

Second Meeting of the Rome-based Informal Group of Friends for the Food Systems Summit (GOFFSS)

Briefing with the UN Special Envoy for the 2021 Food System Summit

Tuesday, 14 July 2020, 14:00-17:00 ZOOM

Summary Record

The second meeting of the Rome-based Membership informal Group of Friends of the Food Systems Summit took place virtually on 14 July 2020, and was chaired by the Independent Chairperson of the Council. In attendance Dr Agnes Kalibata, UN Special Envoy.

Opening Remarks: Overview of the Summit Preparatory Process

Opening Remarks were provided by the Special Envoy, Dr Agnes Kalibata, and her Deputy, Dr Martin Frick. Dr Kalibata informed that the first meeting of the Advisory Committee was held on 7 July 2020, focusing on the preparatory process towards the Summit. Dr Frick recalled that the Advisory Committee had endorsed the grassroots nature of the Food Systems Summit (FSS) as a ‘People’s Summit’. The Committee also endorsed the five Action Tracks of the Summit; 1) ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all; 2) shifting to sustainable consumption patterns; 3) boosting nature-positive production at sufficient scales; 4) advancing equitable livelihoods and value distribution and; 5) building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses. Each Action Track will be led by a Chairperson who will help create their structure. Dr Frick explained that the Chairpersons will nominate two Vice-Chairpersons (one of them a young person) and that each Action Track will have an “anchoring” UN agency. Members will be able to contribute to different work streams to frame these discussions.

The preparatory process and work streams were introduced, including a digital platform which aims to provide a universally accessible, dynamic and inclusive platform where the Summit process will be accessible 24/7 up to and beyond the Summit itself. Dr Frick informed that this platform will encourage vibrant dialogue and exchange of best practices to a broad variety of stakeholders. Dr Frick explained that Food Systems Dialogues will be set up to facilitate widespread engagement of multiple actors in all countries to ensure the Summit will be a People’s Summit and will incorporate evidence from the ground.

Item 1: Clarifications on the Preparatory Process; how will this be organized? Are there areas the Special Envoy would like to test out in an informal way? How can Members engage in the Action Tracks?

Country and Regional consultations

- Some Members asked about consultations at the country and regional levels, noting the importance of both a regional and participatory approach in consideration of the diversity of food systems. Interest was shown in the Food Systems Dialogues and some Members asked how these will be run, and whether the Secretariat has the capacity to synthesise such consultations.
- It was explained that the Summit preparatory process will begin with country level engagement, enabling a deeper understanding of the specificities of food systems in each country. In this regard, Food Systems Dialogues will begin at the country level, and consultations will then move to the regional level. It was noted that engagement with Africa is key, as well as the need for understanding country’s specific needs. It was noted that the Food Systems Dialogues aim to bring about the necessary conversations and commitments at the country level.

Action Tracks

- Members were keen to know how they could contribute to specific Action Tracks and expressed the wish that these should not work in silos. Some Members asked when these tracks will become operational, how they will work in practice and how the Chairpersons for each track were selected. Members confirmed the importance of the role of scientific and operational solutions for the Action Tracks and asked how Members can engage with civil society and the private sector within the Action Tracks?
- The Membership was invited to indicate to the Summit Secretariat which Action Tracks they would like to participate in. It was confirmed that UN Agencies will be able to contribute and participate in the Action tracks. The need to avoid silos between tracks was emphasized, and a mechanism foreseen to bring the tracks together. The importance of balance and representation in the Action Tracks was also highlighted.
- The RBA Membership was asked to propose an exchange structure between itself and the Summit Secretariat in order to avoid a one-way conversation. In this regard, Members were also encouraged to advise the Secretariat.

Summit Secretariat and Budget

- More information was requested on the Summit Secretariat and budget, and concern was raised regarding whether funding was sufficient for the ambitious awareness raising campaign. Some Members requested clarification on the mechanisms and approach involved in the funding of the Summit, and asked whether this will come from voluntary contributions.
- Dr Frick confirmed that the Summit Secretariat currently consists of ten people. It was recognised that the initial budget of USD 20 million build before the Covid-19 pandemic has substantially reduced travel expenses. However, Covid has highlighted the importance of strong digital outreach. The digital platform did not feature in the first budget and will be a substantial part of the revised budget. The need for flexible funding was highlighted, as well as avoiding reliance on private sector donations, as the summit should be impartial to foster civil society trust. Funding from a broad number of Members would enable such impartiality. The Secretariat informed a revised budget will be communicated shortly.

Private Sector

- The Membership highlighted the role of the private sector for its expertise, and believe it should be included in the Champions Network. Engagement with the private sector was considered necessary, and it was noted that the private sector and civil society will be invited to contribute within the Action Tracks and the Food Systems Dialogues.

Membership composition of the Summit Governance Structures

- Some Members asked how the Membership of the various structures of the Summit was chosen. It was noted that an appropriate balance was established in the Advisory Committee, including regional balance.

Voices of the Summit

- Members requested that all voices be incorporated into the Summit, not just experts', and asked that it include women, youth, indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems, local communities, middle-income countries, and all stakeholders. Some Members stressed the

importance of the vulnerable, smallholder farmers to be involved. The representation of women was recognized as important in the preparatory process.

Topics within the Summit preparatory process

- The RBA Membership requested issues such as food safety, transboundary pests and diseases and plant pests, healthy diets, and Covid-19 to be topics incorporated into the preparatory process towards the Summit.

Digital Platform

- Some Members asked for clarifications on the Digital Platform, including how this will be funded and what its governance structure will be.
- Dr Frick informed that the Digital Platform will provide a space for inputs to the Summit. The Platform aims to be open and inclusive, and available in many languages, not only restricted to the six official UN languages. The platform should support the Summit rather than be a form of endorsement. The Platform also aims to minimize the overlap between the Action Tracks by bringing together the leaders of the tracks to look at questions of overlap and to avoid silos.

Summit Date and Venue

- The Special Envoy informed that the announcement regarding the date and venue of the Summit is envisaged for autumn 2020.

Conclusion

The Independent Chairperson of the Council suggested that Members send their questions for Item 2, Food Systems Summit Outcomes and Follow-up, by email (CSG-Director@fao.org), and suggested that an additional information note be developed and circulated. The Chairperson also confirmed that Members will be consulted with regards to arranging for an exchange mechanism between the Membership and the FSS Secretariat.