

UN Food Systems Summit+2 Stocktaking Moment

SESSION REPORT

All session recordings will be available after the conclusion of the session. Please send the report of your session to Ms. Yota Nicolarea (Panayota.Nicolarea@fao.org) and Mr. Thembani Malapela (Thembani.Malapela@fao.org) by Tuesday 1st August COB

Type (click one): HLS/PLENARY – LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE – SPECIAL EVENT

Fertilizers: Meeting short-term needs while working towards sustainable solutions

24 JULY 2023: 11:30 – 12:30 (CEST)

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List of speakers, in all segments, and key messages

NAME AND TITLE OF SPEAKER	SEGMENT (opening, panel, closing, etc.)	KEY MESSAGES OR/AND RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
1. Mr David Nabarro	Moderator	Welcomed the audience to this event and emphasized the importance of engaging in this dialogue to drive beneficial transformations in the agrifood systems.
2. Mr Máximo Torero Cullen, Chief Economist, FAO	Opening/Closing remarks	Mr Torero opened the event and set the scene by sharing that the topic of fertilizers has gained significant attention in the last two years, especially due to steep price increases. He noted that geopolitical tensions have exacerbated uncertainty, further adding to price pressure. This situation has profound implications for global food security. He also noted that it is important to recognize that mineral fertilizers have increased food production tremendously within the last 50 years.

		He noted, however, that it is essential to explore alternative long-term solutions, including through accelerating innovation for more efficient use of fertilizers and improving soil fertility, which could catalyse the needed agrifood system transformation. At the same time, to address the current challenges in the short term, there is a need to ensure access to fertilizer for the most vulnerable countries.
3. Ms Alzbeta Klein, CEO/Director General, International Fertilizer Association (IFA)	Panel	Ms. Klein appreciated the opportunity to participate in such a vital panel discussion. She noted that when considering fertilizer options, it's important to note its agility as a positive attribute. However, availability and affordability can be challenging due to fluctuations in USD exchange rates. She noted that the fertilizer industry made efforts to address such concerns last year, but now the focus is on increasing production. Ms Klein emphasized that while working towards this goal, the industry must consider sustainability and address supply and demand issues. It's essential that everyone, including industry leaders and policymakers, work together to support the global community (UN). She reiterated the call to action to encourage emerging markets to prioritize fertilizer in their ports as a way to support farmers and make a positive impact.
4. Mr Leonard Mizzi, Head, Sustainable Agrifood Systems Unit, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission	Panel	Mr. Mizzi appreciated the opportunity to share EU's view on this topical event. He noted that over the past few years, fertilizer has become a central issue. He highlighted the need for the African Union & European Union Taskforce to examine the fertilizer issue in the context of the tension surrounding the Ukraine crisis. Mr Mizzi further highlighted that this collaboration should analyze the typology of food production, inter-regional markets, and the use of soil maps to identify gaps and improve soil utilization, given that more than two-thirds of the problem stems from these issues and more cooperation is needed in the coming years.
5. Ms Arianna Giuliadori, Secretary General, World 'Farmers' Organization (WFO)	Panel	Ms. Giuliadori mentioned that she was pleased to share the 'farmer's perspective in this crucial event on fertilizers. She noted the need to prioritise farmers' needs to drive innovation in agriculture. She also highlighted that many promising solutions are already available that can be expanded upon and that involving farmers in the research and innovation process is crucial, especially for fertilizers.

		She also pointed out the need to work towards a more balanced power dynamic in the value chains and support farmers through organizations and extension services to create solutions that best suit their needs.
6. Cary Fowler, Special Envoy for Global Food Security, State Department, United States of America	Panel	Mr. Fowler noted that the cost of fertilizer is not the only factor in determining the affordability, but it's the efficiency in promoting crop growth is equally important. In order to bring fertilizer prices to affordable levels, farmers must also see tangible benefits from its use. He also noted that effectiveness of fertilizer is heavily dependent on the soil health and fertility. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritize improving soil health and fertility to increase fertilizer use in Africa and other areas. Finally, he underscored that a sustainable agrifood system and agriculture practices that provide adequate nutrition for everyone must be established to achieve desirable outcomes.
7. Ms Susan Gardner, Director, Ecosystems Division, UNEP	Panel	Ms. Gardner focused on the environmental perspective of the use of fertilizers. She noted that fertilizers are indispensable for sustained food production, but excessive use of mineral fertilizers has roused environmental concerns. She pointed out that enhancing fertilizer efficiency and promoting soil health, and identifying practical solutions that can be implemented in various settings are vital for addressing these concerns. It is a known fact that every member country has pledged to reduce the use of fertilizers; however, more education and political willingness to execute these solutions are required.
8. Ms. Josiane Irakarama	Panel	Ms. Irakarama noted that she was honored to take the podium and provide a few remarks as a 'farmer's voice. She reiterated the need to strengthen the interconnectivity among all these actors, but first of all, there is a greater need to prioritize farmers' perspectives.

Interventions from the floor

SPEAKER	QUESTION OR KEY POINT OF INTERVENTION
1. Irmgard Jordan, Alliance Bioversity International & CIAT, Nairobi, Kenya	How can research be of support in the paradigm shift in agriculture, given that farmers may not have access to necessary resources or information to make informed decisions?
2. Onyaole Patience Koku, Farmer/Regional Lead for the Global Farmer Network, Nigeria	The AU/EU partnership is welcomed. It is good to hear that we are realizing that the world has diverse needs. Can we look at innovative/scientific solutions like synthetic biology and the different application that is present to us with fertilizer substitution as a way to increase production?
3. A representative from Africa	Thank you for your input regarding the issue of fertilizers. Many African countries seem to rely on fertilizers, but without proper soil fertility maps, it's hard to achieve positive results. Additionally, the high cost of fertilizers, exacerbated by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and oil prices, makes it difficult for African products to compete in the global market. This is particularly concerning for small producers who make up the majority of the population and are often malnourished. To address this, we must focus on improving production and ensuring that food is readily available. Thank you for bringing attention to this important issue.
4. Representative from the Republic of Belarus	Limitations on trade and sanctions against fertilizer producers can directly impact farmers' ability to afford fertilizers, particularly in developing countries. The Republic of Belarus was subjected to sanctions well before the operation in Ukraine occurred, and these sanctions were not related to that particular event. We recommend that the final document explicitly states that sanctions against fertilizer producers are not acceptable.
5. Juan David Caro, representing Small & Medium Livestock Farmers in Colombia, Chile and Peru	Regarding technologies that can accelerate the composting process, where is money being invested as such investments are non-existent for small and medium farmers? Should farmers focus on ecology or increasing production?

Overall summary, conclusions and recommended actions (max 250 words)

1. Since late 2021, the world's fertilizer prices have increased significantly due to rising energy prices, COVID-19 disruptions, the war in Ukraine, and trade restrictions imposed by some major fertilizer exporters. As such, affordability and accessibility became a major concern, especially in lower-income countries, leading to less fertilizer application and, thus, lower yields and production.

2. The event aimed to highlight the potential of fertilizers to impact the transformation of agrifood systems positively. The attendees were presented with policy recommendations that encompass both short-term and long-term solutions on how fertilizers can contribute to the transformation of agrifood systems. Short-term solutions can help mitigate the negative effects of market distortions and price fluctuations, while longer-term arrangements should focus on addressing sustainability concerns.

3. The session reiterated that action at scale is plausible by highlighting the problem and focusing on how the fertilizer crisis can be turned into an opportunity. It stressed that while it is essential to meet the immediate pressing needs regarding fertilizer affordability and accessibility, more emphasis should be placed on how fertilizers can be part of the solution to transform agrifood systems to become more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.