

Global Briefing to National Convenors

Preparations for the 2nd UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4)

24 February 2025

Introduction

On 24 February 2025, a global briefing to National Convenors was held to provide key updates on preparations for the 2nd United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4) and facilitate an open exchange on expectations, priorities, and the role of National Convenors in steering food systems transformation. The UNFSS+4, co-hosted by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of Italy, is scheduled to take place from 28 to 29 July 2025 in Addis Ababa.

The session featured interventions from the Deputy Secretary-General, the Permanent Representatives of Ethiopia and Italy, the Director-General of FAO, and the President of IFAD. National Convenors were invited to share insights on their ongoing efforts, the support needed to accelerate progress at national and regional levels, and their expectations for the upcoming UNFSS+4. The briefing also presented the key milestones leading up to UNFSS+4 in July, addressed questions, and provided guidance to strengthen national-level implementation. This report summarizes the discussions held during the briefing.

Setting the scene

The global briefing opened with introductory remarks by Dr Stefanos Fotiou, Director of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, who welcomed participants, outlined the agenda for the session, and emphasized the importance of the briefing to update National Convenors on the preparations for UNFSS+4. He underscored the National Convenors' crucial role as key drivers of national food systems transformation.

Welcoming remarks

Ms Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (DSG), welcomed the participation of National Convenors and acknowledged with gratitude the co-hosting role of Ethiopia and Italy for the upcoming UNFSS+4. She emphasized that holding the Stocktake in Ethiopia reflects a commitment to showcasing progress in food systems transformation, particularly in the Global South. With just five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the DSG underscored the urgency of accelerating food systems transformation and mobilizing investments to scale up national efforts. She highlighted the potential of food systems to achieve sustainable development across many interconnected dimensions, including green energy, digital innovations, and inclusive economic growth. Additionally, the DSG stressed the need to move beyond discussions on best practices and focus on concrete investments, particularly in empowering youth and entrepreneurs driving innovative solutions. She reiterated the importance of ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach at the country level, supported by the UN system, and invited National Convenors to share their challenges and successes to shape the agenda for UNFSS+4. Finally, she reaffirmed the UN's commitment to supporting national efforts despite the emerging challenges and encouraged Convenors to remain engaged in driving meaningful change.

The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Dr Qu Dongyu, reaffirmed FAO's commitment to supporting agrifood systems transformations. He emphasized the critical role of National Convenors as "game changers" and underscored the importance of their coordination efforts at multiple levels—global, national, and local—highlighting their influence in shaping policies across various ministries beyond agriculture, including finance, economy, and innovation. He encouraged Convenors to further engage a broad range of stakeholders, including investors, scientists, civil society, farmers, and consumers, recognizing that consumer demand can be a powerful force for change. Moreover, the Director-General called for the submission of standardized best practices to facilitate knowledge-sharing ahead of UNFSS+4, enabling more effective discussions and policy development. The Director-General highlighted FAO's longstanding role in agrifood policy, innovation, and international trade, stressing the importance of open and transparent markets to achieve sustainable and resilient food systems globally. Finally, he reaffirmed FAO's commitment to supporting National Convenors through the Hub, ensuring efficient coordination and providing technical expertise.

Dr Alvaro Lario, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), highlighted the critical importance of the upcoming Stocktake, particularly as food systems face significant challenges from global shocks and climate change. He emphasized that food systems transformation goes beyond increasing agricultural productivity, touching on vital aspects such as rural job creation, post-harvest loss reduction, distribution, and export opportunities. The President expressed his appreciation to Ethiopia and Italy for co-hosting the Stocktake and outlined the importance of aligning UNFSS+4 preparation discussions with other global events, such as the 4th International Financing for Development Conference and the Nutrition for Growth Summit. Furthermore, the President highlighted the need for national food system plans and investment strategies, stressing that IFAD is committed to supporting the development of financing mechanisms alongside partners like the World Bank. Additionally, he emphasized the necessity of nurturing local private sector ecosystems to create sustainable job opportunities, noting that relying solely on official development assistance will not be sufficient for transforming food systems.

Dialogue with National Convenors

The global briefing moved into an interactive discussion with National Convenors, moderated by Dr Stefanos Fotiou. This session provided a platform for participants to share insights into their ongoing efforts to transform food systems, sharing both achievements and persistent challenges. Many interventions underscored the importance of integrating policy reforms, financial investments, stakeholder engagement, and climate resilience measures into their national strategies. Several countries highlighted the significant progress in scaling up school feeding programs, enhancing digital agricultural services, and strengthening public-private partnerships to foster sustainable food production. Others emphasized the need to align food systems strategies with broader economic development goals to ensure long-term impact.

It was noted that efforts to digitalize agricultural services have led to more efficient distribution mechanisms and improved access to financial resources for smallholder farmers. In some contexts, digital platforms are being used to register farmers and facilitate targeted assistance, reducing inefficiencies in the supply chain. Similarly, investments in climate-smart agricultural practices are critical in building resilience against environmental shocks. Several countries shared experiences of implementing agroecology models and promoting the use of climate-resilient crop varieties to enhance food security.

In addition to national-level strategies, regional cooperation and knowledge exchange were recognized as crucial drivers of food systems transformation. Some countries detailed their engagement in cross-border initiatives to improve food trade, strengthen value chains, and develop sustainable irrigation infrastructure. Others mentioned their efforts to modernize agricultural training programs and foster greater youth participation in food production, aiming to address aging farming populations and attract new generations to the sector.

Several interventions reiterated that while policy frameworks are in place, financial constraints continue to hinder large-scale implementation. The need for innovative financing mechanisms, including blended finance and investment incentives, was highlighted as an area requiring further international collaboration. Some participants suggested that UNFSS+4 should facilitate structured discussions between governments and financial institutions to mobilize new investments for food systems.

Several interventions called for greater integration of marginalized groups, including women, youth, and Indigenous communities, in decision-making processes. It was noted that while progress has been made in engaging these stakeholders, more efforts are needed to institutionalize their participation and ensure that policies reflect diverse perspectives.

A strong emphasis was placed on the need for improved data collection and monitoring mechanisms to track national progress and measure the impact of food systems policies. Some countries reported on their efforts to enhance food security tracking through digital monitoring systems, while others pointed to gaps in data availability that hinder evidence-based policymaking. The importance of aligning national reporting frameworks with global indicators was also discussed to strengthen accountability and facilitate knowledge sharing.

There was a collective agreement that UNFSS+4 must go beyond policy discussions and drive concrete, measurable outcomes. Participants expressed a strong desire for the Stocktake to serve as a platform for forging new partnerships, securing financial commitments, and setting clear post-Stocktake implementation mechanisms. To this end, several countries proposed that the Stocktake include dedicated sessions where governments can present case studies and investment plans to potential donors and development agencies.

The session concluded with a shared commitment to ensuring that UNFSS+4 delivers actionable results that contribute to global food security and sustainable development. The next steps in preparation for the Stocktake include finalizing national progress reports, participating in regional consultations, and refining the thematic focus areas to be addressed in Addis Ababa. Moving forward, National Convenors were encouraged to sustain momentum by engaging their high-level political leadership ahead of UNFSS+4 to secure participation, deepening national stakeholder engagement, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, and identifying key messages and key asks to inform the preparation and successful organization of a meaningful UNFSS+4.

The way forward

The briefing underscored several key priorities for advancing food systems transformation and preparing for the UNFSS+4. National Convenors recognized the urgency of accelerating food systems change, emphasizing the need for robust preparatory actions leading up to the Stocktake.

As the preparations for UNFSS+4 continue, National Convenors were encouraged to finalize their national progress reports through the questionnaire sent by the Hub and actively engage in

regional consultations to refine the thematic focus areas for the Stocktake. The collective goal remains clear: to ensure that the upcoming Stocktake not only serves as a platform for policy dialogue but also delivers concrete, measurable outcomes that can drive global food security and sustainable development.

The DSG concluded the briefing by expressing deep appreciation for the participation of the National Convenors and emphasized the invaluable insights shared throughout the session. She highlighted the importance of moving beyond processes and transitioning towards "learning by doing" to advance food systems transformation. Addressing the gaps in policies and the need for greater coherence between sectors was emphasized as a key challenge moving forward. Looking ahead, the DSG stressed the necessity of raising ambition and reinforcing the call to action initiated in 2021. She underscored the importance of showcasing progress and identifying accelerators needed to continue advancing food systems transformation, especially in the lead-up to UNFSS+4. The DSG also recognized the significant opportunity for high-level representation at the upcoming event, which will provide a platform to send important messages about creating enabling environments for food systems change. Finally, the DSG encouraged National Convenors to make full use of the UN system's resources and coordination mechanisms, including the Resident Coordinator system, to enhance country-level engagement and support. She expressed her commitment to continued collaboration. She concluded by looking forward to the next meeting and expressing gratitude for the active participation of all those involved.