



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

13 April 2020

Dear Professor von Braun,

There are only ten years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The time is now to protect gains, renew our ambition and move at the scale and speed required. As such, 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 COVID-19 pandemic threatens to undermine much of the progress we have made and only reinforces the importance of food systems, including from how we produce food to the supply chains that bring it to our homes. The stress put on our food systems by this crisis underscores the fragility of these systems and the interconnectedness of global challenges and their impacts on people, planet, and prosperity.

These challenges can only be managed through collective action that builds resilience. There is scientific consensus that transforming food systems offers one of the strongest tools we have to change course and realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda. These transformations can also support the Secretary-General's call to "build back better" from COVID-19 as it relates to our food systems.

The Summit will be convened in the context of the United Nations Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs. In line with the overall objectives of the Decade of Action, the aim of the Summit is to help countries and stakeholders in all parts of the world understand and maximize the benefits of a food systems approach across the entire 2030 Agenda and meet the challenges of food security, malnutrition, climate change, natural resource degradation, and economic well-being. The Summit will also offer a catalytic moment for global public mobilization and actionable commitments by various stakeholders to invest in diverse ways to make food systems inclusive, climate adapted and resilient, and support sustainable peace.

Because of your leadership role and expertise on food systems transformation, and on driving progress on the SDGs more broadly, it is my distinct pleasure to invite you to chair the Scientific Group for the Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit and, in that capacity, join its Advisory Committee as well.

Professor Joachim von Braun
Director
Centre for Development Research
University of Bonn
Bonn

The Scientific Group is responsible for ensuring that the Summit brings to bear the foremost scientific evidence from around the world and helps expand the base of shared knowledge about experiences, approaches, and tools for driving sustainable food systems that will inform the future. The work of the Scientific Group ensures the robustness and independence of the science underpinning dialogue of food systems policy and investment decisions. It also informs the content of the Summit, its recommended outcomes, and the asks and commitments that emerge from the Summit.

As the independent Chair of the Scientific Group, you will be entrusted to marshal a committee of twenty-five internationally renowned experts to deliver on this mandate, and to do so while also engaging with networks of hundreds and even thousands of independent experts during the preparatory process. These experts will come from universities, international organizations, research centres, standards-setting and other regulatory bodies, covering all regions, major technical areas, and action tracks essential to food systems transformation. The Secretariat of the Summit will be providing support to you in this effort, including through dedicated staff that will be housed and will work in close collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization.

In this capacity, you will also be asked to join the Summit Advisory Committee, which will be responsible for strategic oversight of the preparatory process and guidance to the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for 2021 Food Systems Summit, Dr. Agnes Kalibata. The terms of reference for the Scientific Group is attached.

I look forward to working with you on this critical opportunity as we collectively seize this opportunity and rise to remake our food systems to meet our ambitions for a more inclusive and sustainable world.

Yours sincerely,



Amina J. Mohammed

UN Secretary-General's 2021 Food Systems Summit

Scientific Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND

- On World Food Day, the Secretary-General announced his intention to convene a Food Systems Summit in 2021 as a part of the Decade of Action for delivery on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. This was followed by his appointment of Dr. Agnes Kalibata as his Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit on 16 December 2019.
- The evidence for action in this space is clear. Despite living in an age of unprecedented wealth and progress, where we produce more than enough food for everyone, poverty and hunger remain stubborn and often inter-linked challenges. Today, over 821 million people are hungry, even as one-third of all food is either lost or wasted. Three-quarters of the hungry are in rural areas, many of them women and marginalized populations, with the majority relying on food production and the food economy for their livelihoods. Addressing poverty and hunger requires that the transformation of food systems is inclusive.
- The *IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land* comprehensively demonstrated the link between land management, food security, and climate change. It highlighted that the ways in which food systems currently function undermines our ability to feed the projected 10 billion people on the planet in 2050. Increasing the capacity of our food systems to meet projected food demand is incompatible with our sustainability goals. Food systems contribute up to 29% of all GHG emissions, including 44% of methane, significantly contributing to climate change. Climate change will in turn alter food production patterns, increasing risks and threatening food security everywhere, particularly for the most vulnerable.
- The report by IPBES on *Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services* shows that one million species are now threatened with extinction, posing serious threats for human beings. This finding is increasingly linked to agriculture as it is responsible for up to 80% of biodiversity loss, and continued overuse of scarce natural resources.
- The link between food and human health is also clear, but the underlying challenges are rooted in complex inequalities and multiple deprivations. For many people all over the world, better nutrition is not a question of choice, but of access. Despite the increase in global food production, malnutrition in all its forms is now the number one factor contributing to the global burden of disease and reduced life expectancy. Two billion people are now classified as overweight.
- The emergence of this evidence is no coincidence: food systems as they currently operate are having negative effects on the climate, environment, human health, and social welfare. Solutions exist to change the unsustainable patterns of our food systems in a way that enhances inclusive economic growth and opportunity, while also safeguarding the global ecosystems that sustain life. The *Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR)* identified food systems and nutrition as one of a few key entry points to accelerate the world-wide transition to a more sustainable trajectory.
- The aim of the Summit is to help Member States and stakeholders maximize the co-benefits of a food systems approach across the entire 2030 Agenda and meet the challenges of climate change. As a key contribution to the Decade of Action, the objectives of the Summit are to generate momentum, expand the knowledge base, and share experiences and approaches to unleash the benefits of sustainable food systems

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for all people. The Summit will also offer a catalytic moment for global public mobilization and actionable commitments to invest in diverse ways to make food systems inclusive, climate adapted and resilient, and support sustainable peace.

- Actions and commitments will be the central feature of the 2021 Food Systems Summit. The actions identified at the end of the Food System Summit should be those that can be implementable at scale and transform food systems at the local, national, regional and global level. The actions should be relevant for multiple stakeholders including local and national governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations and – most especially - people.
- In order to support the Secretary General in the successful design and delivery of the Food Systems Summit, the Executive Office of the Secretary General has established a set of three support mechanisms: 1) A Summit Advisory Committee, 2) A Scientific Group, and 3) A Champions Group. The specific mandate and responsibilities of Scientific Group are as described below.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE SCIENTIFIC GROUP

- The Scientific Group is responsible for ensuring the Summit brings to bear the foremost scientific evidence and helps expand the base of shared knowledge about experiences, approaches, and tools for driving sustainable food systems that will inform the future. The work of the Scientific Group ensures the robustness and independence of the science underpinning dialogue of food system policy and investment decisions.
- The Scientific Group will help pull together applied science-based syntheses and analyses of the trade-offs faced by food system actors, linking with ongoing initiatives under inter alia, the UN system, the CFS High Level Panel of Experts, the CGIAR, Science-based institutions and any other relevant knowledge that will help advance the quality of evidence for future food systems.
- The Scientific Group will inform the Summit's content, recommended outcomes, clarify the level of ambition and commitments that will emerge from the Summit.
- As part of their service and deep engagement with the Summit, members of the Scientific Group may be asked to be spokespeople for the Summit on occasion. They are also asked to help to identify and underpin with evidence the tools, initiatives, and actions that contribute to the acceleration of our common efforts to transform our food systems in service of the 2030 Agenda.

3. MEMBERSHIP

- The Scientific Group is intentionally designed to be both cross-cutting in expertise and to enable deep scientific engagement around the Summit's action tracks. Its Chair and Vice-Chairs are distinguished independent experts, and the Group also includes another 25 internationally renowned experts from universities, international organizations, research centers, standards-setting and other regulatory bodies, covering all regions, major technical areas, and action tracks essential to food systems transformation. These members will be responsible for engaging hundreds of other independent experts across various technical areas and regions as they carry out the Summit preparatory process. The Scientific Group's Chair will also serve as a member of the Summit Advisory Committee to ensure that the ideas and recommendations of the Group are fully considered in Advisory Committee recommendations to the Secretary-General.

4. WORKING METHODS

- The Scientific Group will meet on at least a quarterly basis from April 2020 to December 2021. The meetings will generally be held in Rome or other convenient locations for the Group to come together, but options to connect via teleconference or videoconference will be made available for select portions of meetings at the Chair's determination.

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- The Special Envoy and Summit Secretariat team, particularly with leadership from FAO-seconded staff, will be responsible for providing support to the Scientific Group, including regular updates and the provision of all necessary documentation in advance of meetings.

5. DRAFT DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

- Overall development of an approach for the Summit's evidence and knowledge workstream and deliverables (April – June 2020)
- Alignment on a curated narrative on sustainable food systems – defining what they look like, where we are today, and modelling how the world can achieve the SDGs in the next 10 years.
- Alignment around new models and scenarios that will help policymakers and other stakeholders make decisions about the future, with clarity around estimated impacts and tradeoffs of different interventions.
- Oversight and efforts on action track of the Summit to generate the evidence-base required on specific challenges, solutions, tradeoffs from interventions, costing, and beyond.
- Oversight and sign off of case studies of results and lessons from impactful food systems efforts at country level, city level, company level, and civil society level etc as appropriate
- Oversight and sign off of tools for future use by countries and stakeholders around the world.
- Engagement with various research constituencies and coalitions around the world to bring them into the effort.
- Feedback and input on Summit evidence document, recommendations, and distilled declaration. (Q1/2 2021)