

# Food Systems Stocktaking Moment 2023

## *Regional Preparatory Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean*

Tuesday, 25 March 2023, Santiago

Executive Summary of Key Messages<sup>1</sup>

### Key challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

- Food systems in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) face multiple challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, inequality, and inadequate access to a healthy diet.
- The war in Ukraine and the impact of COVID-19 increased the stress on food systems in the region and impacted food security and nutrition indicators. Many countries are facing challenges with access to agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and with the increase of energy prices that make up a large percentage of food production costs.
- Although many countries in the region are net exporters of food, food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition indicators worsened in the past few years mainly due to external shocks.
- The region's challenges require a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, the private sector, and the science community.
- While many countries have established intra-Ministerial structures to guide food systems transformation, certain countries face difficulty in developing coordinated actions between different stakeholders.
- The region is facing a challenge with an aging farming population and migration, which leads to a loss of knowledge and workforce in the agriculture sector.
- Despite having one of the most advanced social protection programs, the LAC region's coverage is incomplete, leaving out some of the most vulnerable and isolated communities who are unable to access these programs.

### Progress in the region

- The region is showing a solid momentum toward food systems transformation. Out of 33 countries, 17 have submitted national pathways aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Countries are updating their national pathways to reflect the new realities and respond to emerging challenges. Many countries are inclusively organizing national dialogues and with the support of the Regional UN Task Force, countries are developing action plans for the materialization of the national pathways into concrete activities within the sectorial plans of the government institutions.
- Of the [27 Coalitions](#) (on record), 11 Coalitions have LAC countries or institutions as members. These coalitions need to work in synergy with other stakeholders to achieve national objectives. The region is highly productive in terms of agriculture (14% of world exports). This represents an important comparative advantage that should be utilized to transform food systems and improve food security indicators.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an executive summary of the deliberations in the meeting. A detailed report will be released in due time.

Furthermore, in the LAC region, family agriculture is one of the primary sources of food production. Therefore, national strategies include measures to protect and support small-scale farmers.

- The transformation of food systems has become a common ground for various governmental institutions in LAC countries to collaborate and coordinate their efforts toward meeting their commitments.
- The main objective of many countries in the region is to guarantee the Right to Food for all. Many countries are implementing successful social protection and school feeding programmes that have an important role in supporting food systems, food security, and health outcomes in the region.
- Key strategies for transforming food systems include promoting sustainable agricultural practices, enhancing food value chains, supporting blue transformation, increasing access to finance and technology, promoting health practices such as breastfeeding, and strengthening local food systems. Some countries give priority to developing and implementing policies to advance gender equality and empowerment of rural women.
- Targeting the food environment is key in transforming food systems. There is a need for advocacy and the establishment of a regulatory framework for a healthy food environment, including through food labeling, that can guide consumer choices, decrease consumption of ultra-processed food, and achieve food security and nutrition objectives.

## Key messages

- Despite facing numerous challenges in the past few years, the countries in LAC have made strides in transforming their food systems. However, despite this progress, these nations still require technical assistance to translate their national pathways into actionable measures on the ground.
- Developing frameworks for generating evidence and measuring progress is crucial for monitoring and evaluating progress toward the 2030 Agenda and commitments.
- It is essential to enhance the coordination among LAC nations and various coalitions to facilitate the exchange of experiences and strengthen capacity building.
- LAC countries are seeking support to bolster their local procurement programs, which are among the main actions needed to transform the food systems in the region.
- Implementing national pathways can have synergetic impacts on food security, poverty reduction, and health outcomes.
- Ensuring the realization of the Right to Food, reducing food loss and waste, and promoting healthy and sustainable diets are essential components of transforming food systems.
- Transforming food systems requires strong political will, effective governance, and innovative approaches that promote social and environmental sustainability, economic growth, and improved nutrition and health outcomes.

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- International cooperation and partnerships in line with SDG17 are critical for transforming food systems, including leveraging the power of science, technology, and innovation and promoting south-south cooperation.
- Social protection is vital to addressing income gaps and needs to be focused on the most vulnerable in the region.
- Trade policies need to be designed to support food systems transformation and food security objectives.
- Agroecology, local food knowledge, and ancestral food are important to food systems' transformation. Countries also need to have access to and utilize technology and innovation.
- Financing is crucial for supporting national efforts. Microcredit, especially to small producers and women farmers, can play a role in enhancing productivity and food security.
- Sound and supportive legislation are vital to support family farming, availability and access to food, and food systems transformation.
- Youth voices should be included in the discussions around food systems in the region.
- Solidarity economy, consumer associations, civil society organizations, and cooperatives can further support national efforts.
- The STM could help harmonize the several initiatives in the region and at the international level. It should link with other international fora and major events, including COP28, the SDGs summit, and the Committee on Food Security (CFS).
- The countries in the LAC region anticipate that the STM will expand its focus beyond the national level and adopt a regional approach toward transforming food systems. This approach should highlight the interconnectedness of food systems across borders and take a holistic view of the issue.

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