



## Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

### Concept Note

## FAO REU Regional Expert Consultation of the Food System Countdown Initiative's Indicator Framework Virtual, 25 May 2022, 8:30-13:00 CEST

### BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Food systems play a role in meeting all 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). With less than a decade to achieve the SDGs, the global community faces a critical juncture to transform food systems to be healthier, safer, more sustainable, more efficient, and more equitable. Lately, the UN Food Systems Summit has focused global attention on food systems and set the stage for food system transformation. Country and independent dialogues catalyzed the development of shared visions for food systems that apply to different contexts and geographies.

It is widely recognized that to enhance all aspects of food systems and their interactions, a clear, rigorous, and comprehensive set of metrics and indicators are required to guide decision-makers and to hold them accountable. However, no rigorous mechanism currently exists to track the state of food systems, their change, and performance over time. In fact, the commitments reached at the UN Food Systems Summit, and the realization of the visions reflected in the national food systems pathways need metrics to guide decisions and track progress. At the same time, food system actors and stakeholders (e.g., civil society, governments, and international organizations) require trustworthy, science-based metrics and assessment.

### FOOD SYSTEMS COUNTDOWN INITIATIVE

With the ultimate objective to fill this gap, the Food Systems Countdown Initiative ("the Initiative") was formed in 2021 as a comprehensive, independent, inclusive, science-based mechanism to provide actionable evidence to track progress, guide decision-makers, and inform transformation. At the same time, it intends to complement other monitoring mechanisms and the tracking of related goals at global and regional scales (i.e., SDG agenda CAADP).

To implement the Initiative an unparalleled partnership and collaboration have been put together, led by FAO, GAIN, and John Hopkins University and with the participation of more than 50 scientists from nearly 30 academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies from nearly all continents.

#### *Independent tracking and assessment system*

The main goal of the Initiative is to provide an independent tracking and assessment system based on a high-quality, curated, parsimonious set of indicators that cover all important aspects of food systems and measure food system performance. The Initiative/FSCI has designed an architecture for such a system from a multidisciplinary point of view and is moving towards implementation.

The Initiative expects to deliver an annual assessment of the state of global food systems and their transformation, published in a peer-reviewed scientific paper. It is also envisioned that policy briefs will be delivered in parallel for a broader audience and to facilitate transformative action.

The first milestone of the Initiative was the publication of the initially proposed architecture of the system and the description of an inclusive process to move from the concept to its execution.<sup>1</sup> The architecture covers the five thematic areas of diet, nutrition and health; environment and climate; livelihoods, poverty and equity; governance and resilience and sustainability.

<sup>1</sup> Fanzo et al (2021).

As a second step, the Initiative will aim to deliver the set of indicators in each of the five thematic areas above and to deliver a first assessment of the state of global food systems that will serve as a baseline for monitoring progress and performance.

The proposed tracking and assessment system are an independent effort which do not represent any obligation or commitment for reporting from countries.

## **REGIONAL EXPERT CONSULTATION**

The Initiative is committed to an inclusive, consultative, and transparent process that will allow for validation and peer review of the set of indicators that will be used for the assessments. As part of that process, two efforts are envisioned. First, a consultation with expert scientists and, second, a series of regional expert consultations across the FAO regions. This concept note relates to the regional expert consultation for the *FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia* (REU) and explains its objectives, its targeted audience, its structure, and its working arrangements.

## **OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOMES**

The objective of the *REU* regional expert consultation is to bring an expert point of view from policymakers and policy-adjacent users of data, on the relevance, usefulness, and validity of the proposed set of indicators from a regional perspective. The consultation will cover the proposed indicators in each of the five thematic areas. These will be used for the first assessment of the state of global food systems and later for tracking progress and assessing performance.

The regional expert consultation is an opportunity to get inputs, comments, and suggestions on the monitoring framework proposed by the initiative. The framework is not mandatory, however, the consultations will ensure that it has the capacity to be a useful tool for policy decision-making processes. The outcome of each regional consultation will be a public document that summarizes the inputs received in each thematic area.

## **PARTICIPANTS AND PARTNERS**

The expert consultation will bring together representatives from governments from the European and Central Asia Region, as well as individual experts in food systems from the FAO network in countries.

Target participants are senior staff engaged in policy development from the relevant Planning Units of the Ministry, as well as senior experts from across the five thematic areas. It is also extended to additional relevant staff from other Ministries working on the thematic areas of the indicator framework.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENT**

The following document describes the architecture and serves as background information for the regional expert consultation:

- J. Fanzo et al., 2021. Viewpoint: Rigorous monitoring is necessary to guide food system transformation in the countdown to the 2030 global goals. *Journal of Food Policy* 104 (2021).  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2021.102163>

The list of indicators and a four-pager summary on the initiative in *English and Russian* will be provided to the nominated participants prior to the expert consultation.

## PROPOSED AGENDA

08:30 -08:50 hours *Welcoming remarks*

**Raimund Jehle**

Regional Programme Leader, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

**José Rosero Moncayo**

Director of the Statistics Division, FAO

8:50 -09:15 hours *Introduction to the initiative*

**Lawrence Haddad**

Executive Director, GAIN

09:15 -10.30 hours

*Breakout sessions, block 1:*

- *Diet, nutrition and health Domain;*
- *Environment and climate Domain;*
- *Livelihoods, poverty and equity Domain.*

Moderators:

**Musonda Mofu**

Deputy Executive Director, National Food and Nutrition Commission, Zambia

**Fabrice DeClerck**

Science Director, EAT

Senior Scientist, One CGIAR

**Alejandro Guarin**

Researcher, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

10:30 -10.45 hours *Summary of the breakout sessions*

10:45 -12.00 hours

*Breakout sessions, block 2:*

- *Governance Domain;*
- *Resilience and sustainability Domain.*

Moderators:

**Namukolo Covic**

Registered Nutritionist, Health Professions Council of South Africa

Senior Research Coordinator at the International Food Policy Research Institute

**Dr. Preet Lidder**

Technical Adviser to the Chief Scientist, FAO

12:00 -12.15 hours *Summary of the breakout sessions*

12:15 -13.00 hours

*Wrap up and conclusions*