

4TH AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION MEETING REPORT



Fourth global regional meetings supporting countries and partners to advance food systems transformation toward 2030.

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1. Background

The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), convened by the Secretary-General in 2021, positioned food systems transformation as a central pathway to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By highlighting the interconnectedness of food systems with challenges such as hunger, malnutrition, climate change, poverty and inequality, the Summit catalyzed the development of national food systems pathways led by National Food Systems Convenors, alongside a broad ecosystem of support and multi-stakeholder commitments.

To sustain momentum, two global stocktakes were held in Rome (2023) and Addis Ababa (2025), enabling countries and stakeholders to review progress, identify bottlenecks and define priorities for accelerating implementation. These processes culminated in the UNFSS+4 Secretary-General's Call to Action, *From Rome to Addis and Beyond*, which outlines six priority areas: urgent delivery in complex settings; strengthened policy coherence and inclusive governance; mobilization of finance and investment; integrated approaches across climate, health and development; enhanced science, technology and innovation; and intergenerational collaboration.

In parallel, regional meetings have been convened annually alongside the Regional Sustainable Development Forums to facilitate peer learning, knowledge exchange and alignment of national priorities with regional and global agendas.

The **4th Americas and the Caribbean Food Systems Transformation Meeting** builds on this global and regional process, including previous National Convenors Meetings and the 2025 UNFSS+4 Regional Preparatory Meeting. The region has demonstrated strong political commitment and tangible progress in advancing food systems transformation through integrated approaches that link food security, nutrition, climate action, social inclusion, and economic resilience. Countries have reported progress in implementing national pathways, particularly through inclusive governance, territorial approaches, agroecology, climate-resilient production, and strengthened roles for family farmers, Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth.

The region demonstrated tangible progress in moving from policy commitments toward implementation approaches that can attract and effectively utilize financing, including the development of investment pipelines, bankable projects, and financing frameworks aligned with national priorities. Countries have emphasized the need to scale financing—particularly concessional and blended financing instruments—strengthen coordination, and expand partnerships with development banks, international financial institutions, and the private sector. Proven approaches such as home-grown school feeding, public procurement reforms, and SME-driven innovations were highlighted as **practical and scalable entry points for implementation**. Following the hosting of COP30 in the region in 2025, Latin America and the Caribbean have been strategically positioned to elevate food systems transformation within climate and development agendas. However, key challenges remain in mobilizing sustained investment, strengthening accountability, and ensuring coordinated, multi-level implementation.

The meeting brought together more than **80 participants in person and 30 participants online**, including representatives from **21 countries (33 national delegates)** at the level of Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Directors of Units and officers, alongside UN Resident Coordinator Offices and UN agencies from across the region, as well as representatives from civil society, the private sector, academia, the science community and innovation centers.

Over two days, participants engaged in dialogue to assess progress in implementing national food systems pathways, identify persistent bottlenecks, and define priority support needs for the next 24 months. The meeting strengthened the collaboration and aligned multi-stakeholder support with country-led priorities, while promoting scalable solutions and strengthening capacities to mobilize and unlock investment. It resulted in strengthened regional networks, new partnerships, and a shared understanding of the actions required to accelerate food systems transformation across Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. Overview of the Programme

The 4th Americas and the Caribbean Food Systems Transformation Meeting was designed as a **two-day, high-level, action-oriented platform that brought together National Food Systems Convenors, government representatives, UN Resident Coordinators, regional and global UN agencies, international financial institutions, civil society, the private sector, academia, and innovation actors.**

The programme was structured to **move beyond dialogue toward implementation**, with a clear focus on:

- assessing progress since the UN Food Systems Summit,
- identifying persistent bottlenecks,
- and defining priority support needs for the next 24 months.

Across the two days, the agenda combined **high-level plenary sessions, thematic panels, and interactive discussions**, ensuring both strategic reflection and practical exchange. The programme was organized around key dimensions of food systems' transformation, including:

- national implementation of food systems pathways,
- inclusive governance and multi-stakeholder engagement,
- science, innovation, and knowledge systems,
- the role of civil society and communities,
- the contribution of the private sector,
- coordination within the ecosystem of support,
- and financing and investment.

A central component of the programme was the **High-Level Roundtable of National Convenors**, which provided a structured space for countries to present progress, share concrete experiences, and articulate challenges and support needs. This session served as the backbone of the meeting, grounding discussions in **country-led priorities and real implementation dynamics.**

Closely following this, the **finance and investment sessions** constituted the **second most strategic pillar of the programme**, focusing on how to unlock resources to scale implementation. These sessions brought together international financial institutions,

development partners, and country representatives to discuss concrete financing instruments, investment pipelines, and mechanisms to de-risk and align finance with national priorities. The discussions aimed to bridge the gap between policy commitments and **investment-ready action**, positioning finance as a critical enabler of transformation. Complementary sessions brought perspectives from **civil society, academia, private sector, and cooperation actors**, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how different stakeholders are contributing to transformation on the ground and where greater alignment is required.

The programme was deliberately designed to **prioritize interaction over presentation**, encouraging open dialogue, peer learning, and exchange of practical solutions. This format enabled participants to identify **scalable practices, strengthen partnerships, and build a shared understanding of how to accelerate implementation**.

Overall, the programme provided a coherent, integrated framework to connect policy, practice, and partnerships, ensuring that discussions across sessions directly shaped the meeting's key messages and recommendations.

3. Key Messages from the Regional Meeting

The 4th Americas and the Caribbean Food Systems Transformation Meeting reaffirmed that the region is entering a **new phase of implementation**, moving from dialogue and planning toward **coordinated, scalable, and investable action**.

From Pathways to Collective Implementation

The food systems approach is no longer rhetorical. It represents a new way of working that simultaneously integrates considerations for **people (present and future generations), planet, and prosperity** through interconnected, better-informed, and inclusively designed policies.

High-level visions and strategic frameworks are guiding the revision of more coherent sectoral public policies, which are translated into concrete programmes and supported by strengthened institutional coordination.

In the region, the food systems approach has converged around several priorities and regional interventions, linking **social protection, healthy diets, rural development, and climate resilience**. In particular, this has translated into efforts to accelerate multisectoral nutrition, including through **school feeding programmes, public procurement, and support for family farming**.

3.1. Financing and Scale for Implementation

Financing has been a persistent challenge and a key priority to achieve results at scale. Limited access to sustainable finance, weaknesses in markets and supply chains, and insufficient institutional and entrepreneurial capacities continue to slow progress.

A key message from the discussions was that **domestic public financing remains the primary foundation for food systems transformation**, particularly through national budgets,

public programmes, and policy instruments such as subsidies, public procurement, and social protection systems. Strengthening the efficiency, targeting, and alignment of these domestic resources with food systems priorities is essential to drive implementation at scale.

At the same time, countries emphasized that domestic financing alone is insufficient. **Complementary financing from multilateral development banks, international partners, climate funds, and the private sector is critical**, particularly to scale investments, de-risk innovation, and support long-term transformation. This requires stronger alignment between domestic priorities and external financing flows.

Efforts are being accelerated to create an **enabling environment for investments aligned with national priorities** through improved policies, regulations, certifications, and strong institutions that build confidence among partners and investors.

There is a shared objective to optimize resource use by directing investments toward **circular-economy models, entrepreneurship development, digital innovation, and research and development**, as well as toward more **sustainable and regenerative production systems**.

Investments with multilateral development banks, international partners, and the private sector will only be successful if they are **co-designed from the outset**, aligning expectations, assets, and opportunities, and ensuring adequate time and flexibility.

Instruments such as **blended finance, smart subsidies, results-based payments, thematic bonds, and co-investments** have proven effective, particularly when linked to innovative climate finance mechanisms.

The economic, social, and environmental benefits of investing in transformed food systems are clear; the collective priority now is to **translate this consensus into concrete investments**.

3.2. Multisectoral Governance and High-Level Ownership

Multisectoral governance is established at the national level, demonstrating the region's leadership in institutionalizing **permanent interministerial coordination mechanisms**. This includes recognizing the key mandate of National Convenors and creating spaces for structured participation by civil society, family farming, and Indigenous Peoples.

At the same time, there is a shared understanding that food systems transformation must be **politically anchored and led at the highest levels of government**, with executive authorities providing leadership to ensure coherence, continuity, and effective implementation.

Real inclusion is not an option, but a **condition for effective transformation**.

3.3. Transformation is Built from the Local Level

Family farmers, small-scale producers, women and youth leadership, and the value of Indigenous and ancestral knowledge remain the foundation of food systems in the region.

Their persistent barriers—**access to markets, financing, infrastructure, and logistics**—must be prioritized through locally driven, resilient, and culturally appropriate solutions.

While much remains to be done, the region can highlight its leadership in the inclusion of youth, rural women, and Indigenous Peoples. However, these approaches must move from symbolic recognition to **real influence in decision-making**, recognizing their role as central actors in implementation and ensuring their **prioritized access to financing**.

3.4. Territorial Approaches

Given that local challenges require local solutions, territorial approaches guide planning, service delivery, and interventions.

Promoting **sustainable and regenerative production systems, including agroecological approaches**, adapted to diverse territorial contexts, offers effective solutions to current challenges while strengthening resilience, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability.

Closing the gap between public policies and local realities remains a central priority. Progress can only be considered achieved when the most vulnerable communities experience **tangible improvements in their well-being, environment, and future prospects**.

Achieving this requires a **systemic, intersectoral, and coordinated approach** that breaks down silos within governments and across the support ecosystem. This includes strengthening collaboration among partners, aligning interventions, and ensuring that international cooperation is coherent, complementary, and responsive to country priorities.

3.5. Regional Cooperation

A strong regional voice has emerged, reflecting the diversity of national experiences and conveying a renewed sense of **political commitment and shared ambition** across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Governments, the United Nations system, civil society, academia, the private sector, and financial institutions are increasingly aligning efforts, fostering a shared vision, and strengthening **South-South cooperation, technical exchange, and regional collaboration** as key drivers to accelerate implementation.

The support provided by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub over the past five years has been **highly valued by National Convenors and partners**, contributing to the consolidation of a shared space for collaboration and reinforcing a renewed commitment to **sustain and scale these collective efforts toward 2030**.

3.6. Sustaining Momentum in a Changing Context

Despite constantly evolving political and economic contexts, there is a clear and collective effort to maintain the **direction, ambition, and political will** of the food systems approach.

Food systems are increasingly recognized not as a problem, but as **part of the solution to multiple interconnected challenges**. There is a shared ambition to shift the narrative and go further.

Food systems go beyond productivity (while remaining essential): they impact **health** (with 25 percent of the population lacking access to healthy diets), **livelihoods** (22 percent of employment in the region), and are deeply linked to **climate change** (which could affect production by up to 17 percent).

They represent one of the most powerful catalysts for sustainable development, and efforts will be intensified to position them as a **priority in national development plans**.

National Convenors, non-state actors, and the United Nations system—led by Resident Coordinators—are working together to sustain this momentum.

There is no turning back. The region is advancing toward a phase where **implementation, investment, and impact** define success.

*The priority is to **connect political leadership, technical solutions, and financing**, ensuring that food systems transformation delivers **tangible, inclusive, and sustainable results for people, communities, and the planet by 2030.***

4. Main outcomes of the meeting

4.1. Regional perspectives

The National Convenors Roundtable convened government representatives leading national food systems transformation processes across Latin America and the Caribbean. The session provided a structured space for countries to exchange experiences in implementing national pathways, identify persistent bottlenecks, and articulate priority areas for regional and global support.

The discussion focused on three guiding themes:

1. Progress achieved since the 2025 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS+4).
2. Persistent bottlenecks and emerging risks.
3. Support is required to accelerate implementation.

Twenty-one countries participated in the Roundtable: Belize, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Federative Republic of Brazil, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Republic of Chile, Republic of Colombia, Republic of Costa Rica, Republic of Cuba, Republic of Ecuador, Republic of El Salvador, Republic of Guatemala, Republic of Haiti, Republic of Honduras,

Republic of Panama, Republic of Peru, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines..

Across the region, countries reaffirmed strong political commitment to food systems transformation as a central pathway toward achieving food security, improved nutrition, climate resilience and inclusive rural development.

Participants emphasized that food systems approaches have increasingly moved from dialogue phases toward implementation. Governments reported progress in institutional coordination, policy integration, and stakeholder engagement. At the same time, countries highlighted widening fiscal constraints, climate shocks and structural inequalities as major risks slowing implementation.

Participants also underlined the importance of strengthening food system governance, optimizing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, expanding access to financing, consolidating partnerships—including South-South cooperation—and identifying and scaling up good practices to accelerate results at the territorial level.

A consistent message across interventions was the need to transition from **planning and coordination toward sustained financing and operational delivery**.

4.2. Subregional progress across the region

| Subregion | Caribbean | Mexico and Central America | South America |
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| Participating countries | Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Republic of Haiti, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. | Belize, Costa Rica, Republic of El Salvador, Republic of Guatemala, Republic of Honduras, Mexico, and Republic of Panama. | Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Federative Republic of Brazil, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Republic of Chile, Republic of Colombia, Republic of Ecuador, and Republic of Peru. |
| Summary | Caribbean countries underscored that food systems transformation is being shaped by persistent exposure to climate shocks, high import dependency, and constrained fiscal space , requiring approaches that simultaneously address resilience, local production, and market access. | Countries highlighted that transformation is being driven by efforts to address deep-rooted territorial inequalities , while building more integrated policy frameworks linking food systems, climate, and social protection . | South American countries presented diverse experiences shaped by differences in scale, capacity, and policy frameworks, yet shared a focus on territorial approaches, intersectoral coordination, and alignment with climate and development agendas . |
| Progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationalizing pathways through whole-of-government coordination – Dominican Republic: The Food Systems Climate Action Convergence Action Blueprint is an innovative governance instrument that translates national pathways into coordinated, cross-ministerial implementation, particularly by linking production, nutrition, and social protection, and offers a replicable model for operationalizing convergence. • Embedding climate resilience into production systems – Jamaica: Jamaica demonstrated how integrating climate adaptation directly into agricultural systems enables simultaneous gains in productivity and resilience, positioning climate-smart | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchoring food systems in legal frameworks – Mexico: The adoption of the General Law on Adequate and Sustainable Food, alongside SINSAMAC, represents a structural innovation, embedding food systems transformation into binding legal and institutional architecture, ensuring long-term policy continuity. • Institutionalizing inclusive governance – Guatemala: Guatemala's model strengthens intersectoral coordination and Indigenous participation, demonstrating how formal governance mechanisms can | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial implementation and market linkages – Colombia: Colombia's use of territorial dialogues combined with public procurement systems represents an innovative governance-to-market model that directly links local production with institutional demand. • Institutionalizing agroecology through market incentives – Ecuador: The AFC Seal provides a certification-based mechanism that connects agroecological production with markets, offering a scalable model for incentivizing sustainable production. • Resilient local production systems – Venezuela: Venezuela highlighted adaptive production models |

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| | <p>agriculture as a core implementation driver rather than a parallel agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Strengthening domestic production and governance linkages – Saint Vincent and the Grenadines:</u> The country highlighted an approach that connects food systems governance, youth engagement, and national production strategies, illustrating an intergenerational and systems-based model to reduce import dependency. • <u>Scaling localized production models – Cuba:</u> Cuba's urban agriculture systems demonstrate how decentralized, low-input production models can be scaled in constrained environments, offering a practical solution for food access and resilience in crisis contexts. • <u>Linking smallholders to markets in fragile contexts – Haiti:</u> Haiti's efforts to connect producers with markets through localized procurement and distribution channels illustrate an adaptive model for fragile settings, where strengthening local value chains directly supports both livelihoods and food access. • <u>Advancing policy coherence across sectors – Grenada:</u> Grenada's experience reflects an emerging integrated policy model that aligns agriculture, nutrition, and climate priorities, demonstrating how small states can operationalize systemic approaches despite limited capacity. | <p>embed inclusion into decision-making structures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Integrating pathways into national planning – Honduras:</u> Honduras' updated pathway reflects an effort to institutionalize food systems within national development planning, enabling stronger alignment between policy and implementation. • <u>Using public procurement as a transformation lever – El Salvador:</u> By linking school feeding programmes with local production, El Salvador is operationalizing a "triple-win" model (nutrition–markets–livelihoods) that can be scaled across the region. • <u>Aligning production with climate agendas – Costa Rica:</u> Costa Rica's approach demonstrates how environmental policy frameworks can drive food system transformation by integrating sustainability into production systems. • <u>Strengthening interinstitutional delivery mechanisms – Panama:</u> Panama's coordination platforms illustrate how governance alignment across ministries can accelerate implementation and reduce fragmentation. | <p>combining traditional knowledge and innovation, demonstrating resilience under constrained economic conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Decentralized procurement systems – Peru:</u> Peru's approach strengthens institutional demand for smallholder production, showing how procurement can serve as a policy tool for inclusion and market access. • <u>Integrated social protection and food systems – Brazil:</u> Brazil's model remains one of the region's most systemic innovations, linking school feeding, local procurement, and social protection at scale. • <u>Agroecological and Indigenous-led systems – Bolivia:</u> Bolivia's approach integrates biodiversity, Indigenous knowledge, and agroecology, positioning territorial systems as a foundation for sustainability and resilience. • <u>Policy integration within climate frameworks – Chile:</u> Chile's integration of food systems into climate and sustainability strategies reflects a forward-looking alignment between national pathways and global commitments. |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial and community-driven implementation – Saint Lucia: Saint Lucia's community-based initiatives highlight how localized implementation mechanisms can translate national pathways into territorial action, strengthening resilience through bottom-up approaches. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationalizing policy at community level – Belize: Belize's initiatives reflect how policy coherence across sectors can be translated into community-level implementation, bridging national frameworks and local realities. | |
| | <p>Across all subregions, several shared trends emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from formulation to implementation phases. • Increased institutional ownership of food systems agendas. • Stronger multi-stakeholder participation. • Greater alignment between food systems, climate and nutrition policies. • Across subregions, countries are increasingly advancing implementation-oriented innovations that demonstrate a shift towards practical, scalable solutions connecting policy, markets, and territorial implementation, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of public procurement as a systemic lever (Brazil, Peru, El Salvador, Colombia) • The institutionalization of intersectoral governance mechanisms (Dominican Republic, Mexico, Guatemala) • The scaling of agroecological and territorial production systems (Ecuador, Bolivia, Cuba) • The integration of climate resilience into food systems planning (Jamaica, Costa Rica, Chile) | | |
| <p>Bottlenecks</p> | <p>Across all subregions, countries identified the following key bottlenecks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited and uneven access to financing, including constrained domestic fiscal space and insufficient long-term investment mechanisms • Persistent rural poverty and structural inequalities, affecting small-scale producers and vulnerable populations • Fragmented institutional coordination, both across sectors and between national and subnational levels • Limited technical and operational capacity, particularly at territorial and decentralized levels • Challenges in scaling successful initiatives, with many remaining at the pilot stage • Weaknesses in markets and supply chains, including limited market access for producers and inefficiencies in value chains • High dependence on food imports (particularly in the Caribbean), increasing vulnerability to external shocks • Climate variability and extreme weather events affect productivity, livelihoods, and food security • Political and institutional transitions, affecting continuity and sustained implementation • Insufficient monitoring, data systems, and accountability mechanisms | | |

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| Support needed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing mechanisms adapted to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) • Investment in climate-resilient agriculture and infrastructure • Strengthened regional cooperation on food security, logistics, and trade • Strengthening governance mechanisms, including enhanced interministerial coordination, multi-stakeholder engagement, and institutional capacity to lead and sustain food systems transformation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity strengthening for territorial and decentralized implementation • Technical cooperation on climate-smart and resilient agriculture • Knowledge exchange on integrated and inclusive policy design • Support for integrated rural development strategies • Improved access to financing for smallholders and SMEs • Regional platforms for peer learning and innovation exchange | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term and predictable financing frameworks for food systems transformation • Strengthened South–South cooperation and regional knowledge exchange • Technical support for monitoring systems, data, and impact assessment • Strengthening and institutionalizing multi-stakeholder governance platforms, ensuring their sustainability, effective coordination, and capacity to support implementation across national and territorial levels. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to financing aligned with national priorities, including both domestic and international sources • Investment in climate-resilient and sustainable food systems • Strengthening technical capacities for implementation, particularly at territorial level • Enhanced policy coordination and integrated governance approaches • Regional and international cooperation, including knowledge exchange and peer learning • Support from the ecosystem of support must be aligned, complementary, and capacity-driven. Countries emphasized that support should be fully aligned with national priorities and capacities, avoiding duplication by building on existing mechanisms, and strengthening national institutions to lead and sustain food systems transformation. | | |

5. Financing Food Systems Transformation

Financing emerged as a central pillar of the Regional Meeting, with clear consensus that accelerating food systems transformation will depend on translating **national pathways into investable, scalable actions**. While countries have made progress in defining priorities and strategies, a persistent gap remains between **policy ambition and access to adequate, aligned financing**. Participants emphasized that this is not only a question of mobilizing more resources, but of **improving how finance is structured, coordinated, and delivered** to respond to country needs. In this context, International Financial Institutions such as IFAD, together with mechanisms like the UN Joint SDG Fund, were highlighted as key partners in supporting country-led efforts by combining financing, technical assistance, and coordination to unlock investment at scale.

5.1. Promising Strategies and Emerging Initiatives

Discussions highlighted a set of **promising approaches led by countries, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and partners** to address these challenges:

- **Blended and coordinated financing approaches** are increasingly being used to combine public budgets, concessional finance, and private investment. IFIs play a critical role in this space by providing large-scale financing, de-risking instruments, and policy-based lending that can unlock additional capital.
- International Financial Institutions, particularly IFAD, highlighted their role in channeling financing toward small-scale producers and rural communities, combining concessional resources, technical support, and long-term investment approaches to strengthen inclusive rural transformation.
- **Technical-financial facilities and intermediation mechanisms**, such as Colombia's experience, are helping to bridge the gap between demand and supply of finance by supporting the structuring of bankable projects, co-designing financial instruments, and facilitating dialogue between financial institutions and producers.
- **Territorial and community-based financing models**, such as those presented by Honduras, are strengthening local financial ecosystems through a combination of public investment, international cooperation, and community-level financial structures, including rural savings groups and producer organizations.
- **Value chain financing and market-linked approaches** are enabling investments to be anchored in real economic opportunities, including connections to public procurement, school feeding programs, and private sector markets, thereby improving the creditworthiness of producer organizations.
- The UN Joint SDG Fund (JSDGF) was highlighted as a key mechanism supporting integrated, country-led financing approaches, bringing together UN agencies and partners to align technical assistance, policy support, and catalytic funding to accelerate food systems transformation.
- IFIs and development partners highlighted the importance of supporting **pipeline development of investable projects**, including through upstream technical assistance, feasibility studies, and capacity strengthening, to ensure that national priorities can effectively translate into financing opportunities.

Across these approaches, a common emphasis was placed on moving from isolated projects to programmatic and systemic financing frameworks aligned with national development plans, NDCs, and food systems pathways.

5.2. Key Challenges and Feedback from Participants

Participants provided candid feedback on the constraints that continue to limit financing flows:

- **Limited access to finance for small-scale producers, SMEs, women, and youth**, driven by high perceived risks, insufficient collateral, and limited financial inclusion mechanisms.
- **Fragmentation of financing instruments and actors**, leading to duplication, inefficiencies, and misalignment with national priorities.
- **Weak project preparation capacity** limits countries' and stakeholders' ability to develop bankable proposals that meet the requirements of IFIs and private investors.
- **Insufficient alignment between financing and food systems objectives**, with resources often concentrated in traditional sectors while underinvesting in nutrition, sustainability, and resilience.
- **Macroeconomic constraints**, including debt burdens and reduced fiscal space, limit public investment and increase reliance on external financing.

Participants also stressed that **accessing finance remains complex and time-consuming**, particularly for local actors, and that existing mechanisms are often not adapted to territorial realities.

5.3. Priority Actions to Unlock Financing

Building on both IFI perspectives and country feedback, the session identified key priority actions:

- **Strengthening capacities to unlock finance**, including project preparation, financial literacy, and institutional capabilities at national and subnational levels.
- **Enhancing coordination across the financing ecosystem** and ensuring alignment among governments, IFIs, UN agencies, and private-sector actors around country-led priorities.
- **Expanding de-risking and blended finance instruments**, particularly to crowd in private investment and support underserved actors.
- **Developing integrated national financing frameworks** for food systems transformation, linking policy, investment planning, and financing strategies.
- **Improving access to finance at the territorial level** through tailored financial products and decentralized mechanisms that reach local actors.

A strong message emerging from the session was that **technical assistance and capacity strengthening are critical enablers of financing**, not ancillary components. Unlocking finance requires not only capital but also the ability to structure, manage, and sustain investments over time.

The session concluded that financing food systems transformation is fundamentally about **alignment, coordination, and capacity**. While significant resources exist across public, private, and international sources, the key challenge lies in **connecting these resources to country priorities through coherent, inclusive, and well-structured mechanisms**.

In this context, IFIs such as IFAD and mechanisms like the UN Joint SDG Fund were highlighted as critical enablers, not only mobilizing finance but also strengthening country capacities, aligning partners, and supporting the development of investable pipelines.

International Financial Institutions, together with the broader ecosystem of support, play a pivotal role—not only as financiers but also as **partners in de-risking, capacity building, and systemic transformation**. Moving forward, success will depend on building pipelines of investable solutions, strengthening enabling environments, and ensuring that financing reaches the **actors driving transformation on the ground**.

6. Key insights from regional stakeholders across food systems

The thematic sessions of the Regional Meeting provided a comprehensive and complementary perspective on the drivers required to accelerate food systems transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Across sessions, a common message emerged: transformation is possible when policy, finance, knowledge, and implementation actors operate in a coordinated and systemic manner.

6.1. Civil Society and Inclusive Participation

Civil society emphasized that food systems transformation must be **people-centered, inclusive, and grounded in local realities**. Civil society actors highlighted their critical role in **implementation, accountability, and ensuring that policies reflect the needs of vulnerable populations**, including smallholders, Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth.

A key contribution of the discussion was the emphasis on the right to adequate food as a guiding framework for transformation. Civil society representatives highlighted advances in promoting rights-based approaches, including efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, influence public policies, and monitor state accountability to ensure that food systems deliver equitable and sustainable outcomes.

Civil society actors also shared **concrete implementation experiences**, particularly in advancing **agroecological practices, community-based food systems, and local market integration**. These included grassroots initiatives supporting smallholder access to markets through **short value chains**, strengthening **farmer networks and cooperatives**, and promoting **sustainable production systems rooted in territorial and Indigenous knowledge**. Specific examples from speakers illustrated how community-led organizations are operationalizing transformation on the ground, including:

- **Agroecological production systems led by rural and Indigenous communities**, integrating traditional knowledge with sustainable practices;
- **Local procurement and short commercialization circuits**, connecting producers directly with consumers and institutional programmes such as school feeding;

- **Participatory governance platforms and community food councils** enable civil society to engage in policy dialogue, monitor implementation, and hold institutions accountable.
- **Advocacy and monitoring initiatives on the right to food**, supporting the development and enforcement of legal and policy frameworks aligned with human rights principles.

These practices demonstrate that civil society is not only an advocacy actor but a **key implementation partner**, particularly in reaching vulnerable populations and translating policy into action in contexts where institutional capacity is limited.

Discussions stressed the importance of:

- **Meaningful participation in decision-making processes**, moving beyond consultation toward co-creation
- **Strengthening accountability and transparency mechanisms**
- **Scaling community-leading and territorial approaches** that reflect local contexts and knowledge systems

Civil society contributions were highlighted as essential in **bridging the gap between policy commitments and on-the-ground realities**, reinforcing that sustainable transformation requires **trust, inclusion, social ownership, and a strong human rights foundation**.

6.2. Science, Academia, Innovation, and Data

The session highlighted the critical role of **science–policy interfaces and knowledge systems** in guiding food systems transformation. Participants emphasized that evidence must be **accessible, actionable, and co-created**, moving beyond academic production toward practical application in policymaking and implementation.

Academic institutions presented concrete experiences of **multi-actor dialogue platforms**, highlighted the role of **digital tools and data systems in strengthening decision-making**, demonstrated how **scientific evidence can be translated into actionable inputs for policymakers**, and emphasized that **ancestral knowledge systems—already recognized within international legal frameworks—are essential to bridging academic and Indigenous knowledge systems**.

The session concluded with a clear call to **bridge the gap between research and implementation**, ensuring that knowledge systems effectively support continuous monitoring, learning, and course correction.

6.3. Private Sector and Value Chains

The private sector sessions underscored its central role in scaling solutions through **inclusive value chains, innovation, and market integration**. Experiences from countries illustrated how **public-private partnerships** can strengthen linkages between small-scale producers and markets, improve traceability, and enhance value addition.

Key practices included:

- Development of **short and inclusive commercialization circuits** connecting producers directly with consumers.
- Strengthening **traceability systems and quality standards** to increase competitiveness.
- Promotion of **territorial and community-based value chains**, including Indigenous and rural economies.

The discussions also highlighted the importance of addressing the "**missing middle**" in **value chains**—processing, storage, logistics, and distribution—which are often underdeveloped yet critical to system efficiency and resilience.

Complementing these perspectives, other stakeholders emphasized that the private sector's role should be guided by robust public policy frameworks and aligned with national priorities. Governments and cooperation actors highlighted the importance of creating enabling environments that incentivize responsible investment, while civil society stressed the need to ensure fair market conditions, transparency, and equitable value distribution, particularly for smallholders and vulnerable groups.

Across discussions, there was a shared understanding that the private sector can act as a **key enabler of implementation**, particularly in connecting production, processing, logistics, and markets. However, this role depends on **effective partnerships**, clear incentives, and appropriate safeguards to ensure that investments contribute to **sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food systems**.

The session highlighted that strengthening collaboration between the private sector, governments, and other stakeholders is essential to **align business models with food systems transformation goals**, unlock investment opportunities, and scale solutions that benefit both people and the planet.

6.4. Cooperation Actors and Ecosystem of Support

Key messages emerging from cooperation actors highlighted that **effective support depends on coordinated, system-wide approaches aligned with country priorities**.

Concrete examples included **joint UN support models at the regional level (e.g., the Eastern Caribbean) and integrated country-level approaches (e.g., Bolivia's AMAS-1 SDG Joint Programme)**, where multiple agencies support efforts to translate national pathways into **coordinated implementation at the territorial level, combining policy support, capacity development**, and investment-oriented interventions. Global platforms such as the **Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** were also highlighted as key mechanisms for inclusive, evidence-based policy convergence.

Initiatives such as the **Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA)** illustrated how values-based approaches are being integrated into food systems transformation, complementing technical and financial solutions.

These experiences demonstrate that the ecosystem of support is most effective when it operates as a **coordinated platform rather than fragmented interventions**, combining policy support, financing, and capacity development.

6.5. Overall Synthesis

Across all sessions, a shared conclusion emerged: *accelerating food systems transformation in the region requires moving from dialogue to implementation* through:

- **Stronger integration** across sectors, actors, and governance levels.
- **Bridging knowledge, policy, and practice**, including diverse knowledge systems.
- **Building capacities to unlock and align financing** with national priorities.
- **Strengthening inclusive value chains and market systems.**
- **Ensuring meaningful participation and accountability.**

Together, these elements form the foundation of a **coherent ecosystem of support**, capable of translating national pathways into tangible, scalable, and investable actions toward 2030.

Across stakeholders, a consistent pattern emerged: innovation is already taking place at multiple levels—community, institutional, market, and financial—but its impact depends on stronger alignment, scaling mechanisms, and sustained coordination across the ecosystem of support.