

Tenth Meeting of the UNFSS Scientific Group (ScGroup)

17 August 2021, 14.00-15.00 (CEST)

Meeting Notes

Agenda of the Meeting (Meeting agenda was shared with the participants prior to the meeting)

1. 14.00-14:20 Assessment and follow-up to the Pre-Summit
2. 14:20-14:40: Update on Summit Plans (Reporting from Advisory Group)
3. 14:40-14:50 Options for follow-up after the Summit
4. 14:50-15:00 Any other business

Introduction:

The Chairperson of the ScGroup, Joachim von Braun opened the meeting, welcomed the participants, and presented the agenda of the meeting. In his opening remarks, he noted the key issues to be discussed in the meeting: the role of the ScGroup in the preparation for the UNFSS to be held around September 23rd 2021 and its role in the follow-up after the summit.

In the preparation for the UNFSS, the seven **science-driven innovation actions identified in the strategic paper of the ScGroup are key input**. He noted that in a series of meetings of the Advisory Group for the UNFSS, the DSG Amina Mohamed and special envoy Agnes Kalibata, plans for follow-up after the summit have been discussed. The follow-up at the global level may be done by the FAO / Rome based agencies with continued engagement across the UN systems. Member state engagement is critical in the follow-up. The ScGroup has been asked by the UN special envoy, Agnes Kalibata, to **play a role in the assessment of global and country level actions**. This may include designing a role of science in the coalitions of change and in country-level implementation of the summit plans. The emerging task for the ScGroup, therefore, is: How shall Science Communities assist with national level implementation of food systems summit actions? This task would need diverse approaches, depending on types and strength of national science landscapes related to food systems. The second major task is the engagement of the ScGroup with the coalitions including the framing of them including their interconnections in a food systems context, and designs for implementation.

Agenda Item 1: Assessment and follow-up to the Pre-Summit

The Chair called on Maximo Torero, member ScGroup to brief the participants on his perspectives on the follow-up actions after the Pre-summit. There was a proposal at the Pre-Summit by the DSG of eight coalitions of change going forward. The announced coalitions created reactions because there were coalitions that were not on the list. To manage the reactions on the coalitions, a way forward has been proposed that calls on the ScGroup to systematize the coalitions of change from a science perspective. Possible ways for systemizing these coalitions proposed by the ScGroup are: 1. To keep the existing list of coalitions but reduce the number from a scientific perspective. 2. To categorize the coalitions in six

objectives/thematic areas 3. Hybrid of 1 and 2 with a reduced level of dimensions. The ScGroup shall consider mapping the coalitions under a thematic framework. The ScGroup was proposed to extend its support by identifying the thematic areas and map different coalitions within these thematic areas. A template was shared by the Maximo Torero and ScGroup Chair with the participants of the meeting; all coalitions shall be requested to fill out the template to have brief unified information. The template will document science-based evidence in a structured way and the mechanisms of implementation from the global to country level. The ScGroup may use the templates to identify priorities in a systems context. A complex task is how these mechanisms will be implemented at the country-level while respecting diversity of countries's food systems.

There is so far no conceptual framework behind the sum of proposed coalitions, the ScGroup should ensure the scientific base on the coalitions. The political priority setting can be avoided by providing a scientific base. The ScGroup may apply the framework that they have developed in the strategic paper and to help coalitions to strengthen and identify their evidence-base. Areas of convergence to be identified, a small group within the ScGroup will draft these concepts, convergences and share with members of the ScGroup for review. An aim could be assessments of 5-6 top level coalitions that will be considered for the statement of the UN Secretary General at the summit.

Agenda Item 2: Update on the Summit Plans

The UN Food Systems Summit will be a one-day event to be held around September 23rd. There will a peoples' plenary and an opening session, and the leaders' statements. The Vice Chairs of the ScGroup submitted their remarks on the ScGroup's interventions for the summit agenda. Louise Fresco stressed that the task of the ScGroup is to simplify the way forward for the UN leadership and for countries (policymakers), complicated new frameworks should be avoided. The ScGroup can pinpoint the actions at the Global, Regional and at the National levels. There are areas of action where UN level intervention are not sensible, such as actions required and to be implemented at the local levels.

The ScGroup can only help by providing template that can most effectively and efficiently identify the relative strengths and weaknesses in the scientific base as well as the science-policy interaction (interface) at the country levels. These templates should be used in diverse contexts to identify the gaps in science and in science in policy.

The ScGroup in its recommendations should identify the most cost-effective investments in various contexts. A repository of case-studies/scientific evidence on what policies that work in diverse contexts could be a key input form the ScGroup as a follow-up.

A key theme to highlight is the funding of these and related activities. And while food systems related research investment has high benefit to cost ratio, different areas of research have different rates of benefits and those with the highest benefit to cost ratios should be pinpointed.

Agenda Item 3: Options for Follow-up after the Summit

The Chairperson, Joachim von Braun briefed the members on his meeting held on August 12, 2021, with the Chair of the CFS and the Deputy Secretary General of the UN to discuss the

way forward. Another will be held on the August 18, 2021, with the HLPE and CFS on the way forward. Any follow-up must capitalize on the capabilities of the ScGroup and of existing mechanisms and organizations.

The Chair called on the Vice Chairs and the meeting participants for proposition on the follow-up after the summit. The Chair also called on Claudia Sadoff, member ScGroup and Managing Director CGIAR to submit her reflections on the role of the CGIAR in the follow-up after the summit.

Kaosar Afsana remarked that after the summit the role of science at the country level should be ensured. There is a disjoint within countries between science and policy and between policies aimed at achieving various food systems related goals. Connectivity within ministries and connectivity of global science communities with the science communities within the various food systems related ministries is important, including health.

Vice Chair Mohamed Hassan remarked that there are existing organizations in place at the global, regional, and country levels that must be engaged with in the follow up. At the global level, in addition to the HLPE of CFS the Rome-based UN agencies, the CGIAR, and Academies of Sciences under the umbrella of IAP and IPBES and IPCC can play a key role and should be brought on board. There are organizations at the national levels such as the US-based, Council of Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST). The follow-up after the summit can greatly benefit from the wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise of these organizations. Series of dialogues with these organizations can be organized to develop a model for the science-policy interface in the follow-up after the summit.

Claudia Sadoff submitted that there are at least three areas where the CGIAR can play a key role in the follow-up after the UNFSS. Scientists and CGIAR centers around the world can engage with the evidence-base gathering of actions and to identify the issues that need to be prioritized in the way forward. On the coalitions she remarked that coalitions must first gather all the existing scientific evidence on their tasks, identify the gaps in this science base and then use their resources to fill the evidence gaps. Science activities, including investment in research, should be embedded in coalition actions. Moreover, the CGIAR can assist coalitions in finding partner for funding for research and in building partnerships.

In the open discussion on the agenda item, the following points were raised:

- Taking stock of existing research, the ScGroup can submit the recommendations on strengthening the research avenues underlying the coalitions. This would support the science-policy interface.
- A value addition of the ScGroup to the UNFSS follow up is to bring a global body of evidence together and the “how-to” on its use at the country level. The second key role is to recommend or design mechanisms that can ensure that scientific knowledge is brought to places where the scientific expertise is lacking and to link up research with local expertise which may be lacking and in need of support.
- There is also a need for bringing scientific evidence on improving national level actions; national level action: how to improve the effectiveness of these policies is an area where ScGroup can play a part in the follow up.

- Policy actions around standard categories/typologies based on regions or agro-climatic zones or cropping systems or socio-demographic themes can be specified based on existing scientific evidence. The recommendations should be cognizant of diversities and be extremely vary of generalizing, across diverse contexts.
- The One-Health approach can embrace the ideas around the food systems, and it can be useful.
- A dedicated team can be considered to integrate the activities of existing science organizations for consensus building and to streamline their work.
- The challenge is to operationalize scientific evidence for food systems transformation in a short period of time.
- The ScGroup in indicating the priorities must consider the political leanings/considerations of policymakers and find a balance with these political considerations.
- Existing frameworks and repositories such as the <https://foodsystemsdashboard.org/about-food-system> can be used, enhanced, and replicated at national and sub-national levels for knowledge and information sharing.

In an additional remark on the engagement of the ScGroup with the coalitions, the members noted political interests and the need for prioritizing science within the coalitions. There are overlaps between the priorities indicated by the ScGroup from a science perspective and the priorities of policymakers that are political, these can be capitalized on. The ScGroup has compiled a list of state-of-art, top-notch, peer-reviewed research on its website. When the priorities are defined, the list can be revisited.

The Chair requested for written submissions from the ScGroup on the follow-up after the summit and on the engagement with coalitions, because time in the meeting today was short.

Agenda Item 4: Any other business

Consultations of the ScGroup with the HLPE, Academies of Sciences and CGIAR will be planned.

The next meeting of the ScGroup will be held on September 14, 2021. That meeting will be the last before the summit.

The Chair closed the meeting with thanking the ScGroup members for their engagement.

The meeting closed at 15:00 h CEST.