

UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake

SESSION REPORT

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Type (click one):

- ☐ Plenary
- ☐ Ministerial Roundtable
- ☐ High-level Panels
- ☐ Featured Event
- ☐ Investment Dialogue
- ☒ Stakeholder Action Session

Advancing Accountability through Science Advisory Committee (SAC)-led Session

28 July | 12:00 - 12:50

Name of note-taker: Astha Banjara

Session lead/co-lead: *Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted and Shenggen Fan*

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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. Dr. Shakuntala Thilsted, Director, Nutrition, Health and Food Security Impact Area Platform, CGIAR, SAC Chair	Opening, session moderation, Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) is committed to supporting countries in refining and implementing national food system transformation pathways.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-disciplinary collaboration is essential to advance food systems transformation. • There is a need for sustained engagement beyond 2030 to ensure meaningful and lasting impact. • Participants were encouraged to connect with SAC members via the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub to advance shared goals.
2. H.E. Demba Sabally, National Convenor of The Gambia, Minister of Agriculture	Setting the scene: High-level Government Official, Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific innovations in The Gambia such as high-yield, stress-tolerant rice and wheat varieties, improved irrigation, and farm machinery are boosting productivity and resilience. • Climate-smart practices and agroforestry are helping mitigate deforestation and environmental degradation while supporting rural livelihoods. • Strong Science-Policy-Society interface is needed to ensure that innovations serve the public interest, support evidence-based policymaking and improve access to nutrition and affordable food. • The Gambia stands as clear testimony to the positive impact of science-driven innovations in building food security and public well-being.
3. Mr Jarot Indarto, National Convenor of Indonesia	Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indonesia is engaging multiple sectors in transforming food systems through data modelling, foresight, and policy development. • The Free Nutritious Meal Program is a flagship initiative targeting 19 million beneficiaries, including children under five and pregnant and lactating women. • The program aims to improve dietary behavior, foster multi-stakeholder

		<p>engagement, and enhance rural economies and farmer welfare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National efforts are grounded in evidence-based approaches to align food systems with nutrition objectives.
<p>4. Prof. Kaosar Afsana, Professor at BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University</p>	Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bangladesh has made progress in reducing undernutrition, but a double burden of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies persists. ● Technically sound diets are often inaccessible due to cost and availability. ● Nutrition-sensitive programs must be designed with sensitivity to local context and constraints. ● Stronger science-policy-community dialogue is needed to improve implementation and impact. ● Despite increased rice production, food diversification remains a national policy priority.
<p>5. Dr. Jean Francois Soussana, Vice President for International, National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment, SAC Co-chair</p>	Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Six of nine planetary boundaries have been transgressed with food systems as major contributors. ● A systemic approach is needed to integrate food, climate, and environment goals. ● Only one country currently references planetary boundaries in its national food system action plan. ● About 30% of reported national measures focus on environmental objectives. ● The Convergence Initiative is a promising step to align food and climate action

Interventions from the floor

SPEAKER	QUESTION OR KEY POINT OF INTERVENTION
1. Dr. Francisco J Rosado May	<p>Could you elaborate on examples of how indigenous knowledge is being incorporated into food systems transformation?</p> <p>Considering that indigenous knowledge may not always be viewed as “science,” how can we move beyond the “science-policy interface” to a “knowledge-policy interface”?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Demba Sabally answered that traditional leaders such as the Council of Elders and chiefs are consulted during project formulation. • Dr. Jean-François Soussana acknowledged the complexity of scaling indigenous knowledge but emphasized the value of place-based innovation and living labs co-designed with local communities.
2. Research Specialist from National Planning Commission (Malawi)	<p>Coordination is key, but Malawi struggles with limited national convening power. What challenges have you encountered in coordinating food systems players, especially when existing setups may not fully incorporate food systems?</p> <p>There is often a gap between research findings and policy uptake, how willing are policymakers to accept evidence, and what measures ensure interventions are implemented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Shenggen Fan answered that policy coordination works best when led from the Prime Minister’s or President’s office. • H.E. Demba Sabally described national efforts in The Gambia highlighting inclusive consultation with traditional leaders and coordination mechanisms. • Prof. Kaosar Afsana pointed out that capacity-building at the community level is often overlooked, which can hinder policy implementation. • The panel acknowledged gaps between research and policy uptake, emphasizing the need for stronger science-policy-society dialogue.
3. Researcher from Policy Studies Institute	<p>Given the importance of affordability in food system transformation, how is the practice of strategic food reserves or buffer food storage which were used historically to provide affordable food to the poor working today? Has this intervention continued or changed from a policy perspective?</p>

- H.E. Demba Sabally described The Gambia's food reserve programme aimed at maintaining food affordability during lean seasons.
- Prof. Shenggen Fan emphasized rebuilding food reserves as a strategy to increase affordability and resilience.

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

The session highlighted the critical role of science in advancing accountability and driving food systems transformation. Panellists representing The Gambia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and SAC emphasized multisectoral coordination, nutrition-sensitive policies, and the integration of Indigenous knowledge alongside scientific evidence.

Key conclusions include the need for national transformation pathways to be cross-disciplinary and context-sensitive. Affordability and access remain central challenges, with targeted initiatives like Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal Program and The Gambia's food reserve efforts serving as practical examples. The persistence of a double burden of malnutrition in Bangladesh underscores the importance of nutrition-sensitive diversification and inclusive policy design.

Environmental sustainability was stressed, with Dr. Soussana warning that most planetary boundaries have been transgressed, necessitating integrated food-climate strategies. Strategic repurposing of agricultural subsidies, coordinated from the highest political levels, emerged as a vital lever for accelerating change.

The Q&A underscored gaps in policy coordination, the importance of elevating indigenous knowledge within broader knowledge-policy frameworks, and the ongoing relevance of strategic food reserves for affordability.

Recommended Actions:

- National conveners should revisit and update food system action plans to integrate environmental, nutrition, and equity dimensions.
- Governments are urged to strengthen high-level coordination mechanisms to bridge agriculture, health, and nutrition sectors.
- Stakeholders should leverage SAC's expertise through the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub to enhance science-policy-society dialogues.
- Greater efforts are needed to incorporate indigenous and local knowledge meaningfully in policy design and implementation.