



GFAR WEBINAR

UNFSS National Pathways: Background, process and ways GFAR regional fora and members can contribute to work planned at country level in 2023

Held on Thursday, 19 January 2023 (13.00-15.00 CET)

SUMMARY RECORD

The webinar, organized by GFAR in collaboration with the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, provided an overview of the conclusions of the UN Food Systems Summit (FSS) held in September 2021 and the implementation of one of its key recommendations: the development and implementation of FSS 'national pathways'¹. It also outlined efforts to catalyse innovation and research to support national pathways. This informed a lively and substantive conversation among participants on what has been done to date since the FSS, what is being planned and next steps. The webinar attracted more than 250 people from 6 continents, with more than 90 people actively participating. Participants came from all GFAR constituencies and beyond, including: GFAR Regional Fora; national and regional research institutes; farmers' and producer organizations; youth; country level officials; selected international experts and resource persons; and GFAR Steering Committee members and Secretariat. Participants highly appreciated the event and expressed interest in GFAR continuing to work on this issue, supporting efforts to address the challenges related to ensuring sustainable food systems by mobilizing its convening power and capacities for coordination across continents to support country efforts to make progress and report on achievements.

The UNFSS 2021 focused on possible solutions to a range of global challenges to make the transformative effects of food systems a driver for the achievement of the 2030 Development Agenda. The Summit concluded with an agenda to foster inclusive and transformative food systems that nourish progress to achieve zero hunger, and through this to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The Summit recognized that there is a need to build on good practices, to invest in science and innovation, and to engage all people (particularly women and youth, Indigenous Peoples, businesses and producers) in efforts to achieve the SDGs. The Summit agreed that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, but while local contexts, approaches and perspectives may differ, food systems can and must adapt in order to

¹In the run up to the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021, all member states were invited to submit their national pathways for food systems transformation in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Prior to the FSS, more than half of the UN's Member States pledged to host dialogue events to begin conversations about improving food systems.

realize the SDGs. It was agreed that follow-up to the Summit would build on existing efforts of countries and supporting organizations in a process to build national pathways facilitated by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, working with countries, supported by Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams, with the engagement and contributions of all stakeholders.

This webinar, organized at the request of the EC and German BMZ, provided an opportunity to initiate a conversation between the Food Systems Coordination Hub, FSS national convenors, GFAR Regional Fora and members and other participants on ways in which GFAR could engage with and support the process of implementing national pathways at regional and country levels. Such engagement by GFAR members at country level could help build awareness and ownership of the national pathways, thus helping to maintain momentum in the implementation of national pathways. One key element is supporting the initiation of dialogue across Ministries to develop national strategies and pathways

The webinar also outlined planned work, such as the stocktaking process and ways for GFAR members to support the development and implementation of FSS national pathways, building on examples from country level progress to date (e.g. Egypt). GFAR could also contribute to the FSS Stocktaking Moment, planned for July 2023.

Presentations made at the webinar are available on the GFAR website (www.gfar.net). In addition, a record of participant questions and answers provided during the session and a recording of the webinar are available on the website. Key background materials include on the UNFSS process include the following:

- (i) [Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit | United Nations](#)
- (ii) The Food Systems Summit Dialogues Gateway: [Home - Food Systems Summit Dialogues](#)

Key points raised in the session with regard to research and innovation and GFAR's role included the following.

- ***The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (established in April 2022) underlined that the involvement of the research and innovation community in FSS follow-up is very welcome.*** Country level progress on FSS outcomes are the core focus of the Hub, implemented by Country Level Platforms led by Governments. There will be a stocktaking moment in July 2023 and a Work Plan will be developed for the Hub, building on a country survey. More details on the process and the Hub's work plan can be found here: <https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/en>
- ***The example of the priority given by Egypt to research and innovation in its FSS national pathway illustrates the important role they play in enabling countries to reach FSS goals.*** Egypt is deeply affected by climate change and is a net food importer, therefore highly vulnerable to food price hikes related to, for example, the war in Ukraine. It highlighted the important multistakeholder national dialogue process that paved the way for the development of five recommendations that were presented to the FSS. Scaling-up nutrition-sensitive agriculture programmes, sustainable agriculture and food systems, and climate-smart agriculture have all been identified as critical to encourage future resilience. Critical to implementing the national pathway has been the establishment of a dedicated entity reporting on progress directly to the Prime Minister's office, with a view to helping reach Egypt's goal of transforming food systems by 2030. The discussion also highlighted the importance of moving from a sectoral approach to agriculture and food security to a systems approach to address food

systems challenges.

- ***Africa has the highest proportion of food insecure and hungry people among continents in the world.*** The Executive Secretary of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) pointed to the important process to develop one Africa voice to be presented to the UNFSS, in which key actions were proposed to address the FSS agenda. The importance of research and innovation to support the process was underlined – starting with their contribution to market access. The Africa Common Position on Food Systems was published in September 2021 (<https://aiccra.cgiar.org/publications/africa-common-position-food-systems-summary-official-africa-common-position-presented>).
- ***In Central Asia and the Caucasus, more innovations were needed that reach producers at the 'last mile'*** – or the web of relationships and transactions between crop buyers and farmers who produce and sell their crops. The Chief Executive Officer of The Central Asia and the Caucasus Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (CACAARI) highlighted that GFAR offers a possibility for producers at the last mile to connect with a wider network.
- ***In Asia, the development of co-innovation processes and the co-design of programmes offers an innovative approach to transform food systems.*** This is illustrated by the GFAR-facilitated Collective Action on Forgotten Foods and co-innovation processes in India. The Asia Pacific Association of Research Institutions (APAARI) supports the development of transformational food systems through efforts to strengthen research-extension linkages, to build capacities and to transform National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS). Drawing on this experience could be a key contribution to the implementation of FSS national pathways.
- ***Youth engagement in FSS national pathways is very important are a key part of the solution to the challenges facing food systems.*** Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), an international movement by Young Professionals, has been involved in the UNFSS process. Youth representatives participate in the FSS Coordination Hub and YPARD is ready to support implementation and monitoring at the country level. The top priorities of youth in relation to the FSS have been: access to safe and health food for everyone, everywhere; climate action; and ensuring equity, especially for youth and women. The strong engagement of research in the FSS follow-up is both critical.
- ***Measurement of progress on implementation of national pathways is vital to inform policy and implemented.*** Methods and approaches for measuring progress have been developed by PRIMA in the Mediterranean region since its establishment in 2018 (involving 19 countries and the European Commission). The initiative has shown the importance of coordination, sharing of experiences across different regions and countries, and of building knowledge-based, sustainable and innovative solutions for sustainable food systems transformation. The experience of PRIMA offers lessons on how progress on food systems can best be measured.
- ***A territorial approach might be useful to GFAR in supporting the implementation of FSS outcomes at global and regional levels.*** Different biogeographical areas share some common characteristics. One way of addressing this is through the development of territorial approaches that are multilevel (local-regional-national) and are multistakeholder.

- ***Progress on transforming national food systems is too slow; key factors holding back progress need to be identified and addressed in order to maintain momentum.*** There is a need to build awareness of FSS outcomes and ownership of efforts to implement them across stakeholders, including but also beyond Governments, at country level. This can be supported by inter-Ministerial dialogue to develop solutions across sectors.
- ***The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub invited GFAR members to contribute to the FSS [Stocktaking Moment to be held in Rome from 24-28 July 2023](#).*** GFAR can engage with and support the development and implementation of FSS national dialogues to develop national pathways at country level and contribute to the Stocktaking Moment.