

Seventh Meeting of the FSS Scientific Group

17 May 2021, 14.00-16.00 (CET)

Meeting Notes

Agenda of the Meeting

1. 14.00 Introduction and the FSS Process Update
2. 14:15 Draft Agenda Paper of the Scientific Group
 - a. Discussion on the Zero Draft of Agenda Paper.
3. 14:45 Science-Policy Interface
 - a. Background: European Commission's High-Level Expert group (HLGE) paper and Presentation on the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) by Martin Cole
 - b. Discussion
4. 15:15 "Science Days" Event, July 8-9, 2021

Discussion on draft program, speakers and side-events
5. 15:45 Any other business

Update on the FSS processes

The Chairperson of the FSS Scientific Group (ScG), Joachim von Braun opened the meeting and updated the participants on the progress of summit related activities. He noted that over twenty-five **Briefs prepared by the partners of the Scientific Group** are now published on the website of the ScG (sc-fss2021.org).

Nature Journal Chief Editor has sent a message that they will consider publishing pieces from the Scientific Group Reports and will be in touch with lead authors.

The Chair noted that the ScG is expected to play a key role in the Pre-summit of the UN FSS. The **material for the pre-summit** was shared with the ScG. This material will be on the agenda of the **meeting of the Advisory Committee** to be held on May 26, 2021.

The Chair briefed the members on the series of meeting held with the **Integrating Team** of the FSS in the previous week. These meeting were chaired by UN Special Envoy Agnes Kalibata and attended by the Chairs of the Action Tracks, the Chair of the ScG and the Chair of FSS Dialogues.

Meeting participants were informed on the progress of the **National and Independent Dialogues** on food systems. The Chair noted that these dialogues offer an opportunity to gain insights into diversity of global food systems, policy themes, approaches to transform food systems, priorities and perspectives. This diversity shall be recognized in the FSS agenda.

The Vice Chairpersons of the FSS Scientific Group (ScG), Koasar Afsana and Mohamed Hassan gave remarks following the Chair's opening remarks. Mohamed Hassan expressed his pleasure at the **publication of the Briefs of the Academies of Sciences** including the

Association of Academies and Societies of Sciences in Asia (AASSA), Inter-American Network of Academies of Sciences (IANAS), Network of African Science Academies (NASAC), and the European Academies Science Advisory Council (easac) and the Inter Academy Partnership (IAP), and a Brief on youth and food systems is expected to be drafted in collaboration with the Global Young Academy (GYA). Vice Chairperson Kaosar Afsana pointed at the importance of **National Dialogues** as gateways to insights into the diversity of global food systems. She further noted that these dialogues are also informative on the differences in the language of science and policy makers. She noted that for scientists to be able to convey their message to policy makers, engagement with these dialogues can help find a common language.

Agenda 1: Review of Agenda paper

The Zero draft of the Agenda paper had been shared with the ScG before the meeting. The Paper is aimed at communicating the actions for science and policy innovations in food systems to policy makers. Members are asked to share their comments, critique and suggestions on the draft via email. An email reminder will be sent to the members in this regard following the meeting.

In the discussion on the draft Agenda paper, the following suggestions were made by the members:

- Diversity of local conditions and challenges must be acknowledged. Evidence base exists on the adaptation of successful innovations to local environmental, political, economic eco-systems.
- Timelines needed for the implementation of all types of innovations should be discussed.
- Difficulties in different contexts in the transformation of food systems may be addressed.
- There are controversies surrounding innovations such as gene editing, subsidies, sustainable intensification, agro-ecology etc., as well as political economy considerations that hamper adoption of new policies and/or bioscience/technological innovations.
- The communication mechanisms within value chains that vary by locations and diverse food systems need to be acknowledged. These communication mechanisms are key in the transmission of new knowledge along the value chains.
- A section on the modelling of the three potential game-changers; food loss and waste, subsidies, and investments in R&D as well as an overall assessment on the indicators of SDG 2 from this modelling could be added to the paper.

Agenda 2: Science Policy Interface

A draft of European Commission's High-Level Expert group (HLGE) to assess the needs and options to strengthen the international Science Policy Interface for Food Systems Governance was shared with members of the ScG for their comments and suggestions. A consolidated

feedback of the members will be shared with the HLEG. With reference to the paper, the following points were raised by the meeting participants:

- A global collaboration borrowing ideas from but not copying the framework of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) could be envisioned for the Food Systems.
- The Scientific Group's workshop with Academies had discussed setting up of an evidenced based, transparent, and trustworthy organization or a framework around Food Systems. The HLGE makes similar suggestions. Such a panel could gather data and evidence-based assessments for transformation of global food systems.
- HLGE recommendations do not clearly delineate the policy side of a proposed science-policy interface, i-e, a formal policy making authority. Existing frameworks such as the IPCC has its policy side as the UNFCCC.
- Mechanisms for the integration of national development policy with the global development policies chalked out within the proposed framework may be devised.

Martin Cole, Chair of HLPE and member of the ScG, gave a presentation on HLPE and its role in the science-policy interface. The Chair thanked Martin Cole. The presentation will be made available on the website of the ScG (sc-fs2021.org). In the ensuing discussion on the broader theme of Science – Policy interface the following themes were mentioned, and positions taken:

- There exists a strong need for a framework for connecting food systems science with policy. The global academies of science have called for such a framework in their reports. Another model of such a framework is the IPBES (The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) which is not a UN body.
- The global science-policy interface envisioned by the ScG in the workshop of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and in the recommendations of the HLGE does not stand to replace existing bodies. Strengthening the existing global institutions such as the FAO, IFPRI, CGIAR and UN based organizations and strengthening their interaction and linkages with policies may be helpful.
- Platform/(s) to facilitate the interlinkages between the existing institutions is/ needed.
- Instituting links with networks around the interconnected global challenges including climate change, biodiversity, and health may be helpful too.
- An understanding of the complexity of food systems has improved since the last major global food crisis. The contemporary problem confronting the global community is the implementation of strategies of transformation.
- The envisioned framework will guide global and national policies on food system transformation. Hence, processes that ensure integrity and trust on such a framework need to be ensured.
- The current articulation of food security as emphasized in the HLPE and CFS mandate should be shifted towards the broader concept of food systems.

- The nexus of energy, environment, trade and food may be acknowledged and articulated explicitly.
- A deeper and meaningful connection between national and global policies should be emphasized.
- In addition to food systems science focussing the current global challenges, modelling the future projections should be high on the agenda.
- The appointment of members of the HLPE despite being transparent suffer from systemic drawbacks; the nominations for appointments do not come from science communities but from governments and mostly from countries in the Global North.
- There should not be a dogma that existing organizations only should be strengthened, as that would stifle institutional innovation, which food systems transformations need.

The Chair concluded that in view of the important and diverse insights of members of the ScG the exchange and the discussion were pointing at the need to keep the theme of Science – Policy interface on the agenda of the ScGroup. More time would be needed for this discussion and the EU appointed international HLEG' emerging insights offers an opportunity too.

Agenda 3: Science Days (July 8-9, 2021)

A draft program of the Science Days drafted by a steering committee of Joachim von Braun, Ismahane Elouafi, Kaosar Afsana, Mohamed Hassan, Louise Fresco, Maximo Torero had been shared with the ScG prior to the meeting. The draft included the program structure, planned sessions and the potential speakers. A draft concept note of the side events of the Science Days was also shared. The Chair informed the meeting participants that none of the listed potential speakers had been approached and members of the ScG were requested to suggest additional speakers for the event. A need to maintain gender and regional parity within the invited speakers was further emphasized. Science Days is further envisioned as a forum for brilliant young scientists working in any of the food systems related areas. The Chair added that the Agenda paper of the ScG will incorporate the insights shared at the Science Days. Suggestions for adjustments of the program included:

- A plenary session should be included after the parallel sessions for a synthesis and critical valuation of the discussions during each of the plenary sessions, not just reporting back from parallel sessions in plenary.
- Healthy diets as opposed to only an elimination of hunger may be centred as a main theme.
- In addition to the science on food systems, policy perspectives on food systems transformation may be made more visible.

Agenda 4. AOB. No matters were brought up

The chair thanked the ScGroup members for their active engagement in the task of assuring an evidence-based summit.

The meeting closed at 16:00 h CET.