

Chapter 9

Disaster Risk and Resilience in Small Island Developing States

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Introduction

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development was designed in a way that envisaged maximum synergies between its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while minimizing trade-offs. Among these goals, certain points hold a transformative power capable of influencing many SDGs.

Food Systems hold a key transformative power. They influence and are being influenced by many of the SDGs. They run across many of the SDGs: Food Systems are closely linked to SDG1 (poverty eradication) and SDG2 (zero hunger), and they play key roles in supporting or undermining the global efforts to ensure healthy lives (SDG3) and achieve equality (SDG5) (SDG10). Food Systems transformation can ensure the availability and sustainable management of water (SDG6) and can help mitigate climate change (SDG13), while encouraging collaboration among governments, the private sector, civil society and national and international organizations to achieve this transformation (SDG17).

The Food Systems Summit 2021

Acknowledging the centrality of sustainable food systems to our planet and livelihood, the Secretary General of the United Nations convened a Food Systems Summit in September 2021, emphasizing the important role that food systems play in Agenda 2030.²

The summit was organized in an inclusive way and brought together all UN Member States and constituencies around the world – including thousands of youths, food producers, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, researchers, the private sector and the UN system.

In his Chair Summary and Statement of Action, the United Nations Secretary- General stressed that many governments are committing to accelerate and deepen the transformative power of food systems in a manner aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The focus is increasingly centered on feeding growing populations in ways that contribute to people's nutrition, health and well-being;

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²<https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

restore, and protect nature, are climate neutral, adapted to local circumstances, and provide decent jobs and inclusive economies.³

The Summit emphasized the need for a systemic approach. Food system does not thrive without all sectors working as one, towards common goals. It involves multiple sectors of government and different groups of civil society, with the interaction of multiple scientific disciplines, as well as traditional and Indigenous knowledge.

The Food Systems Stocktaking Moment

To ensure that the commitments to transform food systems will go beyond expressions of intent, the UN Secretary-General committed to convening a global stock-taking meeting every two years to review progress in implementing the outcomes of this process and its contributions to the achievement of Agenda 2030.

The first of these Food Systems Stocktaking Moments will take place in July 2023. It will primarily give space to countries to report on the progress they have made in the implementation of their national pathways and food systems transformation visions at the national and sub-national levels, maintain the momentum for acceleration and bold action signalling national ownership of the food systems agenda, as well as solidify the global understanding of the role of food systems in achieving the SDGs, especially in the current food and cost-of-living crisis context.

The systemic approach necessitates that the stocktaking moment is connected with other important global events including the SDGs Summit (September 2023), the United Nations Climate Change Conference “COP 28” (November 2023), The Nutrition for Growth (2024), the Summit of the Future (2024) as well as the annual High-Level Political Fora and Financing for Development conferences.

The objective is to integrate Sustainable Food Systems transformation objectives across global, regional, and national policy discussions, commitments and targets ensuring that the power of sustainable food systems is used to support the achievement of the SDGs.

A World Off Track to Achieve the SDGs

The stocktaking moment takes place at a time when the world has changed substantially from what it was during the UN FSS, due to a number of pre-existing and ongoing challenges, including, but not limited to, the triple planetary crisis, the cost-of-living crisis and the impacts of conflicts on food systems.

³ The Secretary General Chair Summary and Statement of Action <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/making-food-systems-work-people-planet-and-prosperity>

In the context of these challenges, it is evident that the world is not on track to achieve most of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the meantime, it put additional emphasis on the role that sustainable food systems can play in supporting Agenda 2030.

The current food systems are not supportive of Agenda 2030. The hidden social, economic and environmental costs associated with today's food systems amount to a staggering USD12 trillion, undermining decades of collective development achievements.⁴

The State of Food Security and Nutrition Report (SOFI-2022) confirms what we already know. With eight years remaining to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition (SDG Targets 2.1 and 2.2), the world is moving in the wrong direction. Between 702 and 828 million people were affected by hunger in 2021. The number has grown by about 150 million since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic – 103 million more people between 2019 and 2020 and around 46 million more in 2021.⁵ It is estimated that nearly 670 million people will still be undernourished in 2030 – 8 percent of the world population, which is the same percentage as in 2015 when the 2030 Agenda was launched and which would officially declare the failure of SDG2.

The matter is not limited to hunger. Nutrition targets are also under pressure, especially with the increasing cost of a healthy diet, which is not unaffordable for almost 3.1 billion people – 42 percent - around the world.⁶

Moreover, we can see the negative impact on other SDGs. Although food systems account for a significant proportion of global employment, agricultural households constitute up to two-thirds of people living in extreme poverty worldwide pointing out the correlation between food systems, poverty and equality.

Meanwhile, the current food systems continue to negatively impact our environment and sustainability. They generate soil, water, and air pollution, contribute more than one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, as much as 80 percent of biodiversity loss, and use up to 70 percent of freshwater use.⁷

Increasing weather and climate extreme events have exposed millions of people to acute food insecurity and reduced water security, with the largest adverse impacts observed in many locations and/or communities in developing countries and least Developed Countries (LDCs).⁸

⁴ Growing Better: Ten Critical Transitions to Transform Food and Land Use, available from <https://www.foodandlandusecoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FOLU-GrowingBetter-GlobalReport.pdf>>

⁵ The state of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023 <https://www.fao.org/3/cc3017en/online/cc3017en.html>

⁶ The state of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023 <https://www.fao.org/3/cc3017en/online/cc3017en.html>
<https://www.fao.org/3/cc0639en/online/sofi-2022/food-security-nutrition-indicators.html>.

⁷ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 2022. The Global Land Outlook, second edition. UNCCD, Bonn, available at https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-04/UNCCD_GLO2_low-res_2.pdf

⁸ Global Land Outlook (second edition) Land Restoration for Recovery and Resilience, available at https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-04/UNCCD_GLO2_low-res_2.pdf

The Power of Food Systems

Facing all these compound challenges, the transformation of food systems presents itself as a unique opportunity to salvage the SDGs. We need more integrated and systematic approaches that address multiple goals simultaneously.

Food systems transformation presents an extraordinary opportunity to achieve the world's shared ambitions. The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) stressed that the biggest transformative potentials of the 2030 Agenda did not lie in pursuing single Goals or targets, but in a systemic approach that manages their myriad interactions.⁹ Because of their synergetic role, food systems are one of the key entry points needed to keep us on track to achieve the SDGs.

These shifts have the potential to generate multiplier effects, acting as catalysts for broader transformation across multiple systems and SDGs, by reimagining and redesigning our food systems.

Building on the vision of the UN Food Systems Summit held in 2021, global efforts can accelerate actions toward more sustainable, inclusive, equitable and nutritious food systems.

As stated by the United Nations Secretary General in 2021, countries should go beyond rhetoric and take concrete steps towards implementing their newly adopted food systems national pathways which are the agreed strategic frameworks tailored to each country's context, outlining specific actions to be undertaken for food systems transformation.

The stocktaking moment will discuss the signs of food systems transformation, the challenges facing efforts in this direction, and how we can learn from success stories. It is evident that this transformation requires profound shifts across the value chain from production to storage to consumption and disposal of food.

Additionally, the stocktaking moment will be an opportunity to uphold and upgrade these pathways ensuring that are in line with national priorities and new realities.

An Inclusive Preparatory Process

The High-Level Political Forum in 2022 gave a clear direction for the future global work on food systems. Members agreed to remain committed to keeping a strong focus on the sustainable transformation of the global agrifood system, aiming for a global system that can deliver sufficient, safe, affordable, nutritious food and healthy diets for all people and provide employment and income, particularly in rural areas, while at the same time fully respecting planetary boundaries in line with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity and its upcoming post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

⁹ Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, (United Nations, New York, 2019), https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

This also emphasized the inclusivity of themes and stakeholders, a concept that is at the core of the Stocktaking Moment.

In preparation for the stocktaking moment, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, in collaboration with the UN Regional Commissions and other regional partners, is organizing a series of five regional preparatory meetings in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Arab Region. The meetings will include representatives from governments, private sector, civil society and regional bodies.

These meetings will as a platform for the sharing of experiences, good practices, and lessons learned in regional National Convenors' efforts to follow up on the UN FSS, including through the operationalization and implementation of their national pathways.

In addition, participants will be invited to identify priority actions and key messages for the region, to be synthesized in the form of a technical report.

The regional preparatory meetings will provide an overview of countries' progress, challenges, and key priorities leading up to the stocktaking moment. They will facilitate discussions among stakeholders to evaluate efforts and identify challenges.

By engaging in these consultations, National Convenors and other stakeholders will contribute to building a collective understanding of progress made and identify areas for improvement for each region. They will provide important inputs for the vision and roadmap of the stocktaking moment.

Additionally, the preparatory meetings will seek to ensure that the stocktaking moment is lined with other important meetings that takes place in 2023 and beyond.

The Work of the Hub

In order to better understand the country's needs and priorities, the Food Systems Coordination Hub conducted a survey in 2022. This survey was a crucial step in understanding what countries need to transform their food systems and what their priorities are.

The survey showed clearly that countries prioritize advocacy-driven systemic policy and institutional strengthening as the first step toward the 2023 stocktake moment. As a no surprise, financing was identified as a priority area that is indispensable for food systems transformation.

Moreover, counties are expecting support in leveraging the connections, existing tools, knowledge and networks that can play a key role in national implementation.

Measuring progress and evaluation is another area where needs are high, especially among developing countries.

The countries' priorities are shaping the work of the Hub. The Hub is working closely with national Convenors to address their needs.

These needs have informed the Hub work plan's six key functions. These functions were designed to empower the Hub to coordinate multistakeholder, multisectoral and multilevel support for countries to achieve their pathways, respecting principles of subsidiarity and leaving no one behind:

- a) Supporting National Pathways implementation.
- b) Strengthening strategic thought leadership.
- c) Engaging with the ecosystem of support and stakeholders.
- d) Mobilizing adequate means for collective implementation.
- e) Communicating and advocating the food system's approach.
- f) Preparing for the Stocktaking Moment.

For instance, the Hub is working closely with IFAD and the World Bank to develop a budgeting tool that will help countries understand their financing needs and funding gaps in food systems transformation. This is a crucial step for achieving the SDGs. The Hub is also helping in advocacy, not only at the international level but also at the regional and national level to make sure that food systems are on top of these agendas and that funding is sufficiently allocated to food systems.

The Hub is capitalizing on south-south and triangular cooperation as a vehicle to share knowledge and success stories amongst countries facing similar challenges.

In the long term, the main challenge is systematic policy change. This is something that will take time, but the Hub is working closely with national convenors to make the needed change.

The Hub is also trying to assess how to monitor the progress. The stocktaking moment is a crucial step in this direction. Members reported on what they have achieved and what challenges they face. The Hub is helping countries in developing evaluation indicators working closely with regional bodies.

Conclusions

The stocktaking moment is a crucial opportunity to solidify the global understanding of the role of food systems in achieving the SDGs. It will build on the momentum of the 2021 Food Systems Summit and will create a conducive space for countries to review progress on the commitments to action and identify successes, enduring bottlenecks and priorities in order to close the implementation gap by effectively and efficiently utilizing the Means of Implementation for food systems transformation.

It is an opportunity to further socialize the powerful role of sustainable, equitable, healthy and resilient food systems as critical SDG accelerators and advocate for urgent action at scale, building on the latest evidence that sustainable food systems contribute to better and more sustainable outcomes for people, planet and prosperity leaving no one behind.

Food systems go beyond their basic function and become powerful forces for change that impact economies, societies, and the environment. Transforming these systems to align with the SDGs shows how humanity can bring together its hopes and actions. This commitment is an investing in a future where success isn't seen in separate achievements, but in how different goals work together. In a very challenging world, our collective mindset should realize that food systems are not the problem but the solution.