

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

*Concept Note for the Ministerial Roundtable led by
Italy and African Union*

1. Title of the session:

Food Sovereignty – Exploring National Approaches to Accelerating the Food Systems Transition

2. Type of the session:

Ministerial Roundtable

3. Date and time of the session:

July 29, 2025, from 11:00 to 12:50

4. Session background:

While food security focuses on access to adequate food, food sovereignty is the right of the peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture system. As such, it has a key role to ensure the right to food and to achieve resilient, sustainable efficient and inclusive food systems, both at local and national level.

5. Context:

In the face of escalating global challenges such as climate change, economic instability, and geopolitical tensions, it is critical to rethink agriculture and food systems based on local and national ownership, traditional knowledge, sustainable agricultural practices, social equity and climate resilience. Regional efforts that have already been launched and need to be taken into consideration include the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2035, and the Africa common position on Food Systems.

6. Session objectives:

This session aims at strengthening recognition of the right to food sovereignty and reaffirming its economic, social and environmental catalytic effects to accelerate food systems transformation. At the same time, it has the ambition to support policies and facilitate investments including certification schemes, policy dialogues and investment facilitation platforms, to scale up local solutions. In order to do that, the Ministerial Roundtable will highlight good practices that showcase the importance of local cultures and traditional knowledge in the path toward food self-determination.

It will provide concrete examples from different countries and regions to illustrate how these objectives can be effectively achieved through a concrete application of the concept of food sovereignty.

7. Link to UNFSS+4 objectives:

a. Reflecting on Progress

Examine how food sovereignty has been integrated into national food systems policies, how the food sovereignty agenda has contributed to food security since the first UNFSS, highlighting both achievements and persistent gaps.

b. Partnerships and Tracking Commitments

Highlight the need for partnerships to empower small-scale producers and local communities to exercise food sovereignty. It will also showcase mechanisms developed to monitor, track, and uphold national and regional commitments to food sovereignty.

c. Unlocking Finance and Increasing Investments

The session will also spotlight successful financing models and discuss the need to expand investments towards strengthening food production, preservation, and scaling food sovereignty. It will stress ensuring financial resources reach small and medium-scale producers, women, and youth, including improved access to climate finance for countries to strengthen food sovereignty.

8. Key messages of the session:

Food Sovereignty is essential to the right to food:

Exploring the concept of food sovereignty as the right of peoples and communities to define their own agricultural and food policies. Emphasis on how it is essential to ensure affordable, sufficient and healthy diets for all by prioritizing local food systems, cultural values, and environmental sustainability, differently from globalized agro-industry. Examining the interconnections between food sovereignty and food security and how food sovereignty underpins long-term food security by fostering self-reliance, preserving biodiversity, and enhancing adaptive capacity to environmental and economic shocks. Considering the economic, social and health risks associated to insufficient food production at national level and dependency on food imports.

Traditional practices are at risk and need to be supported and protected:

Emphasizing the detrimental effects of current practices on food security both at global and local levels. Emphasizing the value of traditional practices of agricultural, fishing and pastoral communities in the shaping of their territories and in the adaptation to environmental, social, and economic challenges. These systems, developed over centuries and sometimes millennia, represent sustainable solutions to the current challenges of agrifood systems. Discussing the multiple threats that traditional practices are facing and possible policy solutions, including protection of high-quality traditional products through labelling and other quality assurance systems. Analyzing the multifaceted risks threatening food availability and access, including climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, economic

crises, geopolitical conflicts, and disruptions in global supply chains. Understanding the vulnerability of food systems and the importance of strengthening local production and resilience.

Geographical Indications (GIs):

Exploring the potential of GIs for the preservation of cultural identity and heritage, the protection of traditional know-how, the generation of positive impacts on livelihoods and the environment. By contributing to create unique products whose value is reflected in the selling price, GIs can play a vital role in supporting rural economies by boosting demand for regional goods, creating jobs, and adding value to local activities. They also contribute to maintaining high-quality standards and supporting sustainability. Discussing how to boost their potential, for example by linking GIs to financing strategies and developing national branding policies.

Public policies and local communities are key to build sustainable food systems: Robust public policies, combined with empowered local communities, form the backbone of sustainable food systems governance. Discussing the need for integrated and coherent policy approaches at local, national, and international levels that support smallholder farmers, protect natural resources, and promote agro-ecological practices. Highlighting the need for empowerment of local communities as key actors in sustainable food systems governance.

Greater public and private investments are needed to achieve sustainable, resilient, efficient and inclusive agrifood systems:

Discussing the need for expanding investments, both public and private, ensuring that appropriate financial resources reach small and medium-scale food producers, women and youth, as farmers are key agents of change. This includes improved access to climate finance for countries. Exploring the potential of specific financial instruments such as blended finance and climate-smart funds.

9. Session format:

This roundtable will be moderated by **H.E. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, African Union Special Envoy for Food Systems**.

After his welcoming remarks, the Ministers of Agriculture of Ethiopia and Italy will deliver their opening remarks. The following session will feature interventions from the podium of Ministers, sharing their different national experiences and successful policy examples. A multistakeholder panel discussion will follow, featuring representatives from International Organizations, agricultural producers' organizations and other stakeholders, followed by an interactive exchange with the audience. The moderator will deliver the closing remarks.

10. Guiding questions for speakers:

- How to build on local good practices related to food sovereignty and to scale them up to make national agrifood system more sustainable, equitable and resilient?

- Which shared priorities among countries can be identified to support the international process aimed at recognizing the right to food sovereignty?
- What are the elements that could trigger virtuous circles in terms of public and private investments that can reach small and medium-scale food producers?
- How can national planning frameworks (e.g. NDCs, agricultural investment plans) integrate food sovereignty principles?

11. Desirable outcomes:

- **Enhance multisectoral and comprehensive cooperation** to achieve increased production, productivity, and diversity in nutrition at national and local levels. Such cooperation should target improved access to inputs and technologies and access to finance that are critical for enhanced productivity. Best practices in transforming local agricultural production through improved cooperation will be shared.
- **Facilitate knowledge exchange and dissemination of best practices** related to food sovereignty and food security among diverse stakeholders, including through the potential launch of a knowledge platform mapping local practices aligned with food sovereignty (e.g. the certification and labelling schemes of high-quality traditional products). Successful examples of certification, support and business development of traditional products and value chains will be showcased.
- **Identify shared priorities** and develop common strategies aimed at promoting food systems that are sovereign, sustainable, equitable, and resilient, including through the establishment of specific working groups.
- Foster the creation of networks and partnerships to support advocacy, **policy development and investments**, as well as practical initiatives that reinforce sustainable food systems.

13. Additional links/documents:

Include any reference documents or links relevant to the session.