

# Preparatory Youth Conference for the 2<sup>nd</sup> UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4)

## *Concept Note*

15 – 16 May 2025 / Bangkok, Thailand

### I. Introduction

Food systems are inherently complex—unpredictable, dynamic, and unique to every country. Governments often struggle to navigate this complexity, and donors and development actors frequently overlook systemic approaches to contested policy spaces. To address these gaps, the Food Systems Youth Leadership Program (YLP), funded by the German government, empowers young leaders to tackle policy fragmentation and drive transformative change in food systems.

This programme bets on youth engagement as a key ingredient in the recipe for success when transforming food systems. Since the establishment of the YLP, National Convenors and the UN system have been learning how to work more strategically with younger leaders, creating new partnerships that catalyze young people's growth, with rising opportunities for improving vital skills like leadership, communication, and critical and systems thinking.

### II. Background

Since the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub's (the Hub) establishment in early 2022, countries have increasingly requested support to implement their National Pathways roadmaps guiding public action towards resilient, sustainable, just, and healthier food systems.

The first Stocktaking Moment (UNFSS+2) concluded with the launch of the Secretary General's Call to Action for accelerated food systems transformation, urging the global community to accelerate actions toward sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food systems that deliver equally for people, planet, and shared prosperity. This Call was echoed in the Political Declaration adopted at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in 2023 and throughout the 2023 SDG Summit, where food systems were identified as one of the six key transitions to accelerate the SDGs. It was further bolstered at the COP28 Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action, in which a large number of signing countries committed to expediting the integration of agriculture and food systems into climate action and simultaneously mainstreaming climate action across policy agendas and actions related to agriculture and food systems.

Guided by the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action and its six concrete proposals, the UNFSS+4 has three main goals: **reflecting on progress** on the implementation of the integrated approach towards food systems transformation, **strengthening accountability**, and **investing** to sustain and accelerate food systems transformation.

### III. Objectives of the Youth Conference

The Preparatory Youth Conference for the 2nd UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4) (the Youth Conference) serves as a platform to galvanize the power of youth in addressing critical challenges in global food systems. Aiming to:

- Build momentum toward sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems through youth-led initiatives.
- Mobilize youth to collaborate with decision-makers on actionable strategies to amplify the voices of young leaders in the global food systems governance, while scaling finances to support movement-building, youth-led initiatives, and public outreach.

The Youth Conference also increases the impact and inclusivity of the UNFSS+4 process. This will be achieved by contributing to the three objectives of the UNFSS+4:

1. **Reflecting on Progress-** Reflecting on progress in food systems transformation four years after the UNFSS 2021 and five years before the 2030 milestone will involve thorough reflections on what has been accomplished, the lessons learned, and the challenges that remain. Assessing the needs of countries and matching these needs to the tools and approaches available for advancing food system transformation will be a central feature. Discussions will also highlight progress in food systems governance and coordination mechanisms that engage all sectors and stakeholders through a whole-of-society approach and including youth voices systematically, combining short and long-term goals.
2. **Strengthening Accountability-** The roles, commitments, and contributions of both state and non-state actors in driving food systems transformation will be looked at with the purpose of surfacing critical gaps, missing actors and strengthening engagement that is essential for accelerating progress. The objective emphasizes assessing country needs, strengthening governance, and integrating food systems strategies into sustainable development policies through whole-of society approaches, with a strong Youth focus.
3. **Unlocking Investments for Food Systems Transformation-** This objective aims to scale transformative solutions by addressing barriers, leveraging partnerships, and aligning with national pathways and global multilateral targets. Emphasis is placed on opportunities for youth in, for example, financing precision agriculture, climate-resilient technologies, and digital tools to support small-scale farmers.

### **Audience and Criteria for Financial Support to Attend the Conference**

- The Conference is open to all stakeholders, including National Convenors and members of the broader Ecosystem of Support, on a self-funding basis for in-person or virtual participation without costs.
- Efforts will also aim to ensure diversity across gender, geography, and disability status, fostering an equitable platform for voices from all backgrounds to contribute meaningfully.
- Financial support will be provided for YLP alums and World Food Forum (WFF) selected youth leaders.
- Beyond the YLP and WFF, financial support for the conference will prioritize inclusivity and diversity, ensuring representation from underrepresented groups. Focus will be given to female small holders' farmers, Indigenous Peoples, and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, funding will also prioritize participants from countries where the YLP program is not yet represented, and participants recommended by partners from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

### **IV. Conference Structure**

The event will be held over two days in Bangkok (15-16 May 2025), Thailand. The Youth Conference will be hybrid, with in-person and online participation to maximize inclusivity, bringing together young leaders, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to foster intergenerational partnerships and scale the investments made under the YLP.

Over the four dynamic days, participants will:

- Discuss cutting-edge advancements in food systems transformation and exchange with top decision-makers on how to make youth engagement more meaningful across food systems.
- Learn from local and global success stories.
- Collaborate to develop actionable recommendations for the UNFSS+4 Summit, including a draft of a new Youth Declaration for the Summit.

### **Process before the Youth Conference and expected outcomes**

The process leading up to the Youth Conference begins with a collaborative effort to gather insights and priorities from young people worldwide. This inclusive process starts with six regional online consultations in partnership with the World Food Forum's (WFF) Youth Assembly. Youth leaders will discuss and unpack some of the most pressing challenges and opportunities for transforming global agrifood systems through these consultations.

The consultations serve as an inclusive space for young people to voice their concerns in a systematic and structured manner, share innovative solutions, and identify key areas for action, main recommendations for engaging young people in food systems transformations, and top needs for their effective action – both at the regional and global level.

The results of these six consultations will be synthesized into a global youth-prepared document outlining actionable strategies to enhance youth engagement in food systems governance and decision-making, which will be presented to National Convenors during UNFSS+4. This meets UNFSS+4's goals of reporting on progress and enhancing accountability.

To support the UNFSS+4 goal of unlocking opportunities, the Conference will socialize the understanding of food systems among participants and stakeholders, valuing solutions from early career professionals in food systems. Moreover, through media visibility, the Conference will amplify youth voices and innovations through traditional and social media channels to increase public knowledge about the urgency to transform current food systems and to scale global awareness and understanding of cross-cutting issues.

## V. Impact and Outcomes

The Youth Conference seeks to create a lasting impact by:

- Reporting on progress by strengthening youth leadership in global food systems governance through their engagement in Pathways planning and implementation.
- Enhancing accountability by bridging gaps in civil society engagement and food systems policymaking.
- Unlocking opportunities by developing a youth-driven roadmap for systemic food systems transformation.

By empowering young professionals and fostering collaboration, the Youth Conference envisions a future where global food systems are sustainable, inclusive, and just. Together, young leaders and decisionmakers can shape strategies prioritizing the Right to Food and intergenerational well-being, ensuring no one is left behind.

Set against the vibrant backdrop of Bangkok, participants will prepare for UNFSS+4 and inspire a generation of changemakers to lead the transformation of food systems worldwide.

### Post-Conference Legacy

- In addition to presenting the outcome document and policy recommendations, the work from the Youth Conference and experience from UNFSS+4 will also be brought forward into the 5th WFF flagship event during the week of 13-17 October 2025. Here, the results will be shared, and interactive youth assembly sessions will be held to continue to build the path forward, as well as milestones in the following two years coinciding with key moments, including COP30, the following WFF flagship events, and UNFSS+6.
- WFF National Chapters can be leveraged as a vehicle to take actions forward in coordination with the National Conveners, and successful case studies can be shared to encourage scaling these across other countries.

### Partners

- **World Food Forum** - The WFF, launched in 2021 as an independent network of partners hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), serves as the premier global platform to actively shape agrifood systems for a better food future, accelerating the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the WFF Global Youth Action Initiative, its pillar linked to youth, the conference will tap into the expertise of the WFF [Youth Assembly](#) in operationalizing virtual regional consultations during the pre-conference. The Youth Assembly serves as a year-round open and inclusive platform for young people to co-create and discuss various issues related to agrifood systems. It brings together young individuals, youth entities, organizations and constituencies to discuss policy topics or issues within agrifood systems and develop joint recommendations or solutions.
- **FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific** – Supports logistically and advice on the operationalization of the Conference.
- **Scientific Advisory Committee of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub** – Provides intellectual advice on the agenda design and strategic topics.
- **Youth Task Force (YTF)** - The Youth Task Force (YTF) for the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake 2025, established in April 2025, plays a role as a strategic partner in ensuring meaningful youth engagement in the lead-up to UNFSS+4. Serving as a participatory and action-oriented body, the UNFSS+4 YTF brings together diverse youth voices to contribute to initiatives led by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and the World Food Forum. It co-designs and implements youth-centered activities, including the Preparatory Youth Conference, and fosters collaboration between youth, governments, civil society, and other stakeholders. The YTF also monitors national-level youth engagement efforts, promoting long-term investment in youth as critical agents of food systems transformation.