

## 2<sup>nd</sup> UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4)

### *Concept Note for Session Co-leads*

July 27-29, 2025 – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

#### 1) Title of the session:

Listening to Practitioners: Barriers and Enablers of Food System Transformation

#### 2) Type of the session:

High-Level Panel

#### 3) Date and time of the session:

28 July, 15.00-16.20

#### 4) Session background:

Food systems transformation is hindered by business-as-usual governance practices including fragmented policies and lack of coordination across sectors. Successful food system transformation requires more than policy change; it calls for a variety of subnational, national, regional, and global actors to align behind common visions, pull in the same direction, and be mutually accountable. At the same time, much interconnected and collaborative action is being taken to overcome these barriers and ensure sustained, systemic change in food systems. Collective engagement, through examples of how steps are taken to think systemically, act coherently and work together collectively, is key to driving action so that multiple outcomes can be delivered at scale. The session will bring together voices from diverse perspectives, including government, legislative power, local authorities, farmers and civil society, from diverse regions across the globe. This will allow us to explore how enablers can be leveraged in different contexts as well as how different players can help advance food systems transformation from their own role, when inclusive governance is built in.

#### 5) Context:

Governance is a critical element of the way food systems work and has been an important focus of the UNFSS process so far, for example through the dialogues that were held in many countries to inform the National Food Systems Transformation Pathways. The UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for accelerated Food Systems Transformation at the UNFSS+2 in 2023 reiterated the importance of governance by including, as one of the six areas of concerted action,

‘establishing food systems governance that engages all sectors and stakeholders for a whole of society approach and deepening joined-up participatory design and implementation of inclusive nature’. Furthermore, the recent 5th global conference of the One Planet Network (10YFP) Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Programme focused on overcoming the barriers to food systems transformation topics such as political economy dynamics, and inclusive and participatory multi-stakeholder collaboration were highlighted as essential enablers of transformation. This session is thus part of a larger dialogue around how governance can be an enabler for food systems transformation efforts. It will build on outcomes of other sessions and aims to highlight concrete examples in order to inspire on how to take action to leverage governance as an enabler to overcome systemic barriers to food systems transformation.

#### 6) Session objectives:

- Facilitate an evidence-informed discussion grounded in practitioner experience to identify and reflect on the structural, political and institutional barriers impeding progress on food systems transformation, and the governance enablers that have proven effective in different contexts.
- Provide a platform for practitioners from government, civil society, and farmers’ groups to share concrete experiences navigating and advancing multilevel, multisectoral governance, demonstrating how diverse actors can co-shape transformation.
- Advance the case for participatory and transparent governance frameworks as a cornerstone of resilient, sustainable and equitable food systems.
- Reinforce the importance and foster momentum for continued collaboration, learning and accountability beyond UNFSS+4 across all actors and levels.

#### 7) Link UNFSS+4 objectives

- **Reflecting on Progress** - this session will focus on enablers to accelerate food systems transformation, focusing on the role of governance. This closely links to the priority area B of the UN Secretary-General’s Call to Action on inclusive governance mechanisms and the aim as formulated in the UNFSS+4 concept to ‘highlight progress on food systems’ governance and coordination mechanisms that engage all sectors and stakeholders ...’. The session will showcase concrete progress since 2021 in establishing or strengthening inclusive, multi-stakeholder governance platforms, national convenor roles and inter-ministerial coordination structures. It will draw on practitioner experience to reflect on transformation dynamics in diverse national contexts and highlight lessons learned that can inform future efforts.
- **Partnerships and Tracking Commitments**
- **Unlocking Finance and Increasing Investments**

#### 8) Key message(s) of the session:

- Inclusive governance mechanisms that allow for meaningful participation of all actors, including local communities and marginalized groups, is essential so that food systems agendas are shaped jointly and structural inequalities and political economy dynamics, such as power asymmetries, that perpetuate exclusion are tackled.
- Coherent policies and aligned implementation need to be supported through coordination and joint planning, where responsibilities for all stakeholders involved are clear. Leadership structures that facilitate inclusive decision-making and action across sectors are key to drive positive transformation.
- Regulatory frameworks can help create equitable conditions, align incentives and identify disincentives, and rebalance financial and trade policies, fostering more sustainable food systems.
- Space for continuous collective learning among diverse stakeholders, and among levels (global, national and local) allows for stronger leadership and real-time adaptation to shape policy and practice in dynamic ways.

#### 9) Session format:

The session will open with a high-level “scene-setting” segment featuring two ministers providing framing remarks on the governance-related barriers holding back food systems transformation including persistent structural lock-ins, such as siloed governance, conflicting mandates, and vested interests. The core part of the session focuses on experience-based enablers to overcome such barriers. Through a moderated panel discussion, speakers will unpack how governance can be leveraged as an enabler to overcome systemic barriers to accelerate food systems transformation, sharing perspectives on enablers based on concrete, practical experience. This will be followed by an interactive section engaging the public in the room and online, followed by closing remarks.

#### 10) Guiding questions for speakers:

1. In your experience, what are concrete enablers to help mitigate the impacts of some of the governance-related barriers identified, such as geopolitical imbalances, internal power asymmetries, and market concentration within food systems?
2. In your experience, what practical actions have helped ensure that marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, can meaningfully shape food systems policies and decisions?
3. As a practitioner, what would be the key recommendations or priority actions for improving governance and institutional frameworks to enhance governance and coordination to achieve food systems outcomes? [call to action]

4. What was a situation in which a multi-stakeholder process, or a multi-level dialogue, such as an inclusive platform, a national convenor-led process, or inter-ministerial coordination, allowed you to re-think and adapt actions to support food systems transformation?

#### **11) Desirable outcome:**

- To create a space for collective learning from practitioners with insights from practical experience into how governance can serve as an actionable enabler to overcome systemic barriers standing in the way of progress on food systems transformation.
- To inspire other practitioners and policymakers take forward these insights and learnings and implement them in their own context to make governance an enabler for food systems transformation.
- A call to action from practitioners and policymakers on necessary actions to overcome the barriers to meaningful participation and to foster inclusive governance for more sustainable, resilient and equitable food systems.

#### **12) Additional links/documents:**

[Final Outcome Document\\_5th Global Conference SFS Programme.pdf](#)