

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR THE FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

Information Note December 2020

As a part of the *Decade of Action for the SDGs*, the **United Nations Secretary-General is convening a Food Systems Summit in 2021** aimed at empowering people to leverage food systems as accelerators of progress to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The following Information Note is intended to provide an update on the status of the Summit process, particularly in light of the outcomes of the third meeting of the Food Systems Summit Advisory Committee.

RECENT UPDATES

Third Meeting of the Summit Advisory Committee: The UN Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) chaired the third meeting of the Advisory Committee on 11 December 2020. Opening the meeting, the DSG noted the high expectations on the Summit now that it has fully entered its substantive phase, as well as the high degree of interest from all parties in links between the food systems agenda and the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement.

The DSG welcomed the two new, and final, members of the Advisory Committee: Chair of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), H.E. Thanawat Tiensin, Ambassador of Thailand to the Rome-based Agencies and Ruth Richardson, Executive Director of the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, who will serve as the Chair of the Multi-Actor Food Systems [Champions Network](#). The DSG welcomed the stronger connection with CFS in particular as the process goes deeper into its work and strives to build on existing work and mechanisms and be as robust and inclusive as possible.

The Special Envoy provided an overview of the progress in each of the major areas of work and invited specific updates this meeting from three constituencies (Indigenous Peoples, Farmer and Producer Organizations, and Private Sector), the Action Track Leads (Lawrence Haddad, Gunhild Stordalen, Joao Campari, Michelle Nunn, Saleem Huq) and the Chair of the Scientific Group (Joachim von Braun).

Update on Progress and Constituency Updates

- **[Scientific Group](#):** The Group held its third meeting in November and will begin meeting monthly in 2021 in the run up to the Summit. The Chair noted that the Group should and does interact with the other Summit work streams as well as other institutions and evidence providers. So far, they have:
 - Developed five initial papers in discussion with Action Track leadership teams, and one cross-cutting paper on Food Systems for discussion and feedback, which are available online for review and feedback before being finalized early in 2021;
 - Identified nine thematic cross cutting areas in the Action Tracks that will serve as a focus for short thematic papers;

- Developed partnerships with broader academies of science and research groups around the world;
- Articulated a roadmap to the Summit, including a draft production timeline.
- **Action Tracks:** The Leadership for the Tracks is in place, and the five Tracks are formed on values of transparency, broad engagement and ensuring a sense of shared responsibility. They have each drafted and refined discussion starter papers with one round of feedback that are available on the Summit website, and each Track has held an open forum to get ideas from all interested stakeholders. The DSG and Special Envoy underscored the importance of engaging all countries, particularly those from the global South. Each of the five Action Track Leads then shared how they are approaching their work and the progress made so far, including how membership in the Tracks is coming together and the orientation of work within each Track. Outreach efforts to engage Member States and other stakeholders were highlighted and they noted an emerging understanding of what a game-changing solution is. Each Lead, as well as the Envoy, noted that each of the Tracks are moving together in an integrated and coordinated manner. There are regular engagements between the Leads, as well as with those ensuring that due attention is paid to the cross-cutting levers of change (Gender, Finance, Human Rights and Innovation).
- **Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSDs):** The FSSD “toolkit” is now fully available and is online. As of 11 December, 24 Member States have formally confirmed their intention to convene national FSSDs, and many others are expected by the start of 2021. Over 35 briefings and trainings have been conducted for Member States, UN entities and other organizations as well as all other stakeholder groups, engaging over 1700 people so far. The first Global Food Systems Summit Dialogue took place virtually on 1 December 2020, hosted by the 3rd Global Conference of the One Planet Network’s Sustainable Food Systems Programme. The Independent Dialogue programme is live and dialogues in this work stream are underway. As information on all Dialogues becomes available it will be updated on the Food Systems Summit Dialogue Gateway;
- **Communications & Engagement:** There is increased public mobilisation and engagement at all levels. There are focused amplification efforts centred around the Action Tracks, Scientific Group and the FSSDs, but also on promoting greater understanding of food systems and mobilization towards actions in support of the SDGs;
- **Champions Network:** The Champions Network now has a [Chair](#) as well as a strong group of nine Vice Chairs. The Network has begun meeting and is designed as a network of networks. It will reach out to communities, ensuring the Summit can draw upon ideas that are normally not heard. It will bring in significant numbers and allows for feedback to come back to the Secretariat on the various streams of work. Champions will be particularly invested in advancing game-changing solutions to improve food systems and supporting the FSSD programme;
- **Digital Platform:** This [Food Systems Community](#) is just rolling out in the latter half of December, providing an opportunity for all actors to connect with the substance of the Summit process as well as with one another, especially given circumstances related to COVID-19 while also recognizing the inherent limitations of the digital divide. It will be promoted heavily from the start of the new year as a platform for inclusivity and community building;
- **UN Taskforce:** The structure has met twice at Principal’s level and has over 30 member institutions, including the World Bank. They are arranging themselves to

plug into the Action Tracks, support the FSSDs at country level, coordinate on communications and engage on other Summit instruments;

- **Resource Mobilization:** Thanks to the Member States that stepped forward, the Summit closes out 2020 on strong financial footing. Other Member States are being sought to close the Summit's remaining funding gap in 2021.
- **Indigenous Peoples** (Dr. Myrna Cunningham): Working with partners, 16 Dialogues have been initiated in most regions with more than 600 indigenous persons participating from more than 50 countries. They will submit the results to the Secretariat. Together with the UNPFII, FAO and IFAD, an expert seminar is being organized on 16 December. A draft paper is also being prepared with intention of sharing it by February after an interaction with the Scientific Group. A roadmap, that coincides with the main activities of the Summit, has been prepared to help coordinate and guide engagement.
- **Farmer's and Producer's Organizations** (Esther Penunia and Elizabeth Nsimadala): This constituency is working to ensure that farmers' and other producers' voices are heard and that they are active participants, including in the Action Tracks, with their input reflected in the FSS. To that end, they are pursuing dialogues amongst themselves at global, regional and national levels to consolidate perspectives and they will then seek to engage more broadly. They are seeking financial support to deepen their engagements. In Asia, a regional consultation was organized with farmer organisations and CSOs, and within which the Special Envoy participated. In Africa, work is ongoing to awareness and mobilise farmer groups and engage in various relevant spaces to call attention to the process and raise up farmer perspectives. They are launching a study on African food systems that will be complete by end of February, 2021.
- **Private Sector** (Peter Bakker): The Private Sector Guiding Group (PSGG), has been established, bringing together more than 30 business associations, including those of SMEs. There are quarterly CEO meetings. They believe that the choice of Action Tracks was really good for mobilising engagement, and private sector is especially looking towards identifying game-changing solutions. So far, they have identified over 100 game changers that they are populating in a database, and they are then hoping to narrow that down against criteria that emerges during the Summit process. These solutions are emerging around (i) regenerative agriculture, (ii) dietary shifts, (iii) reducing waste, and (iv) sustainable livelihoods. The foreseeable challenge is converting abstract big ideas into scalable solutions that multiple companies can adopt.

Various Members took the floor during the discussion period to provide feedback: Several welcomed the impressive progress made and reiterated their offers to support outreach and engagement of various groups while also stressing the importance of engaging as many Member States and other stakeholders in the process as possible. There is a need to strengthen engagement in New York and build connections on the issues with Rome. On FSSDs, Members welcomed the information and progress in this area and noted their own efforts in this regard. Each dialogue should be anchored in local realities and an inclusive, bottom-up process. More information was requested on how the inputs from all independent dialogues is to be consolidated and analysed. As it relates to the linkages with the Scientific Group, many members reiterated the importance of this dimension, noting that all areas of work should continue to not be prescriptive and account for different perspectives and approaches. Action Tracks were encouraged to seek deeper engagement with Member States and with representatives of the private sector. The concept of "game-

“changing solutions” was welcomed, but there was a request to clarify the criteria used to identify these. Existing evidence, structures and mechanisms should be drawn on to the extent possible, particularly after the Summit moment. Members noted that productive linkages need to be made to other processes in 2021 such as the COPs on Climate, Biodiversity and Land, the G20, Oceans Summit, the One Planet Summit, CFS, and beyond.

Reflecting on the discussion, the DSG noted that the Action Tracks Leads and Scientific Group Chair heard the feedback and invited them to build on the constructive perspective shared and to communicate directly with any member as needed. The FSSDs will not get to all the countries or reach all people directly, but certainly the UN will use its global and in-country presence to the extent possible to support. On inclusivity more broadly, the DSG agreed on its importance while also noting that meaningful representation is key.

The FSS Secretariat then presented the suggested approach for **(1) the Pre-Summit and Summit Moments and (2) Expected Outcomes**.

Opening the discussion, the DSG noted that any review mechanism that may emerge from the Summit should be rooted in existing institutions and structures. As it relates to the Secretary-General’s Statement of Action, that will help capture the outcomes of the Summit based on the process and she further reminded that this should not be understood as a prescriptive outcome nor will it be negotiated.

Italy confirmed that it is working closely with the Special Envoy and her team for the Pre-Summit, and will support financially. The premises will be confirmed in the coming weeks, and the RBAs will be strongly involved in the preparation. Some members requested additional clarity on the precise nature and format of both events.

The DSG thanked Italy for its commitment and support while also underscoring the importance of a strong, mutually beneficial linkage with the G20. The DSG clarified that the Pre-Summit would be largely a Ministerial event while the Summit would be convened at the level of Heads of State and Government in the context of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly. Those prioritized to speak during the Summit will be those with concrete and actionable commitments. Closing the meeting, the DSG noted that she would look forward to speaking again in March. She appreciated the work of the committee members in these meetings, but more importantly their work even outside of it.

External Engagement and Outreach: The Special Envoy and Summit Secretariat continue to engage communities, geographies and constituencies wherever possible to raise awareness of the Summit, draw important linkages and benefit from the perspectives and inputs of various stakeholder – including indigenous peoples and young people. Recent high-level engagements have included, but aren’t limited to, the Annual General Assembly of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, the Nutrition for Growth Springboard Event, the Expert Seminar on North American Indigenous Food Systems, Cultivate Africa and the EU Agriculture Minister’s Conference, among others.



Launched during World Food Week, the Summit website is now the Summit's primary outreach platform with dynamic pages such as [events](#), news and [commentary](#) (including a new [medium.com blog series](#)) – which have driven a 130% increase in traffic from November to December. More than 1700 people participated in live Action Track Public Forums in November and December with more than 5000 viewers post-event. All recordings of public forums, and Dialogue briefings are on the [Summit's Youtube channel](#). Moving forward there will be a strategic email and social media push to increase participation with the Action Track online surveys and future public forums. A Summit official [Communications Hub](#) encourages strategic partners to support increased inclusivity with key messages, branding elements, logos and a [Partnership Video](#) to inspire sharing for broad engagement.

Since the launch of the Food Systems Hero platform, 1000 new subscribers from 100 countries have signed up to be a Food Systems Hero with a designed [Welcome Kit](#) to boost further contribution. The Summit Secretariat continues to welcome everyone to step forward with their views and to promote improved foods systems in their own community.

Summit social media:

- Twitter: @FoodSystems @Agnes_Kalibata
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/unfoodsysteams/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UNFoodSystems>
- Medium: <https://un-food-systems.medium.com/>

NEXT STEPS

During January and February, the Scientific Group and Action Tracks will share preliminary thinking on game-changing solutions to improve food systems in each of the Summit's focus areas, to focus review and feedback from all stakeholders and will continue to post documentation as it emerges online. FSS Dialogues will also begin to rollout in many Member States and with several independent organizers around the world, providing the Summit with feedback on what various communities view as working and not working in their food systems.

The Summit continues to call for all actors - countries, consumers, private sector, producers, civil society, youth activists, indigenous leaders, scientists and many others - to get engaged, have their voices heard, and take forward action in their own way. The Summit seeks a high ambition, and recognizes that honest, courageous conversations are needed that recognize points of divergence and try to bring actors closer together. This engagement is essential to unlocking bold actions that will be win-win-win opportunities for people, the planet, and shared prosperity.

For queries, contact foodsystemssummit@un.org

Nairobi, 21 December 2020