

Overview of work plan of the Coalition of Action for Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children & All (HDSFS)

January 2023

1. Background

In 2021 the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) brought together governments, civil society, businesses, Indigenous Peoples, young people, international agencies, farmers, consumer advocates, food system champions, and many others with a stake in food systems transformation. The intensive Summit dialogues and engagement processes placed the global spotlight on the need for food systems transformation for people and planetary health and served as a catalyst for the development of country-level pathways for food system transformation, as well as the formation of global coalitions to accelerate coordinated and, collective action, and tailored support towards the vision of country pathways. **A key priority echoed by many Member Countries and stakeholder groups involved in the UNFSS, was the urgent need for action to deliver healthy diets from sustainable food systems for all¹.**

All the stakeholders who united behind the UNFSS have a role in ensuring that healthy diets from sustainable food systems are a reality for all. Many implement policies and practices every day, through multiple entry points throughout food systems, that directly and indirectly influence the availability, accessibility, affordability, and appeal of healthy diets and how they are produced. However, people, policies (including regulations, laws, standards), programs, and practices typically focus on sector-specific goals, meaning **fragmentation ('siloed working') is the norm in efforts to deliver healthy diets rather than the coordination and co-benefits of multi-duty action on diets for both nutrition and environmental sustainability goals.**

As noted by the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition², “coherence, coordination and convergence” are needed across different sectors to effect transformational change and to unleash the power of the existing focus of the policy, business, research, and civil society communities on this issue. **A broad coalition inclusive of multiple actions is thus vital to align and strengthen actions across sectors and the different elements of food systems at all levels to achieve a collective impact on healthy diets from sustainable food systems.**

2. Vision, purpose, and goals

The shared vision of the HDSFS is a world where all people eat healthy diets from sustainable food systems. That is, healthy diets are available, affordable, accessible, and appealing to all. Realization of this vision would achieve a multitude of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, promoting healthy lives and wellbeing for all by substantially reducing the health burden of non-communicable diseases and improving maternal and child health, reducing inequalities, promoting responsible consumption and production, and foster urgent action to combat climate change.

Progress towards this shared vision will be assessed by the decrease in the number of people who cannot afford a healthy diet – down from 3 billion in 2019³. Further, the Coalition will

¹ Food Systems Summit Synthesis Report: <https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Member-State-Dialogue-Synthesis-Report-4-March-2022-EN.pdf>

² <https://www.fao.org/cfs/vqfsn/en/>

³ [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021 \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition-2021/)

contribute to ongoing efforts aimed at building consensus on other relevant indicators for assessing sustainable healthy diets.

The purpose of the HDSFS is to accelerate a substantial increase of impactful actions by stakeholders across food systems, aligned for collective impact on healthy diets from sustainable food systems.

It takes a broad view of where action can be taken:

- **The food supply:** Actions that increase the supply of foods needed to support healthy diets from sustainable food systems.
- **Food environments:** Actions to support healthy diets from sustainable food systems through enhancing the institutional, physical, price, informational, educational, and policy environments where people procure their food.
- **Valuing food:** Actions to motivate, empower and enable everyone, everywhere to have the agency to acquire, prepare and eat healthy diets produced using environmentally sustainable practices.

Through complementary actions, advocacy, and engagement with the CFS, the Coalition will also promote the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition at the country level, which spans across these three above-mentioned areas.

The HDSFS will integrate gender equality and multi-stakeholder governance as cross-cutting issues– to ensure its functions and activities promote an inclusive approach to the achievement of healthy diets, leaving no one behind, as well as multi-actor collaboration to ensure this nutritious food is produced from sustainable food systems.

3. Functions of the HDSFS

The HDSFS works as a ‘Coalition of the Willing’ and strives to act as a mechanism for coordinated action for healthy diets from sustainable food systems, which countries can look to for support, information, and inspiration, maintaining and gaining momentum from multiple stakeholders on the issue.

As an overarching principle, the Coalition functions as a global learning platform where the focus is on sharing expertise and best practices through peer-to-peer exchange, accelerating progress, generating and reporting learnings from what is working well and what is not, and leveraging surveillance and information systems in countries to measure progress. It ‘learns by doing’ and adapts its functions accordingly with a focus on enhancing collaboration and coordination towards the shared vision.

In this regard, the Coalition seeks to translate its global role of aligning, mobilizing, and supporting actions into tangible outputs at the regional and country level, by working with volunteer countries in 2023 and beyond.

Specifically, the HDSFS aims to achieve its purpose by conducting three interrelated functions, which respond to countries requests and priorities.

- (i) **Function 1: Addressing priorities challenges at the country level through aligning action across food systems for collective impact**

The UNFSS showed that a considerable number of entities are taking action,

implementing relevant activities globally, regionally, and in countries to promote healthy diets and food system sustainability. Nonetheless, as highlighted above, these efforts remain fragmented as different groups work in silos related to sectors and isolated policy actions.

The Coalition facilitates coordination of existing entities (operating at the global, regional, and country level) and actions to address problems related to healthy diets from sustainable food systems which are priorities in national contexts, such as those set out in the country food system transformation pathways (as developed by around 110 countries during the UN Food Systems Summit process). This approach, requiring more intensive engagement, will be prototyped in a limited number of volunteer countries during 2023.

It is envisioned that the HDSFS would help guide prototype countries through a process of identifying how to address priority problem(s) related to healthy diets from sustainable food systems through aligning and building on existing action. The starting point of this collective impact would be for countries to come with their priority problem (e.g., access to nutritious foods, rising proportion of Highly Processed Foods, enabling diets that reduce GHGs etc.) and a sense of what is being done to address the problem and by who a multistakeholder workshopping process would then be used to bring together relevant stakeholders to identify a shared agenda to address the problem, develop an appreciation of who is already doing what to solve the problem, come to a shared understanding of the impact of these actions, what is working and the strengths and assets, and collectively discuss who can do what to build on and align what's already working in a way that is mutually reinforcing. The process will entail listening to and engaging all the relevant actors to move forward in this systems approach for more collective impact, while also contributing to strengthening capacities at all levels and mobilising sustainable financing solutions to address major gaps.

Function 1 will also include compiling existing resources, tools, best practices and initiatives for assessing and guiding a systems approach to the transformation towards the delivery of healthy diets from sustainable food systems for all. As this function is implemented, oversight will be kept throughout by the Coalition, so that experiences and learnings can be shared between the Coalition's members and beyond.

Under this function, the Coalition will also facilitate workshops and policy dialogues on topics in support of the achievement of policy objectives through a systems approach, to generate demand for a systems approach to food systems transformation.

Concrete deliverables for 2023 under this pillar are: a) the organization of 2-3 workshops in three prototype countries; (b) two peer-to-peer learning sessions/policy dialogues on systems approaches for collective impact; and (c) collation of initial list of resources, tools and best practices for taking this approach.

(ii) Function 2: Facilitate peer-to-peer learning between countries

Different countries and Coalition members face different contexts and challenges but share similar concerns and aspirations to deliver healthy diets from sustainable food systems. The HDSFS uses Function 2 as a forum that brings countries and Coalition members together for peer-to-peer learning, support, problem-solving and showcasing successful actions. Each year, the Coalition Secretariat will facilitate the identification of

opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, in order to ensure they are responding to Member needs. Additionally, the Coalition secretariat aims to, within Function 2, support partnerships building and country networking, work to match shared interests among Member Countries to learn from each other, showcase best practice⁴, and provide mutual support and capacity building.

The level of engagement for this activity is demand-based and flexible. Coalition members can engage on topics that are of particular interest to them and contribute with their expertise and experience, as well as use this peer-to-peer learning to build capacity. Matching based on interest and expertise could take place in a variety of ways, serving the purpose as requested by members. Examples of topics for this exchange could include health and nutrition, dietary, and sustainability indicators for measuring progress on food systems transformation; engagement between business and public sector; effective approaches to create healthy school food environments or establishing policy dialogues to advance progress towards identified priority actions (e.g., “Framework International Convention on Agri-food System Regulation”).

The Coalition Secretariat collates a repertoire, detailed notes, which include country actions and ambitions based on the content of the peer-to-peer forums. Topics from the peer-to-peer learning can evolve into special projects under function (iii) for identified demands and the need for nuanced work.

The concrete deliverable for 2023 under this pillar is the organization of at least four webinars that aim at facilitating peer-to-peer learning and supporting partnerships and networks between countries on topics put forward by Member Countries.

(iii) Function 3: Manage special projects on integrating nutrition, health, and sustainability through food, determined by country priorities

The special projects involve proactive mobilization of expertise, providing opportunities for learning, supporting the creation of relevant partnerships and networks, and building capacity to advance progress in specific areas. Examples of such areas are the integration between FBDGs with environmental sustainability elements, the facilitation of the access of members to peer to peer learning opportunities, the facilitation of country networking, the identification of innovative partnerships, determining relevant food system indicators; supporting Member Countries to include transformative, financed action on food systems within their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (COP28); and engaging researchers on identifying health and environmental co-benefits of transforming food systems to generate greater political commitment. The focus area and country involvement within special projects is based upon request, though the lessons learned are shared with all Member Countries.

The concrete deliverable for 2023 under this pillar is the continued active work within special project 1 and 2 launched in 2022, as well as the launch of special project 4 (2023) and progress made in the implementation of special project 3. See section 6 below for more details on the special projects.

⁴ See for instance the [European Commission’s Public Health Best Practice Portal](#) and [UN Nutrition Tales Be Told series](#).

4. Structure of the HDSFF

The HDSFS is supported by a Secretariat which is composed of FAO, UN-Nutrition, and WHO. A Steering Committee is being established (Q1 2023) composed of some Member Countries and its constitutional members (GAIN, EAT, WWF, CARE, Club of Rome, Consumers International, City, University of London, International Livestock Research Institute/CGIAR and various UN agencies (FAO, UN-Nutrition, WFP, WHO). These entities represent the founding members of the Coalition, and have up to now made up the Core Group, which will be replaced with the Steering Committee.

A number of frontrunner countries (17) have formally engaged with the Coalition: Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, the European Commission, Finland, Ghana, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Slovenia, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The governance of the HDSFS is described as follows:

- An independent entity with its own work plan and activities. Current arrangements are that the Secretariat is supported by in-kind contributions from several organizations involved.
- It has:
 - A Secretariat responsible for the coordination and support of the implementation of the functions of the HDSFS, preparation and drafting of key documents, administrative and operational support, wider outreach and communication on the HDSFS's work, and otherwise as needed.
 - A Steering Committee that would provide vision and direction, as well as content expertise on the HDSFS's functions on a regular basis (planned every 6-7 weeks). Up to now, this has been the Core Group made up of its constitutional members.
 - Members of the Coalition are Country Governments and CSO, UN agencies, and Academic entities who offer expertise and capacity as part of the effort to accelerate more impactful action at the country level and support special projects.
 - The Principles of Engagement support the Coalition's efforts to engage with a wider group of stakeholders – to support the delivery of the Coalition's work plan – and a stakeholder forum – composed of entities who endorse and promote the Coalition's vision and wish to be informed of the Coalition's work.
 - The Coalition's structure (Steering Committee and Secretariat) is positioned at a global level and connects with Countries using already established connections with Country Governments and existing structures of several of its members, such as Country offices. In the foreseeable future, there is no plan to set up organizational structures of the Coalition at country level.
 - The Coalitions' Principles of Engagement that were set up in 2022, guide the Coalition's interactions with stakeholders, including Private Sector actors (for example non-state-actors (NSAs)), to prevent or manage conflicts of interest and ensure the integrity of the Coalition's actions and advisory services are maintained.
 - The Coalition requires its own funding and/or in-kind support (e.g., secondments), including core funding for the Secretariat, and targeted funding to deliver the specific functions, but does not aim to mobilize or disperse funds more widely for activities that are not included in its work plan.

5. *Work plan for January – December 2023*

Key priorities for the Coalition's actions in 2023 are:

- Agree on a set of priority actions in support of continental regions and countries that are members of the Coalition
- Identify forms and channels of collective support for the actions prioritized (e.g., sharing ideas and experiences on the implementation of those actions, including tools for implementation, building country capacities, organizing country, regional, and global level advocacy)
- As country pathways are developed, adopted, and implemented, there is a pressing need to assess the food system transformation actions through peer-to-peer analysis facilitated by the HDSFS. A limited number of our frontrunner countries could step forward for this.
- To identify volunteer countries to advance action on the incorporation of food systems actions into NDCs ahead of COP28
- Outline a resource mobilization strategy/approach in support of the work plan. The strategy/approach will be drafted by the current Secretariat and Steering Committee of the HDSFS and shared with its members. The exact approach for resource mobilization will need to be adjusted based on how and where the Coalition will be housed

These actions will be progressed via **regular meetings** with all members, accompanied by bilateral discussions to advance the special projects.

6. *Function 3: Special Projects*

The four special projects that were suggested, based on Member Countries expressed priorities, are listed below. Further information on the special projects' respective purpose and activities are detailed in their dedicated concept notes.

1) Sustainable Food and Diets in NDCs

- a. Objectives: (a) to develop concrete global guidelines/recommendations and carry out global advocacy for inclusion of healthy diets from sustainable food systems and Food Losses and Waste (FLW) in NDCs, and (b) to work directly with a set of champion countries, starting with HDSFS members who have expressed interest, to provide technical assistance and pioneer concrete examples of action.
- b. Purpose: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food systems and simultaneously enhance food systems and climate action, through the integration of healthy diets from sustainable food systems.
- c. Core Member Leads: WWF, EAT, UNEP, GAIN, FAO, Consumers International.
- d. Should connect with the Climate Resilient Food Systems Coalition (hosted with UNFCCC), the Food is Never Waste Coalition, and potentially the One Planet Network's SFS Programme.

2) Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) incorporating sustainability

- a. Objectives: Ensure FBDGs integrate a food systems approach and sustainability considerations, in particular environmental sustainability, and that food systems support consumers in following dietary guidance, emphasising preference for fresh or minimally processed foods and avoidance of ultra-processed foods, through the implementation of FBDGs within public policies all along food systems (e.g., public procurement, trade policy, agriculture, and finance), in line with the international guidelines
- b. Purpose: Support countries with the implementation of current FBDGs or the development or revision of FBDGs to transition towards FBDGs with a food system lens (FSBDGs) for improving health and nutrition and incorporating sustainability

aspects, with particular emphasis on environmental sustainability. These updated FSBDGs can serve as a tool to align public policies, actions, and interventions across food systems so they are most effectively deployed towards realizing the objective of making healthy diets from sustainable food systems more accessible, affordable, and practiced contributing toward the achievement of the SDGs.

c. Core Member Leads: FAO, WHO, GAIN, UNEP, Consumers International.

3) Public engagement, including awareness campaigns - *not launched yet / concept note to be developed*

a. Objectives: Develop global campaigns on key areas building on successful collaborations from the UNFSS process and guidelines for implementing national campaigns on strategic topics such as the importance of healthy diets from sustainable food systems.

b. Purpose: Create more global awareness about the importance of healthy diets from sustainable food systems across the food supply, food environments, and valuing food to shift public behaviour and mindset.

c. Potential Core Member Leads: GAIN, WHO, UNICEF, EAT, UNEP.

4) Risk and vulnerability in fragile contexts - *to be launched in Q1 2023. Concept note being developed currently.*

a. Objectives: Explore how to promote access to and practice of healthy diets from sustainable food systems in fragile contexts, including delving into country-based solutions, tools, and guidelines.

b. Purpose: For more people living in fragile contexts to have access to healthy and sustainable diets.

c. Core Member Lead: WFP, FAO.

The list above is an initial one of 4 special projects presented by the interim Coalition Secretariat in 2022. Other special projects may be suggested, and all projects are subject to demand and interest from countries and other Members, as well as capacity from the Secretariat. The funding approach for special projects will be detailed in the Coalition's resource mobilization strategy currently under development.

Planning a special project would, in general, start by assessing interest and capacity among countries, and then among Members of the Coalition who would like to support the projects. The landscape of relevant initiatives, projects, experts, and experiences should also be mapped, and alignment should be sought to avoid duplication and leverage synergies. If interest and need are deemed sufficient, the interested Members should be convened to align on the core elements of the special project's work plan. The Secretariat would facilitate this meeting, possibly in the shape of a workshop, then draft a work plan, including a timeline and suggestion for distribution of responsibility for the project. The timeline should, to the extent possible, harmonize with that of the overall Coalition and other projects Members may be involved in. At the end of a special project's agreed duration and scope, the special project should be evaluated, its findings shared with all Members of the Coalition, and potential follow-up may be agreed upon.