

FOOD SYSTEMS SOLUTION DIALOGUES

Monitoring data-driven food systems transformation at country level

12 March 2025

Summary Report

Introduction

The Food Systems Solutions Dialogues (FSSD) are purposeful and organized events that bring together National Convenors and other food systems actors to share their experiences and insights on food systems hosted by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub). A new series is launched each year, and morning and afternoon sessions are held for each Dialogue to accommodate different time zones. On 12 March 2025, the first Dialogue of the 2025 series was held on "Monitoring data-driven food systems transformation at country level". This Summary Report reflects the combined discussions from the two sessions (morning and afternoon).

The Dialogue explored how data-driven approaches shape food systems' transformation and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It examined how countries set goals, measure progress, and utilize initiatives like the Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FSCI) and other national monitoring frameworks. The discussions also highlighted the value of integrating traditional and Indigenous knowledge into food systems monitoring.

Setting the Scene

Mr Stefanos Fotiou, Director of the Hub, opened the morning and afternoon sessions, emphasizing that many countries firmly commit to sharing progress, lessons learned, and experiences in advancing their food systems transformation pathways. Reflecting on the first UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+2), Mr. Fotiou noted that 110 countries voluntarily submitted progress reviews, showing a strong dedication to monitoring efforts. He highlighted common challenges such as establishing impact-level monitoring, aligning data demands with national capacities, and differing views on benchmarking.

The morning and afternoon sessions welcomed a distinguished panel that shared global, regional, and local perspectives on data and monitoring for transforming food systems. The panel included:

- Mr José Rosero Moncayo, Director of the Statistics Division and Chief Statistician, FAO
- M. Estherine Fotabong, Director of Agriculture, Food Security and Environmental Sustainability, AUDA-NEPAD
- Mr Phrang Roy, Coordinator, Indigenous Peoples' Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty

- Mr Lawrence Haddad, Executive Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
- Mr Francisco Rosado-May, Professor, Intercultural Maya University of Quintana Roo, Mexico

Ms Mia Madsen, Policy Officer at the Hub, moderated the event.

Key Insights from Panellists

Mr José Rosero Moncayo opened the panel by highlighting the importance of measuring and monitoring food systems transformation. He introduced the Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FSCI) as a global framework that tracks progress using 15 core indicators across five thematic areas: diets, nutrition, health; environment, production; livelihoods, equity; governance; and resilience. He also affirmed that the initiative is well-positioned to drive meaningful progress toward more sustainable, resilient, and equitable food systems worldwide by continuously refining the monitoring system and expanding country-level engagement.

Ms Estherine Fotabong presented the CAADP Strategy and Action Plan: 2026-2035 as a regional framework for food systems transformation in Africa, building on the Maputo, Malabo, and Kampala Declarations. She noted the need to strengthen national statistical systems, enhance multi-sectoral coordination, and align National Food System Transformation Pathways with National Agricultural Investment Plans. She underscored that the Kampala Declaration and CAADP framework align with the UN Food Systems transformation Agenda and SDG 2, offering a foundation for continued progress through data-driven, coordinated, and holistic approaches to food systems transformation.

Mr Phrang Roy stressed the critical role of Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge systems in advancing food systems transformation. Drawing on the experience of the Indigenous Partnership, he shared insights from field-based assessments conducted across 16 diverse landscapes in Thailand, Northeast India, Kenya, and Yucatec, Mexico. The studies show that Indigenous food systems support biodiversity, enhance nutrition, and offer strong livelihood potential, particularly when traditional values such as caring, sharing, and community-based governance are upheld. He concluded by emphasizing the need for an intercultural approach where contemporary science and Indigenous knowledge collaborate as equal partners, and AI systems reflect this integration.

In the afternoon session, Mr Lawrence Haddad spoke on the FSCI, highlighting it as a feasible starting point for monitoring food systems at the global level and a tool that complements existing indicator frameworks used to track development, health, and environmental goals. He explained that it provides a way to track annual progress on food systems transformation, offering both a menu of indicators and relevant datasets at the country level. At the end of his presentation, Mr Haddad noted that food systems transformation is difficult to implement and even harder to measure, stressing that without a monitoring mechanism, stakeholders lack the necessary guidance to navigate transformation efforts effectively.

The afternoon session included a presentation from Mr Francisco Rosado-May, who discussed the importance of metrics in monitoring food systems, emphasizing the need to develop culturally appropriate metrics that can be understood and applied by Indigenous Peoples, given their distinct ways of thinking and understanding. He drew on experiences applying FAO's Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) across Indigenous communities in Mexico, India, Kenya, and Thailand, highlighting its alignment with the FSCI and the value of combining both frameworks. He noted that Indigenous food systems perform well across the ten elements of agroecology, particularly when grounded in human and social values. Sharing insights from a participatory exercise in Yucatec Maya communities, he explained how local actors reorganized the ten FAO elements into a step-by-step model rooted in values, co-creation of knowledge, solidarity economy, and resilience, ultimately culminating in responsible governance. Mr Rosado-May underscored that such localized interpretations not only reflect Indigenous worldviews but also offer valuable entry points for transforming broken food systems toward sustainability.

Dialogue with National Convenors

Following the expert panel, National Convenors engaged in an interactive discussion on monitoring data-driven food systems transformation. The Convenors were provided with three guiding questions:

1. What steps has your country taken to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for food systems transformation, and what are your key lessons learned so far?
2. How is knowledge and research linked with policymaking processes to ensure evidence-based decisions?
3. In your experience, what are the key enablers to promote inclusive stakeholder accountability for food systems transformation?

National Convenors shared diverse experiences in establishing monitoring frameworks. Some have developed national systems grounded in key performance indicators aligned with global frameworks, while others are in the early phases of identifying relevant data sources and building institutional capacity. Monitoring food systems transformation has been integrated into broader national development and sustainability strategies in several contexts, often coordinated across multiple ministries and supported by regular reporting mechanisms. Convenors emphasized the importance of embedding monitoring efforts within broader sustainability strategies and national development plans, often involving collaboration across multiple ministries and technical actors. Despite challenges such as limited capacity or conflict-related disruptions, Convenors expressed a strong commitment to maintaining continuity, adapting approaches as needed to ensure that monitoring efforts remain resilient and responsive.

Another key theme was the integration of research and evidence into policymaking processes. National Convenors emphasized that evidence-based policymaking lies at the heart of their national food systems transformation efforts. They highlighted using data gathered from government reports, academic institutions, and stakeholder consultations to inform strategy design and policy decisions. Some noted the development of comprehensive monitoring frameworks that incorporate key performance indicators and diagnostic tools to identify food insecurity and guide mitigation efforts. Convenors also shared efforts to institutionalize this approach by involving scientific actors in national strategy development and fostering collaboration across sectors. These experiences reflect a growing commitment to embedding research and interdisciplinary knowledge into national planning processes to ensure more targeted, informed, and adaptive food systems policies.

National Convenors emphasized fostering inclusive and participatory processes as a core element of food systems transformation. They described efforts to engage a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society, academia, the private sector, and local communities through national dialogues, public consultations, and structured multi-stakeholder working groups. Several highlighted the need to move beyond one-time events by creating ongoing platforms for consultation and collaboration, ensuring that feedback is gathered and meaningfully integrated into policy and strategy development. While acknowledging that limited capacity and resources can present challenges, Convenors underscored that sustained, inclusive engagement is essential to building trust, ensuring transparency, and fostering shared ownership of national transformation efforts.

The Way Forward

The Dialogue reaffirmed the critical role of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks in advancing national food systems transformation. Both panellists and National Convenors emphasized that data-driven approaches are essential to track progress, identify gaps, and inform adaptive strategies. They noted that aligning global initiatives, such as the Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FCIS), with national priorities is crucial for building coherent and locally relevant monitoring systems. Participants also stressed the importance of integrating diverse forms of knowledge, including scientific evidence and Indigenous perspectives, to ensure that monitoring tools are inclusive and culturally appropriate. They highlighted that participatory approaches must be supported, and metrics accurately reflect local contexts and realities.

Additionally, sustained multi-stakeholder engagement was recognized as a key enabler of accountability, with many calling for institutionalized and ongoing platforms to guarantee meaningful and continuous participation. Participants pointed out the necessity of building resilient systems capable of maintaining monitoring efforts under challenging conditions in contexts affected by crisis or instability. Looking ahead to UNFSS+4, the Hub remains committed to fostering a broader ecosystem of support and stands ready to assist countries in measuring food systems transformation at the country level, in collaboration with the UN system.