



Updates from Rome – January 2023

The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub

[The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub](#) (the Hub) convened the 12th of January a virtual dialogue between the Food Systems National Conveners and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), QU Dongyu. Attended by over 200 participants, the dialogue welcomed Ministers for Agriculture and high-level national officials.

At the dialogue, dozens of National Conveners and officials responsible for leading the implementation of plans for agrifood systems transformation described priorities and actions that are delivering on the commitments made at the 2021 UN Food Summit. They also outlined some of the challenges they face to transform their agrifood systems, such as the impacts of conflicts and climate change as well as access to food and agriculture inputs. Moreover, the leaders highlighted the importance of linking agrifood systems policies to solutions that help overcome the triple planetary challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

The FAO DG assured that the Hub will continue to support these critical links by creating added value through the Organization's knowledge, information, and technical expertise, with the support of the UN Agencies, while avoiding duplication of work.

One year ago, the United Nations established the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, which is hosted by FAO on behalf of the UN System and supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO). The Hub's primary role is to support countries to develop further and implement their national agrifood systems transformation pathways.

“FAO, together with partners, and all relevant stakeholders, is providing technical expertise and professional solutions to support these changes...and continues to lead efforts to support national transformation plans in a time of unprecedented challenges,” Qu explained.

The Director-General further informed that the Food Systems Stocktaking Moment (STM) will take place in July 2023. Together with regional preparatory meetings this year, this milestone event will provide opportunities to report on progress made at the national level since the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021.

The outcomes of the STM will be an important input to the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2023.



FAO is also using its flagship programmes – such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, the Investment Forum and the 1000 Digital Villages—as important mechanisms for accelerating the transformation of agrifood systems at the country level and mobilizing the required investment.

“Leveraging finance for agrifood systems transformations is one of the most catalytic actions needed for achieving the SDGs - if we get it right, our agrifood systems can be profitable, equitable, sustainable, healthy, and more resilient to shocks”, Qu explained, adding that it is also necessary to invest in science, innovation, and technology.

Finally, the FAO DG reminded participants that the effective implementation of National Pathways—the country’s plans for agrifood systems that are sustainable and equitable— can deliver urgent change to ensure progress on multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

“National ownership and the leadership of the National Conveners are key to successful agrifood systems transformation”, Qu said, reiterating that the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub is ready to support and empower them.

Committee on Commodity Problems¹

In the 75th session of the committee, members expressed concerns that the effects of the war in Ukraine, the Covid-19 recovery, and the resulting food price inflation, would increase the risk of undernourishment for vulnerable populations and seriously impact food security globally. Therefore, the committee called on FAO to harness its technical expertise and intensify its efforts to support informed policy decisions, promote policy coordination, and continue providing up-to-date and objective data and market assessments. The following was suggested:

- To expand FAO's analytical efforts to include a broader range of supply, demand, and risk factors into its ex-ante scenarios, foresight study, and reports such as the SOCO (*the State of Agricultural Commodity Markets*).
- To integrate geospatial and digital technologies into FAO’s Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS), to scale up data collection and analysis.

Members asserted their unified vision of a freer, fairer, predictable, non-discriminatory multilateral food system, under the WTO and consistent with its rules, for promoting

¹ The CCP is the FAO governing body which reviews global issues that affect the production, trade, distribution, consumption and prices of food and agricultural commodities, debates specific commodity problems, and proposes action to mitigate them.



agricultural and rural development and contributing to achieving food security. Trade policies and regional trade agreements equipped with legally binding environmental provisions are emphasized to foster open global markets, and so is the role of science, innovation, and research to improve agricultural productivity and efficiency. Trade becomes an “avenue for growth”, deemed appropriate for the needed transformation towards more sustainable food systems and the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda. On the other hand, multilateral environmental agreements and international climate change instruments such as the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC still appear as central in mitigating the effects of climate change.

Committee on Agriculture²

In the 28th session of the committee, held in Rome (18-22 July 2022), members agreed on the necessity for FAO to refer to the realization of the **right to adequate food** in the context of national food security, instead of referring to the right to food.

FAO was requested to continue playing an active role in relevant international fora by promoting an open dialogue with all technical divisions and relevant stakeholders on sustainable agri-food systems, and further working with other international partners to collect science-based data, by increasing investment for research. An example of this is the avowed intention of collaborating with the WHO to finalize the One Health Joint Plan of Action, as a holistic, coordinated, evidence-based approach.

To shift towards sustainable, inclusive, and resilient agri-food systems the **UN Decade of Family Farming** was recognized as essential. Family farmers need to be prioritized, therefore the urgency of close coordination with IFAD in the leadership of the UNDFP was once again emphasized. To strengthen the resilience of family farmers members are required to mobilize financial resources, supportive policies, and concrete actions on the ground.

The Committee also commended the work of the Sub-Committee on Livestock for its inaugural session (16 to 18 March 2022). In line with the objective of integrating the livestock sector into climate actions, delegates recognized the role of small-scale livestock producers, as well as the category of family farmers, in contributing to food security and nutrition, and in transforming agriculture and food systems, in accordance with national contexts and capacities. For this reason, the Committee recommended FAO to strengthen its support to members on greenhouse gas emissions assessment, especially by sharing good practices and training to livestock managers/practitioners. Moreover, it encouraged members to include sustainability, productivity, competitiveness, and resilience aspects of livestock systems in their policy agendas. FAO’s support is seen as essential to enhancing biosecurity along livestock value

² The COAG is the FAO governing body which provides overall policy and regulatory guidance on issues related to agriculture, livestock, food safety, nutrition, rural development, and natural resource management.



chains by developing a Progressive Management Pathway for Biosecurity and collecting scientific evidence on alternative feeding practices to replace the use of medical antimicrobials.

As regards the progress towards the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, the committee recommended FAO to address the restoration of agricultural production ecosystems within FAO policies and programs; and encouraged Members to support the activities of the Decade and enhance their ecosystem restoration efforts.

Committee on Fisheries³

From the 5th to the 9th of September 2022, an IPC Delegation took part in the 35th Session of the Committee on Fisheries of the FAO in Rome.

For COFI35, a delegation of 35 IPC delegates representing the main 4 networks of the IPC Working Group on Fisheries (WFFP, WFF, IITC, and La Via Campesina) gathered in Rome for the 35th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries. The two-day preparatory meetings before COFI finally provided an opportunity for the IPC delegates to rebuild the internal cohesion and solidarity, damaged by the virtual work, and define the common messages and points to bring into COFI.

From the 2nd to the 4th of September, the IPC Delegates contributed to the first edition of the SSF Summit, organized with the support of FAO, GFCM, and SSF Hub. On this occasion, the IPC organized a full whole day dedicated solely to SSF organizations, which created a space for dialogue among SSF organizations and opened up the possibility of collaborating at the regional level to ensure the implementation of the small-scale fisheries guidelines.

During the 35th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), the IPC Working Group on Fisheries prepared its statements on the issues it considers priorities. The sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the context of a changing climate, better use of biodiversity, ensuring equitable growth for small-scale fishers, and the elimination of IUU fishing, were among the major issues discussed at COFI 35.

The IPC statements reiterate the lack of recognition for small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples, the challenges they face, and the marginalization of women working in fisheries not enjoying equal rights in the sector. These challenges continue to be often overlooked, while small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples are left out of decision-making processes that

³ The COFI is the only global intergovernmental forum where FAO Members meet to review and consider the issues and challenges related to fisheries and aquaculture.



directly affect our lives and livelihoods. Moreover, small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples keep losing access to fishing territories and resources, as a consequence of the increasing expropriation of fisheries resources in inland and marine territories globally. Once again, the IPC renewed its invitation to States to avoid false solutions, such as exclusionary Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), and instead take effective measures to restore the legitimate traditional, customary, or Indigenous tenure rights of fishing communities and redistribute such rights where they have been infringed upon.

Like in the previous COFI34, the discussion in the Plenary gave huge space and attention to aquaculture and its contribution to food security and sustainability, claiming that the IPC does not agree with export-oriented aquaculture as a solution to the food crisis. The volumes of wild capture fish and plant-based products, such as soy, that are needed to feed the fast-growing aquaculture industry are simply not sustainable. IPC, therefore, called upon COFI members to work with small-scale fishers and Indigenous Peoples, to support and advance localized SSF value chains, which can provide healthy and affordable food for communities. The very existence of our communities is also under threat due to climate change, environmental destruction, and pollution. IPC called upon governments to implement plans and projects for the reparation and protection of nature. The impacts of climate change should be addressed by states based on knowledge, information, and solutions as articulated by fishing communities, Indigenous Peoples, and our organizations.

During the 35th COFI edition, member states discussed and agreed to proceed with the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management, which would include a standing agenda item on small-scale fisheries. This sub-committee will not be able to address the overarching issues related to small-scale fisheries, which are much broader in scope. Instead, COFI as the main platform for diverse actors to engage and discuss small-scale fisheries issues must be strengthened and enhanced. Lastly, IPC called upon states to bring back discussions on fishery subsidies to the FAO and COFI, to ensure Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing is addressed democratically, and where we have an opportunity to participate in negotiations.

IPC welcomed the government's decision to hold an SSF summit in the days leading up to COFI, an opportunity to have a space for discussion and strategy-building between different SSF organizations. However, IPC expressed its high disappointment with the COFI chair's decision not to allow observers to speak during the discussions on the creation of the sub-committee on fisheries, biodiversity, and climate change, justifying this choice with a lack of time. Following this decision, he only allowed a 1-minute intervention, once again denying the SSF and Indigenous' Peoples the opportunity to express themselves, thus preventing the voice of millions of small-scale fishers from being brought to the attention of Government delegations.



The IPC delegation provided its contribution to the discussion by sending via email all its statements to make sure they were uploaded to the COFI website but at present, only the IPC General statement is available.

Committee on Forestry (COFO)⁴

In recent years, FAO has been making a great effort to address the multiple linkages between the agricultural and forestry sectors. In the 26th session of the Committee on Forestry, FAO stressed the importance of greater and inclusive policy coherence related to cross-cutting themes that can be found in other technical committees (e.g., COAG and COFI). For this reason, FAO is more and more committed to carrying on this synergy in different spaces simultaneously, and with other relevant UN agencies and international organizations as well.

The Committee recognized the potential of forests to help mitigate the impacts of global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, it invited Members to work collectively to halt forest loss and degradation, restore degraded lands and enhance the sustainable management of forest resources, while considering national priorities and circumstances. To do so, it called on Members to strengthen cooperation on science-based data collection, research, technology, and innovation and invited FAO to continue supporting Members' efforts to promote **small-scale producers, women, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities take a leading role** in scaling up action on the ground on the forest pathways.

Delegates recognized the importance of mobilizing additional resources to support the implementation of the FAO Strategy on Climate Change 2022-2031 through its Action Plan, including for forest-related climate action, as well as promoting inclusive collaboration to adopt low-emission, good practices, and innovative solutions, “leaving no one behind”.

To conclude, it encouraged FAO to continue playing an active role in relevant international and regional fora and further working with other international partners, including all relevant stakeholders and particularly members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), to upscale synergies between agriculture and forestry and to optimize the mitigation, adaptation and resilience potential of forests.

The World Food Forum

⁴ The COFO is the FAO governing body which provides periodic reviews on forestry problems and proposes concerted actions to Member Nations and the Organization to solve them.



During the week of 17-21 October, FAO hosted the World Food Forum flag event, a youth-led independent event born in 2021, which has the objective of empowering young people to actively shape the food system, connecting governments, organizations, students, Agri investors, and scientists by creating a global food movement. The forum comprised:

1. the WFF Global Youth Forum,
2. the FAO Science and Innovation Forum and
3. the FAO [Hand-in-Hand Investment Forum](#) (private sector).

These three interlinked fora aspire to advance concrete solutions to catalyze the transformation of the agri-food systems in light of the current challenges and crises, highlighting the importance of *collaboration* between the *current and next generation* and their combined ingenuity in science, technology, and innovation – and investments, in key areas of food and agriculture.

The week, full of side events in which participants were free to participate, fostered dialogue and debate among relevant stakeholders, ranging from the young and the youthful, farmers, small-scale producers, Indigenous Peoples, policymakers, Agri-investors, and scientists, tuning in from the four corners of the world, on the theme “Healthy diets. Healthy planet”.

Updates from the 171 FAO Council

Members exhorted FAO to continue playing a leading role in fighting against the global food crisis and to provide regular updates and data focused on the regions. Members also asked Russia to respect the Constitution of FAO by “providing welfare and freeing people from hunger”. Top priority is given to fertilizers, the Black sea initiative (updated every week, to see its evolution of it), and complementary notes on gender, land, and employment impacts related to the war in Ukraine. Strong collaboration is maintained with partners, including the WTO on the fertilizers joint paper and the GASP paper, constantly working and dialoguing with the Global Food Crisis Response Group as well.

Finally, the Council took note of the status of the implementation of decisions taken at its 169th and 170th Sessions (see table below), and noted the responses provided by the Secretariat to specific queries raised by Members during this session.

Completed	Ongoing
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UN Food Systems Coordination Hub	
	<p>Since April 2022, the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub has organized the monthly “Food Systems Solutions Dialogues” on several technical topics. The purpose of the Dialogues is to identify the needs of Members they require from the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) and the UN System in implementing their food system plans, pathways, transformations, or relevant food systems work to achieve the SDG.</p> <p>The Council noted that the UN Secretary-General designated FAO as the host for the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub on behalf of the UN System and requested FAO to engage in inclusive consultations with Members regarding its work, and further requested FAO to update Members regularly, on the work and the financing mechanism thereof.</p>
Participation of private sector observers in sessions of FAO Governing Bodies	
	<p>The Council requested the Independent Chairperson of the Council to engage in informal consultations with FAO Members on the matter of participation of the private sector as permanent observers in sessions of the FAO Governing Bodies, in light of the approval at its 165th Session of the Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025.</p> <p>Update from the 171st Session of the Council: members, despite some concerns related to credibility, authority, neutrality, and efficiency of the governing bodies, demonstrate general support for the FAO’s strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025.</p>
Impact of the Ukraine-Russia conflict on global food security and related matters under the mandate of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	



	<p>The Council requested the Director-General to leverage FAO's role as a knowledge institution to closely monitor the implications on world food security and agriculture; to make recommendations on the conflict's implications for FAO's implementation of its Strategic Framework (2022-31); to develop plans to address the global food security impacts of the conflict in Ukraine; and to keep Members notified through regular briefings, consultations, and reporting to the FAO Governing Bodies.</p>
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Calendar of some FAO Governing Bodies and other Main Sessions 2022-2024

EVENT	DATE
171 st Session of the Council	5-9/12/2022
135 th Session of the Programme Committee	13-17/03/2023
172 nd Session of the Council	24-28/04/2023
173 rd Session of the Council	10/07/2023
51 st Committee on World Food Security	23-27/10/2023
136 th Session of the Programme Committee	6-10/11/2023
174 th Session of the Council	4-8/12/2023
37 th Regional Conference for the Near East (SOM)	5-8/02/2024
37 th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific	19-23/02/2024
37 th Regional Conference for the Near East (MM)	4-5/03/2024
38 th Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean	18-22/03/2024



8 th Informal Regional Conference for North America	2-4/04/2024
33 rd Regional Conference for Africa	15-19/04/2024
34 th Regional Conference for Europe	13-17/05/2024
36 th Committee on Fisheries	8-12/07/2024
27 th Committee on Forestry	22-26/07/2024
76 th Committee on Commodity Problems	11-13/09/2024
29 th Committee on Agriculture	30/09/2024-4/10/2024