

Concept note

Global Dialogue on the United Nations Food Systems Summit

Dialogue on Building capacity for agrifood systems research to better harness science, institutions and technology to improve Global/African food systems

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Background

In October 2021, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres will convene the first Food Systems Summit to launch bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, delivering progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This Summit is being convened under the theme “*Transforming food systems is crucial for delivering all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*”. The Summit aims to awaken the world and recognizes the fact that only collective action can transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food. Being a summit for everyone and everywhere, it is therefore a peoples’ and solutions’ Summit that needs everyone to have a role and take action in transforming the world’s food system.

The summit aims to achieve the following:

1. Generate significant action and measurable progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Summit will succeed in identifying solutions and leaders, and issuing a call for action at all levels of the food system, including national and local governments, companies and citizens;
2. Raise awareness and elevate public discussion about how reforming our food systems can help us all to achieve the SDGs by implementing reforms that are good for people and planet;
3. Develop principles to guide governments and other stakeholders looking to leverage their food systems to support the SDGs. These principles will set an optimistic and encouraging vision in which food systems play a central role in building a fairer, more sustainable world; and,
4. Create a system of follow-up and review to ensure that the Summit’s outcomes continue to drive new actions and progress. This system will allow for the sharing of experiences, lessons and knowledge; it will also measure and analyse the Summit’s impact.

This historic event is being preceded by several dialogues which are providing different stakeholders an opportunity to engage in the Summit in a meaningful way. The dialogues aim to bring to the table a healthy diversity of viewpoints, to encourage shared exploration and to map out stronger ways of working together as a world. Therefore, all Member States have the opportunity to engage in this three-stage dialogue which began in November 2020 and workings towards the pre-Summit in Rome in July 2021. This process is allowing for an examination of existing systems and policies as a starting point to sharpen pathways for sustainable national food systems that align with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This preparatory process also includes various complimentary work streams to ensure a strong interface between science, policy and implementation.

To lead the process at national level, a diverse range of people in every region of the world need to be engaged more deeply. This will develop into a broad and inclusive coalition for the transformation of the world's food systems through coordinated action before, during and after the summit. To this end the Summit has designated 100 UN multi-actor Food Systems Champions to mobilise interaction and invite National Dialogues Conveners at the level of Heads of State/Governments and high level coordinating ministers. It is in this spirit that Prof Adipala Ekwamu, the Executive Secretary of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) has been selected as one of the UN Food Systems Champions. Dr. Agnes Kalibata, Former Minister of Agriculture for the Republic of Rwanda and President for the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), is the special UN envoy for the Summit.

To stimulate discussions on capacity development and science, technology and innovation solutions and actions appropriate for agri-food systems for Africa, RUFORUM is reaching out to African and global higher education networks and research organisations to hold a pre-Summit dialogue. The focus of the event is to identify key actions and policies needed to strengthen the African higher education system, agricultural research and development towards an improved African food system that is inclusive and sustainable.

Selected Global Higher Education Networks and Research Organisations

1. African Union Commission (Human Resource, Science and Technology Department (HRST))
2. African Science Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC))
3. Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)
4. African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS)
5. Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA)

6. The Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA)
7. West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF)
8. National Association of School Resource Officers (NAASRO)
9. Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)
10. Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
11. Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
12. American Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU)
13. Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR)
14. Inter-University Council for East African (IUCEA)
15. AGRINATURA
16. National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS)
17. Association of African Universities (AAU)
18. African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA)
19. African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE)
20. West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL)
21. The Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL)
22. Belt and Road/South-South Cooperation Agricultural Education, Science and Technology Innovation League (BRSSCAL)
23. Universities and Academies of Sciences
24. Association of Indian Agricultural Universities
25. Association of Caribbean and Pacific Universities
26. Global Alliance for Agricultural Research and Education (GCHERA)

Proposed Mode of Consultations

Virtual

Date: 02 June 2021

Time: 1700-2000 East African (Nairobi) Standard Time

Proposed arrangements: Plenary and break up into thematic groups that captures global perspectives and different voices such as Higher Education Networks and Universities, Research, Agricultural Advisory Services, Youth