential for scaling up efforts and fostering synergies across sectors.

Countries shared updates on the operationalization of their national food systems transformation plans, for example integrating multi-sectoral collaboration across ministries (e.g., health, agriculture, education). Many countries stressed the need to prioritize nutritious diets, school feeding programs, and social protection systems that integrate local food production. Initiatives like school gardening and homegrown school feeding programs

were noted as effective approaches to promoting healthy diets and improving food system sustainability.

Multistakeholder collaboration was highlighted as a driving force for change. There was a call to strengthen engagement with diverse stakeholders, including civil society, youth and private sector actors, to broaden the reach and impact of food systems transformation efforts. The importance of engaging youth as key agents of change was specifically highlighted, ensuring youth perspectives are better integrated into national strategies. By promoting inclusivity and leveraging expertise across sectors, countries can better address the complex challenges of food systems, ensuring long-term resilience and sustainability. Furthermore, there was a significant emphasis on the need for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of food systems transformation, with some National Convenors suggesting that the UNFSS+4 should focus on evaluating the successes and challenges in implementing national pathways, particularly showcasing the tangible impact on the ground.

National Convenors also underscored that capacity-building efforts remain central to addressing gaps in technical knowledge and governance structures. Many countries are working to strengthen multi-sectoral steering committees and governance platforms to align their food systems strategies with national priorities. This includes initiatives to engage stakeholders across various levels, from technical personnel to civil society, ensuring that food systems transformation efforts are inclusive and well-coordinated. Additionally, there was a recognition that more support is needed for countries facing fragility and crisis, with several Convenors requesting targeted interventions that can help stabilize and strengthen food systems in these challenging contexts.

Moreover, financing emerged as a critical element for scaling food systems transformation efforts. Countries underscored the importance of accessing and aligning funding from international mechanisms, including climate finance, to support agriculture and food systems. While significant progress has been made with the help of development partners, there is growing interest in enhancing funding mechanisms to address emerging challenges, particularly around food security and sustainability. The importance of linking the climate finance agenda to food systems transformation was emphasized, with some participants suggesting that the UNFSS+4 could provide an opportunity to discuss financing gaps and country level initiatives on the costing of national pathways.

Looking ahead towards UNFSS+4, many National Convenors expressed a desire for the event to provide an opportunity to showcase national progress and share lessons learned, with a particular emphasis on showcasing the impact achieved on the ground. The need for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of food systems transformation at the national level was emphasized, with some participants suggesting that the event could serve as a platform for discussing the successes and challenges of implementing national pathways. Participants highlighted the need for thematic sessions at the UNFSS+4, for example discussions on the political economy of food systems transformation, the linkages between food systems transformation and trade, financing gap and the costing of national

pathways. The importance of showcasing successful coalitions of action and sharing examples of effective implementation was emphasized, with the hope that these experiences will inspire further action. Lastly, there was also a strong call to enhance civil society engagement in food systems transformation, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness of the food systems agenda among citizens and media outlets to ensure a broad, informed, and participatory approach, which is essential for ensuring that food systems transformation is inclusive and supported at every level.

The Way Forward

The Global Touchpoint highlighted several essential takeaways for advancing food systems transformation and preparing for the 2nd UN Food Systems Stocktaking Moment. First, participants emphasized the importance of timely preparatory work ahead of UNFSS+4, stressing the need for better linking National Convenors to the various events organized by the Hub. The Hub will share more information about the UNFSS+4 roadmap in early 2025.

There was also significant interest in enhancing communication platforms for Convenors to share updates and challenges, aiming to enhance collaboration and knowledge sharing across countries and regions. Overall, Convenors shared a common commitment to advancing sustainable food systems through collaborative action and multistakeholder engagement and to further mobilize global momentum for food systems in preparation for the UNFSS+4.

The Global Touchpoint sessions were closed by the Hub Director, who expressed sincere gratitude to all participants for their commitment and active engagement with the Hub throughout the year. He acknowledged that inclusive and interactive dialogues with National Convenors provide a valuable platform for exchanging ideas, addressing challenges, and sharing solutions to advance food systems transformation. The Dialogues and Touchpoints with National Convenors are critical for keeping the food systems momentum on the global agenda and supporting countries to effectively operationalize the national pathways for sustainable food systems.