



# CATALYSING THE SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE TRANSFORMATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS

## A JOINT EU, FAO AND CIRAD INITIATIVE

**Food systems** concern the way our food is produced, processed, transported, traded, distributed, consumed and disposed of. They include the livelihoods of all of the people working in the sector as well as the activities, actors, policies and investments that play a part in getting food and agricultural products to consumers. Food systems are a tremendous source of employment and livelihoods, far beyond the farm.

The world's food systems are incredibly **diverse**. Consider the vast number of crops available in the world, the richness of cooking and gastronomic cultures, the differing levels of capital, infrastructure and technology - all evolving and interconnecting at different rates because of a wide variety of ecosystems and geographies.

A **range of pressures** including rapid population growth, urbanization, growing wealth and consequent change in consumption patterns, are

challenging our food systems' ability to provide nutritious food, and to contribute to enhanced livelihood opportunities in an environmentally sustainable way.

The alarm on unsustainable food systems was raised in a 2019 joint report "**Food Systems at Risk**" by the European Union (EU), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). Widely disseminated at the High-Level Event of the Global Network against Food Crises in April 2019, the results underscored the urgent need to transform food systems to be more sustainable, resilient and inclusive.

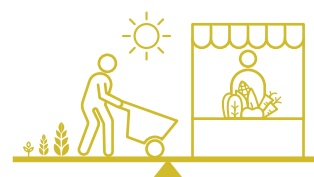
Since 2020, the EU, FAO and CIRAD have entered into a **partnership** with governments and stakeholders to initiate a large-scale assessment and consultation on food systems in more than 50 countries, as a first step towards transforming them. The three partners share as priority agenda to be part in



Ensure **food security, nutrition and health** for all through healthy, balanced and nutritious diets



Ensure **decent livelihoods and jobs and equity of power and wealth distribution** for all food system actors

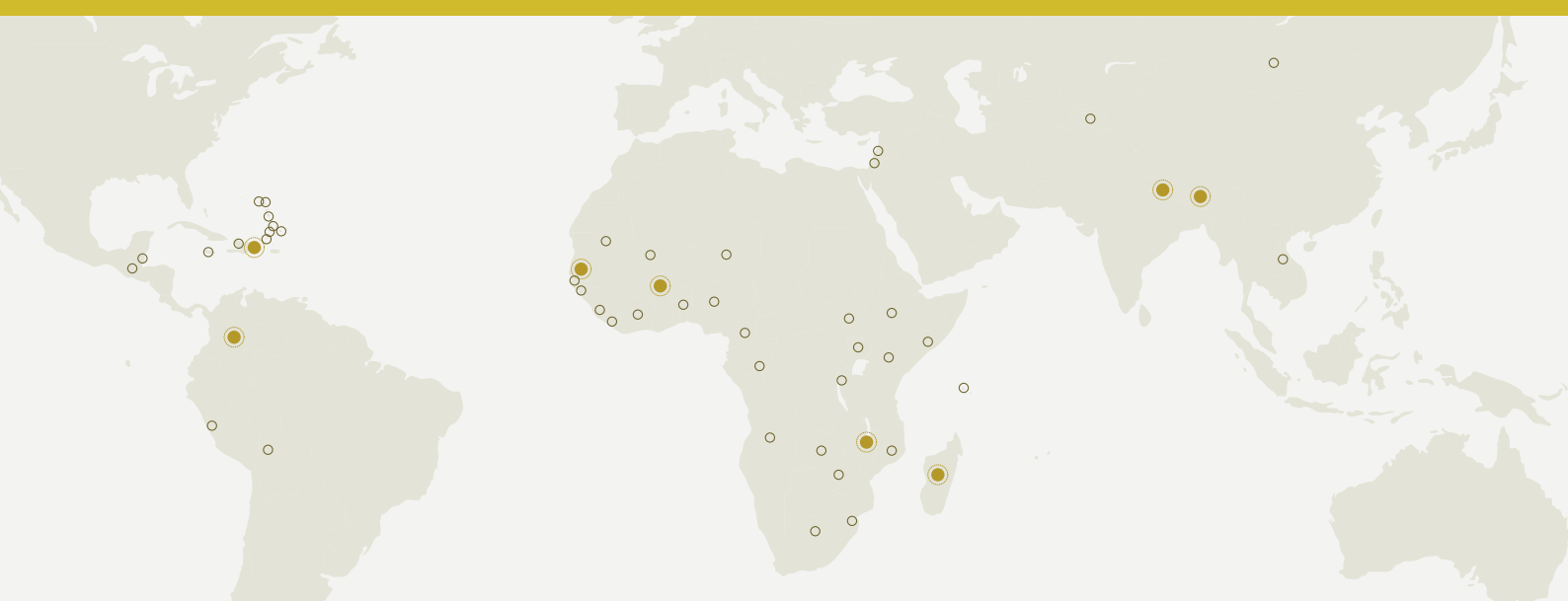


Ensure **balanced territorial development**



Protect and restore **ecosystems and natural resources** while limiting negative effects on climate change and biodiversity





supporting the global transition to sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems.

Economic constraints, health and nutrition concerns, livelihood and environmental pressures mean that our current food systems are **not fit for purpose** in providing nutritious food for all, decent livelihoods for all actors, whilst preserving the environment. In short - our food systems **need transforming**. Responding to these challenges requires a systems-based approach that addresses them in a holistic and sustainable manner.

In many countries, the problem lies in the **constraints** of the system, far beyond agricultural production. There is globally enough food to potentially feed everyone - preventing the dual healthy burdens of malnutrition and obesity.

The inequities in terms of nutrition are vast. So too is the **imbalance in economic wealth** and powers within the food system, between primary food producers and large food conglomerates and retailers. Food systems do not generate fair economic returns for all actors, particularly for small-scale producers, triggering an endless cycle of precariousness and poverty.

In the same way, **disparities** between parts of a country can be substantial, with some areas and **territories** benefiting from a higher level of development and others neglected or forgotten, as is the growing divide between rural and urban settings.

Our food systems are contributing to, and affected by, extreme weather events as **associated with climate change**. They produce about one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, consume large amounts of natural resources, especially water and contribute to critical biodiversity loss and land degradation, threatening the very existence of agriculture for future generations.

The joint EU, FAO and CIRAD assessments and consultations will **gather evidence and knowledge** in support of the transition to more sustainable food systems, centered on **four core goals**, namely food security, nutrition and health, inclusive economic growth, territorial development and equity, and the environment. They will combine data and qualitative information from diverse food system actors, in view of analyzing their impacts on the set goals. The results will help identify entry points for **innovative policy and investment solutions**

for the transformation of food systems. Country teams led by the government and supported by EU Delegations, FAO Representations and other development partners are driving the process in the participating countries.

As we move closer to the **2030 Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) of a better future for all, particularly in this last decade of action, a concerted effort is needed to **rethink our food systems**. They are critical to achieving all SDGs. However, the solutions are complex. Each regional, national and even sub-national food system has its own specificities and set of hurdles, which means that a solution for one may not apply to all, but stakeholders can **learn from each other's** way of improving the system. Therefore, a continuous dialogue between all actors at national, regional and international level is required. To this end, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, will convene a **Food Systems Summit** at the UN General Assembly in September 2021. The assessments will inform the Summit and provide key evidence for this high-level dialogue and ultimately guide future action under the food systems transformation agenda.

