

## Science and policy for accelerate food systems transformation – perspectives from the Scientific Group for the Food Systems Summit

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Dear Colleagues, and especially dear co-organizers of this important conference, thank you for the invitation. I applaud the French Government for the high level commitment to the Summit and to related science.

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The UN Food Systems Summit needs to **address systems failures** that have contributed to the hunger, malnutrition, and obesity problems; to the environmental problems of deforestation, green-house gas emissions, biodiversity losses and species extinctions; to the problems of poor livelihoods in farming communities especially of women and youth; and to the fundamental issues of food system related violations of rights – human right to food, broadly defined.

The Food Systems Summit **needs to offer solutions** to address these failures and accelerate the transformation of food systems, and this is where **science-based innovations** come in, for instance innovations for lowering the cost of healthy diets; innovations of institutions for efficiency and fairness in value chains; innovations in technologies for plant breeding, animal health, new protein production; innovations in using digital opportunities, and many more. All these potential solutions come from research.

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The Food Systems Summit **is THE opportunity** to address problems, which only political **leaders** can tackle. An agenda with the appropriate level of **ambition** is required. The ambitions are clear, and in the SDGs: *End hunger and facilitate healthy diets*. -- We need to inform policy makers about what does it cost to end hunger sustainably. A recent large research effort found that it requires annual incremental investments of about 40 to 50 billion US\$ till 2030. Achieving the end hunger and healthy diet goals must not conflict with the objective of safeguarding *biodiversity and natural resources*, the protection of ecosystems and climate. *Eliminate poverty* is the third big objective. The Scientific Group will assess solution proposals against these established ambitions and considering synergies and tradeoffs. We started already 5 months ago disseminating draft papers for inputs into the **5 Action Tracks**.

The Food Systems Summit is to be also a **peoples’ summit**. Now, scientists are no more than about 0.1 % of global people, and food system related scientists may be less than 10% of these. So, the voice of science needs to be humble, and not a self-serving lobbyist voice in the Summit processes. Science is not a stakeholder, but needs to support all stakeholders, especially the marginalized and excluded.

It was a bold decision by UN leadership to create an **independent Scientific Group** for the Summit. We are 29 scientists from around the world, rooted in the many different disciplines related to the food systems. The members participate in about 60 scientific associations that each have thousands to tens of thousands of members. We have partnerships with the many academies of sciences, University consortia, the Global Young Academy and reach out to student networks. We connect to science in the private sector, and to knowledge in civil society, incl. indigenous knowledge. CFS Chair and IPCC Chair and CGIAR leader are members.

The UN leadership made clear that – I quote - “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.” We are committed to deliver on this request, and appreciate the UN empowering the Science communities for shaping the summit.

This conference speaks of “Bonding science and policy”. I like that, as long as it is not understood as a marriage. For gender relations, Amartya Sen elaborated the concept of “**cooperative conflicts**”. Science and policy can be in productive cooperative conflicts. Science and policy have a lot to gain from cooperation, but are also in conflict, e.g. when science counters conventional wisdom with evidence-based insights. For climate policy the IPCC has made a big difference to the bonding of science and policy. The Food system needs something like that too.

Science serving the Food Systems Summit agenda needs to serve people, ecology and the public good, globally and locally.

Thank you.

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