

2nd 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:

Transformation in Complex Settings

2. Type of the session:

High-Level Panel

3. Date and time of the session:

29 July 2025, 11:00 – 12:50

4. Session background:

This high-level panel will highlight how countries facing protracted and recurring food crises are shifting from short-term solutions to long-term food systems transformation. Convened by a coalition of crisis-affected governments, the session aligns with the UNFSS+4 goal of accelerating progress in the most challenging contexts – where conflict, climate shocks, and economic instability intersect.

The session will showcase how national strategies are integrating resilience and long-term transformation, linking humanitarian and development efforts, and unlocking catalytic financing. It will highlight scalable, locally led solutions and innovative partnerships that reduce dependency on humanitarian assistance and tackle the root causes of hunger.

Bringing together leaders from governments, financial institutions, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector, the session will elevate successful models and explore how regional frameworks, such as the African Union Common Position on Food Systems and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, can support context-driven, coordinated action.

Key themes include:

- Government leadership in driving systemic transformation
- Sustainable, catalytic and scalable investments for resilience and long-term impact
- Multi-sectoral collaboration in complex settings
- Local evidence and innovations shaping policy and finance

By connecting political will, investment, and grounded solutions, the session contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly to delivering on SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships), reinforcing the UNFSS+4's call for inclusive, systemic change that reaches those furthest behind.

5. Context:

In 2024, over 295 million people across 53 countries faced acute food insecurity – many of these in complex settings marked by multiple, interconnected and protracted crises. For 35 countries, food crises have persisted annually since 2016, revealing deep flaws in conventional responses. Despite contributing least to the crises they face, it is often the most vulnerable who are bearing the greatest burden.

Transforming food systems and enhancing their resilience is a cornerstone to reducing food crises and reliance on humanitarian assistance, while promoting lasting stability and security, inclusive economic growth, and high returns on investment. However, current development spending in complex settings still reflects a narrow view of food insecurity as a primarily humanitarian concern, rather than an issue that requires linking emergency response with long-term systems transformation.

Moving beyond short-term solutions, a growing number of countries are embedding resilience into national strategies, investing in long-term transformation, and forging dynamic cross-sector partnerships to build back better. Financial institutions are responding too, with smarter, sustainable investments that target root causes.

This high-level panel at the UNFSS+4 Stocktake, convened by a coalition of crisis-affected nations, calls for bold, systemic change. The goal: transform food systems from fragile and reactive to resilient and inclusive.

The discussion will spotlight local, scalable solutions and explore how initiatives like the African Union's food systems strategy are delivering results in tough environments. At the core of the discussion are the voices of vulnerable communities - ensuring their needs are reflected in shaping a more secure, equitable, and future-ready approach to food systems.

6. Session objectives:

Highlight practical ways forward to advance long-term transformation of food systems in complex settings which support government-led strategies, unlock catalytic financing, fostering cross-sector partnerships, scale evidence-based solutions to build resilience, reduce reliance on humanitarian aid, to break the cycle of protracted food crises.

7. Link UNFSS+4 objectives

Please complete at least one of the three sections below. Feel free to fill in more than one where relevant.

- a. **Reflecting on Progress:** This session reflects growing momentum among crisis-affected countries to move beyond emergency responses and embed food systems resilience into national strategies. The discussion will highlight progress in adopting integrated, locally led, and evidence-based approaches to transform food systems in complex settings – ensuring that transformation reaches those most at risk.
- b. **Partnerships and Tracking Commitments:** The session will highlight how multi-sector partnerships, linking agriculture, climate, finance and humanitarian efforts, are addressing interconnected crises. It will showcase country-led coordination and

locally-led solutions, exploring how to track progress and ensure accountability in complex settings.

- c. **Unlocking Finance and Increasing Investments:** This session will highlight the importance of catalytic, sustainable and scalable financing that targets the root causes of hunger and food insecurity. It will present strategies for unlocking smart, sustainable investments that scale up locally led solutions and reduce long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance. By showcasing how governments and financial institutions are aligning resources behind systemic transformation, the session will promote investment models suited to complex settings, advancing the UNFSS+4 goal of financing food systems transformation at scale.

8. Key message(s) of the session:

1. **Governments are driving change** by embedding resilience into national strategies and linking humanitarian aid with long-term development for lasting food systems transformation.
2. **Financing must be catalytic**, focusing on smart, sustainable investments that scale innovative, locally led solutions and reduce dependency on short-term aid.
3. **Partnerships across sectors** - from agriculture to climate and economic recovery - are essential for tackling interconnected crises and fostering resilient food systems.
4. **Evidence and experience matter.** Local innovations and proven strategies must guide data-driven transformation rooted in the realities of crisis-affected communities.

9. Session format:

The session is a moderated high-level panel, with a podium for keynote speakers and a panel discussion. There will also be an open Q&A session, involving speakers and the audience.

10. Guiding questions for speakers:

1. **Government leadership:** What are the most effective ways governments can embed long-term resilience into food systems through integrated policy action?
2. **Catalytic financing:** How can smarter, more strategic investments unlock scalable and sustainable food systems solutions?
3. **Cross-sector partnerships:** What makes a multi-sectoral partnership truly effective in addressing interconnected crises beyond food assistance?
4. **Evidence-based impact:** How can locally generated evidence and innovations guide broader policy and investment decisions for lasting transformation?

11. Desirable outcome:

Participants walk away with a renewed lens for understanding and addressing protracted food crises—one that places government leadership at the center, reimagines how we partner across sectors, and redefines financing as a catalyst for long-term, system-wide transformation in complex settings. Crucially, the session will underscore the importance of grounding action in evidence and lived experience, highlighting how local innovations and proven strategies can guide data-driven solutions tailored to the realities of crisis-affected communities.