

Fourth Meeting of the FSS Scientific Group

12 January 2021, 14.00-16.00 (CET)

Meeting Notes

Agenda of the Meeting (PPT with detailed agenda had been shared before the meeting)

1. 14.00-14.15 Welcome and briefing on FSS Progress
2. 14:15-14:45 Progress and plans on Papers by Scientific Group (peer review of current papers; potential further papers)
3. 14:45 - 15:30 Partnerships and Policy Briefs (priorities, forming support teams of Scientific Group and roles)
4. 15:30 – 15:45 Conferencing by Scientific Group
5. 15:45 -16:00 Our communications and Websites and any other business

Agenda 1 and 2

Welcome, Briefing on FSS Progress and Papers by Scientific Group:

The chairperson of the FSS Scientific Group (ScG) opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The Chair mentioned that only three members could not make it to this meeting and had sent apologies.

The Chair briefed the ScG on a recent **Advisory Group meeting** held on December 11, 2020, under the leadership of UN DSG Amina Mohamed. The notes on the Advisory Group meeting was shared with the Scientific Group. The progress of the Scientific Group, Action Tracks and FSS Dialogues was a key focus of the Advisory Group meeting.

The Chair further informed the meeting participants of the formation of an **“Integrating Team”** led by Agnes Kalibata, the UN Special Envoy for the FSS. This team will integrate the activities from the various processes, i.e., Scientific Group, Action Tracks and FSS Dialogues and other FSS processes. The team will have monthly meetings after its first meeting on January 20, 2021.

The Chair briefed the ScG on the **progress of the Scientific Papers**. The six (6) Scientific Papers include five Action Track Papers and one Food Systems paper that will be sent for external review (the papers have been sent for external review in the meantime). The aim is to publish these papers as journal articles. The Chair also mentioned plans for a **“True Cost of Food” paper** and the plans for a ScG **“FSS Agenda paper”** based on scientific insights (see ScG discussion on these two papers below).

The Vice Chairpersons of the FSS Scientific Group, Louise Fresco, Kaosar Afsana and Mohamed Hasan, gave their opening remarks. On the **Scientific Papers**, the Vice Chairs highlighted that

the papers must be science-focussed and peer-reviewed by outstanding reviewers in the respective fields. The papers must move beyond diagnostics and focus on solutions. The trade-offs and costs of the set of solutions must be clarified. The set of scientific papers must also be integrated in their prescribed solutions. On **Policy Briefs and Partnerships**, the Vice Chairs emphasized that the briefs are expected to shape the overall agenda of the Food Systems Summit. The Policy Briefs need to be concise, concrete, and crisp. The Policy Briefs shall be developed in collaboration with partner institutions. Partner organisations will be monitored by the members of the scientific group. It was emphasized that young scientists and youth organizations be engaged on the Policy Briefs.

On the Chair's announcement of considering a "think-piece" on "**the true cost of food**" the ScG had a discussion with the following main points: This paper shall incorporate the ecological, social, environmental, health and nutrition costs of food. Some ScG members suggested: rates of resource depletion vs rates of renewal may be explicitly incorporated in the valuations; farmers' incomes, an important aspect of cost of food, may not be ignored. The package of commitments made by world leaders that can be affected by the think-piece should be clarified, especially the SDGs and G7/G20. Some members advised caution that estimating the true cost of food is a complicated concept and the time-frame available may not allow its precise estimation. It was cautioned that market valuations of all externalities cannot be easily accounted for. Under these limitations, a conceptual piece without an exact monetary valuation of the cost of food may be envisioned. There was broad agreement that such a paper must move beyond diagnostics and focus on solutions. Clarity on controversial issues such as fertilizer use may be maintained. Sheryl Hendricks was requested, and kindly agreed, to guide on the paper and form a team i.e., an interdisciplinary group of ScG members, to work on the paper.

The Chair briefed on the steps toward a **Scientific Group's FSS Agenda Paper**: The Chair noted that the paper will need the engagement of the whole ScG. The paper will focus on solutions from a science perspective. An annotated outline shall be shared in the February ScG meeting.

Agenda 3

Policy Briefs and Partnerships:

The Chair opened the discussion on Policy Briefs and Partnerships on these briefs. In the opening remarks, the relevance of Briefs' themes and of the collaborating partner organizations were indicated as key talking points for the discussion.

Clarifications from Chair: The Chair clarified that members of the Scientific Group are asked to act as a liaison to coach, comment and review Briefs drafted by the partner organizations. A concept paper to guide ScG and Partners will be shared. Members were requested to indicate the theme they wish to engage in.

During the open discussion, members agreed that the Briefs must be built upon evidence-based science with concrete and specific solutions. A need to include universities, national academies of science and youth organizations as partners was highlighted.

While some members indicated that the number of themes be reduced, others offered that some important themes were less visible and should be added. These include the role of culture in food habits, a broader concept of agricultural technology including value chains and processing technology, efficient use of soil and soil health, food systems and health, mother-child health, food waste, urban food systems, marginal and healthy diet, and nutrition.

It was suggested that a framework be developed for the inclusion of themes. The framework may be based on solutions, clarity, and visibility of the themes.

Some members provided cautionary notes on the briefs' themes and numbers:

- It should be ensured that the highlighted themes are not supply-pushed by partner organizations. Relevant but less visible themes may be included.
- The addressees and end-users of the Briefs must be clearly identified.
- The Briefs should be consistent with the Scientific Papers and the Action Tracks papers. The overall consistency of the Briefs may also be ensured.
- Themes that do not have evidence-based solutions available may be identified. Gaps in existing scientific literature on the themes may also be identified.
- Solutions need to remain cognizant of the context and avoid one-size-fits-all recommendations. Differences between world regions and countries should be considered and diverse solutions may be sought.

Members also noted a few procedural issues. It was advised that the role of partner organization and Scientific Group member be made explicit. A clearance process and timetable for paper submissions and review may be developed. It was also suggested that "Policy Brief" may not be an appropriate label for the briefs.

The Chair summarized the ScG advice and indicated that as important follow up a concept for implementation of the partnerships and briefing papers will be developed and shared with the ScG, and the Briefs may be called "Food Systems Summit Briefs from Scientific Group and its Partners".

Agenda 4

Conferences and Workshops:

Participants were informed of upcoming events:

1. Patrick Caron: Invitation on behalf of the French Minister of Agriculture and Food, the French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the French Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation on "**Bonding science and policy to accelerate food systems transformation**" Thursday, February 4, 2021 10.00 – 16.30 CET – Online Event (Joachim von Braun and Agnes Kalibata will address the event).

2. Joachim von Braun: “**Seminar of Scientific Group on FSS Agenda**” in Rome (largely virtual) April 20-22 at Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

3. Ismahane Elouafi: Proposal of a “**FSS Science Day**” event with our partners and stakeholders (e.g., June/July)

Agenda 5

Communication and Websites:

The Chair referred to the self-explanatory PPT slides and highlighted the following new website: <https://foodsystems.community/communities/scientific-group/>. The Chair asked that all ScG members register themselves in this platform.

He also highlighted the ScG’s own platform <https://sc-fss2021.org/> which offers a comprehensive presentation of the Scientific Group and its partners.

The meeting closed at 16h CET.