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Organization of the
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FAO and the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review

*Guidance note for
Regional and
Country Offices*

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Introduction

In previous years, FAO has been engaged, to varying degrees, in high-level political fora on sustainable development (HLPFs) and Regional Fora for Sustainable Development (RF4SD), and in the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). As 2023 is a mid-point in the 2030 Agenda implementation, it is critical that FAO scale up its contribution to the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review processes through a more dedicated engagement with national and regional partners, key groups and donors.

The present **Guidance note for FAO Country Offices** is part of a wider **2030 Agenda Follow-up and Review Toolkit**, which aims to support the process of repositioning FAO as a strong member of the UN family, supporting its Member Nations in the process of transforming agrifood systems to ensure better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life for all, leaving no one behind.

In addition to this Guidance, the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review toolkit includes a set of webinars/capacity-building activities, context-based consultations with FAO Country Offices, and other types of support (substantive and technical) with the preparation of the VNR report and its audiovisual files.

1. 2030 Agenda follow-up and review

2030 Agenda follow-up and review process in 2023

Follow-up and review (alongside the Political Declaration, the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] and the means of implementation) are an integral and essential part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Follow-up and review take place at national, regional and global levels. The global level of follow-up and review is operationalized through the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Voluntary National Reviews are prepared by Member Nations and presented during the HLPF.

National reviews, according to the UN Resolution on “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” are voluntary and country-led; they need to be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent; to be people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind; and to be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data.

The follow-up and review process, and the VNRs specifically, serve to:

- track progress in implementing the universal Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in all countries,
- promote accountability to citizens,
- support effective international cooperation in achieving the 2030 Agenda,
- foster exchanges of best practices and mutual learning,
- mobilize support to overcome shared challenges, and
- identify new and emerging issues.

They, therefore, need to maintain a longer-term orientation, identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors, and support countries in making informed policy choices.

VNRs are presented each year at the HLPF, where they serve as a platform for:

- peer-to-peer learning,
- catalysing multistakeholder partnerships and platforms,
- promoting commitment to enhanced monitoring, accountability and reporting,
- strengthening policy integration and coherence,
- mobilizing various national and international resources, and
- raising awareness of the countries' priorities, and advocating for change and transformation.

In 2023, the HLPF will take place in July, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with the title *“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”*. It will take place at ministerial level and will result in a Summary of the President of ECOSOC. In September 2023, the SDG Summit will take place in September 2023, under the auspices of the General Assembly at presidential level; it will mark the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and result in a Political Declaration. Participation in the 2023 HLPF and the presentation of a VNR in 2023 provide a crucial opportunity for countries to present their achievements, outline their challenges and mobilize change.

Each year, following a four-year cycle, the HLPF reviews in depth a set of SDGs. HLPF 2023 will review in detail **SDGs 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 7 (Affordable and clean energy), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)**. Some countries will primarily focus their reviews on these SDGs, while others will prepare a review of the progress of all SDGs. For FAO, this is an opportunity to highlight the importance and key role of the transformation of agrifood systems in achieving synergetic positive changes with regard to the Goals under review.

What are the VNR lessons learned and opportunities for further improvements and action

VNRs presented each year are regularly analysed by various UN and non-UN entities, organizations and institutions. According to the latest report of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP), *“the VNRs ... are not reflecting the transformative ambition of the 2030 Agenda, nor do they appear to be effectively used as tools for taking lessons learned into policy debates and processes. The VNR reports are largely descriptive and lack the substantive assessments and analyses required to serve their intended purpose...”* (CDP, 2022), outlined in the section above.

Among its recommendations for the future, CDP includes the need for the VNRs to:

- incorporate more specific and substantive discussions and analysis on national and international policies, actions and strategies taken as part of the global social contract in pursuit of the SDGs,
- review in particular the challenges of achieving the transformative and integrated objectives of the 2030 agenda, and include a reference to the key constraints faced by countries and the support needed, and
- explore ways to tap into new opportunities to make VNR processes more inclusive, while ensuring adequate representation of groups that are disadvantaged.

All the points above provide a significant scope of work and open up entry points for FAO to provide high-quality support to its national partners.

Why should FAO engage in support to VNR preparation

The key priority for FAO in the process of supporting its national partners with the VNRs is to maximize the quality of the review process by:

- supporting evidence- and science-based review and subsequent policy-making with regard to future policies, actions and investments,
- promoting integrated assessment, analysis and discussion of agrifood systems transformation,
- facilitating the participation, inclusion and dialogues of different partners and stakeholders and their awareness of the role of agrifood systems transformation for broader sustainable development transformations,
- identifying accelerators to speed up transformative processes,
- supporting the capacity development of national partners to undertake robust, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review, and
- building long-term partnerships during the VNR preparation process to support and promote further transformative change on the ground.

For FAO, engagement in the VNR preparation process is an opportunity to re-position itself both with its Member Nations and within the UN system in order to best support transformative changes leading to the achievement to the four betters and the SDGs.

2. FAO and the Voluntary National Reviews

Preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews

Each year, UN DESA prepares an updated [Handbook for the preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews](#) with the deadlines relevant for that year's submission of key documents, as well as adding new country examples and encouraging advanced planning for effective VNRs.

It is important that FAO's engagement is strong in both:

- process-related aspects (during the preparation process of the VNR), and
- content-related aspects (what the VNR document reflects).

With regard to the process-related aspects, Annex 1 contains the list of the main preparatory stages as per the UN DESA Handbook, followed by the steps that FAO Country Offices can take to ensure their active participation and support throughout the process.

With regard to the content-related aspects, the VNR document needs to clearly recognize:

- the role of agrifood systems transformations as a key accelerator for all SDGs and integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda,

- the importance of utilizing available data and statistics to assess progress, and promote the data collection of food and agriculture statistics,
- the importance of policy coherence in agrifood systems and inclusive policy making,
- the role of wider inclusion of the FAO target groups (farmers, youth, women and other groups) in addressing the leave-no-one-behind commitment,
- the role of partnerships with FAO and its stakeholders as an important element of the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda, and
- the role of governance, technology, science and innovation as key drivers of agrifood systems transformation and the achievement of the SDGs.

All these elements, and how to make sure that they are integrated in the VNR document, are unpacked in the following sections of this Guidance.

FAO support at country level to VNR preparation

There are four main steps of how FAO can best support VNR preparation at country level. All four steps are described in a nutshell below. Detailed “how-to” guidance notes with examples from the latest VNRs are available in the respective annexes.

Based on the country context and the approaches taken by the Member Nations, not all steps may be applicable in a given country. The list of minimal engagement and support that the FAO Country Office can and needs to provide to its national partners is given at the end of this Guidance note.

Step 1. Initial preparation

The preparatory step has several important objectives and will define how effective FAO’s support is during the process. During this stage it is important to:

- 1. Designate an FAO focal point who will lead and support the process from the FAO side.**
The focal point can be technical (to submit inputs, share documents and so on) or substantive (with responsibilities to liaise with national partners or take part in respective UNCT meetings). The final decision as to the focal point or a team to lead the process will ultimately depend on the country context and the available resources and capacities in the FAO Country Office.
- 2. Identify key FAO stakeholders (key groups or networks) that need to be involved in the preparation process.**
A key for success is to ensure that FAO target groups and constituents are aware of the VNR preparation process, are willing to participate in it and contribute to it, and are committed to joining the follow-up actions required to ensure continuity of the process. The process of stakeholder identification may include the need to undertake a) mapping of the stakeholders who are (and/or have been in the past years under review) involved in the work towards the SDGs and to assess their mandates, available expertise and resources, opinions and interests; and b) analysis of the potential overlapping, diverging or conflicting interests, mandates and values in order to be able to build inclusive participation, coordination and cooperation among them.
- 3. Identify the resources that will be needed for the process.**
VNR preparation requires significant human, financial and other resources from the national partners, starting from the collection and analysis of data, the organization of multistakeholder consultations

and meetings, and participation in global and regional VNR preparation workshops, to the production of the VNR document and its Main Messages, translation of the document into English or other official UN languages, the editing and layout of these documents or the creation of audiovisual materials. It is essential to understand which of these activities FAO can support.

4. Prepare a communications campaign to share information about the importance of the VNR process and the FAO role in it.

FAO Country Offices are encouraged to have a set of key messages that can either be used in the FAO-led communications campaign or be incorporated into UNCT-, government- or civil society-led communication campaigns about the 2030 Agenda and the importance of the follow-up and review process, as well as the role of agrifood systems transformation in accelerating the achievement of SDGs.

Detailed “how-to” descriptions of each of these steps can be found in Annex 1.

Step 2. Stakeholder engagement

While it is the responsibility of the national authorities to ensure a participatory approach in the preparation of the VNRs, FAO Country Offices can promote interest and facilitate participation in their preparation by engaging their own partners in consultations and discussions on the progress towards 2030 and the ways in which agrifood systems transformations can accelerate the achievement of multiple SDGs.

The process of effective multistakeholder engagement for the VNR includes three steps:

1. Initiate the process

The purpose of the first step is to clarify the objectives of the engagement, the main milestones in the consultation process, and the importance of using an agrifood systems transformation lens when discussing progress towards the SDGs. During this step, it is important to have a special arrangement with the national data collection and analysis team to ensure that data inventory and gap assessment can take place at the beginning of the preparation process and that FAO can contribute to this process.

2. Build sustainable collaboration and participation

During the second stage, the objective is to build sustainable collaboration and participation. A series of discussions is recommended: on progress towards the SDG goals and targets that are relevant for FAO’s work (these can be different, based on the decision of the national authorities to analyse the progress on all or on selected SDGs); a joint analysis of synergies and trade-offs and policy coherence; discussion of the results of the analysis of synergies and trade-offs and policy coherence; and discussion about the next steps to transform agrifood systems.

3. Manage collaboration

Sustaining collaboration requires detailed and concrete action plans and capacities to establish a working mechanism. FAO can promote the creation of a dedicated online space to support discussions between meetings, and to store information and relevant documentation for the participants and wider public to access throughout the entire process.

These steps are outlined in detail in Annex 2.

Step 3. Assessment and analysis

1. Data collection and processing

VNRs provide a snapshot of the progress made by countries on reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and are essential for sharing experiences and the learning process in global and national SDG reporting. While data availability is an important challenge, another frequent problem is the under-utilization of the available data resources. FAO publishes a vast array of reliable country-level data for SDG indicators, as well as data platforms managed by technical units (FishStat, FAOSTAT, etc). An extended list of data resources is included in this package for Country Offices to conduct their data mapping exercise.

To pull together all available data:

- check the availability of **SDG data on the [UN global database](#)**
- check if the country has submitted a **[VNR report](#)** before in order to use previous reporting as a baseline to assess trends over time
- check the statistical progress assessment from FAO's annual **[report](#)** tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators (FAO, 2019)
- check the national SDG dashboard/tracker if available (the data resources annex contains links to various regional and national dashboards)
- consult the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS)
- refer to the **[FAO Statistical Capacity Assessment 2019](#)**
- use the National SDG Indicator Framework
- locate sources of non-official data that can be reviewed and incorporated in the VNR to help fill gaps
- consult upcoming data collection plans – Review plans for **[agricultural censuses](#)** and agriculture or household surveys in which modules for SDG data collection could be included where possible (indicators 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 5.a.1)
- consult UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and the Common Country Analyses (including annual updates of the CCA), which can be found at **[UNINFO](#)**

A detailed step-by-step how-to guide can be found in Annex 3.

2. Assessment and analysis

Using the above (as available) data sources, the next step is to conduct an assessment and analysis of where a country stands with regard to the implementation of the SDGs and their targets. The assessment and analysis exercises are led by the national authorities. FAO can support this process in many ways: by providing its framework (presented in Annex 4) to the national authorities; by organizing and leading respective exercises with FAO target groups if requested by the government; or by sharing this framework with its key target groups (civil society organizations, research institutions, think tanks and others) as a framework for reference.

- **Assessment** is the process of identifying **where the country currently stands** with regard to specific SDG indicators (global or national, whichever the national authorities are using) in absolute numbers.
- **Analysis** needs to **put the numbers in perspective by comparing them** with the baseline or the year in which the previous assessment was undertaken and by indicating if there is a positive trend, a negative trend or no change, or if the indicator is not possible to measure. The analysis also needs to **put the numbers into context by demonstrating how close the country is to the Goals set for 2030**, by extrapolating the current trends, taking into account the progress observed during the previous

years or forecasting progress, based on reports and evaluations of national country plans or programmes.

- The important element of moving from data assessment SDG-by-SDG to an integrated analysis of progress on all SDGs is the **analysis of trade-offs, synergies, and spillover effects**.

A detailed step-by-step how-to guide can be found in Annex 3.

3. Moving from an SDG-by-SDG analysis to an integrated analysis of the progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The UN DESA Handbook emphasizes the need to present an analysis of the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It is, therefore, crucial to move beyond an SDG-by-SDG analysis in order to review and analyse the progress achieved in the transformation of the systems for FAO-agrifood systems.

The 2021 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2021) identifies six possible pathways towards agrifood systems transformation to address the major drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and the unaffordability of healthy diets:

- 1) integrating humanitarian, development and peacebuilding policies in conflict-affected areas
- 2) scaling up climate resilience across food systems
- 3) strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable to economic adversity
- 4) intervening along the food supply chain to lower the cost of nutritious foods
- 5) tracking poverty and structural inequalities, and ensuring that interventions are pro-poor and inclusive
- 6) strengthening food environments and changing consumer behaviour to promote dietary patterns with possible impacts on human health and the environment.

Based on the country context, a different set of pathways determines which driver or combination of drivers impacts most on the identified food system and on related food security and nutrition outcomes. Following the analysis of the trends of progress towards the SDGs, as well as the trade-offs and synergies, the pathways above can be used by FAO to guide **discussions with national partners on whether the data collected and analysed demonstrate progress towards a context-based set of transformative pathways**. Alternatively, FAO can present information about the transformative pathways to the national partners as a useful framework for undertaking this part of the analysis exercise.

Annex 3 presents how-to guidance for the process of structuring the discussion with the national partners on the progress towards these transformative pathways.

Analysis of the key areas under the FAO six transformative pathways will reveal the **level of policy coherence** or the lack thereof (for instance, when ambitious but divergent goals of agricultural production and environmental performance create more complex problems of policy incoherence). See Annex 3 for how to undertake a policy coherence analysis for agrifood systems and the SDGs.

This analysis will also help to discuss how the **leave-no-one-behind principle** is applied in the course of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Annex 3 provides the “how-to” for this step of analysis.

4. Moving from analysis towards follow-up action points and next steps

Based on discussion of the results of the analysis made of the use of transformative pathways, national stakeholders can look beyond that analysis towards identifying portfolios of policies, investments and legislation for food systems transformation, using the five steps below:

- ensure coherence with other systems: agrifood, environmental, health, social protection and others
- identify win-win opportunities
- identify actions to address drivers along alternative pathways (best practices)
- identify accelerators to support and speed up transformative processes

Identifying accelerators is key to ensuring that the country can leapfrog from the current rate of transformation towards an accelerated pathway to sustainable development by identifying and utilizing breakthrough points of acceleration.

The *2019 Global Sustainable Development Report* (UN, 2019) identified sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition as one of the six entry points towards sustainable development transformation. The forthcoming *2023 Global Sustainable Development Report* (UN, forthcoming) focuses on those tipping points at which current dominant unsustainable pathways can reach the point of breakdown, be phased out and replaced with emerging sustainable pathways. In addition, *The 2022 Future of Food and Agriculture – Drivers and Triggers for Transformation* (FAO, 2022) identified 18 drivers and triggers (see the diagram below). This conceptual framework can be used to analyse and discuss the drivers and triggers that will influence the agrifood systems in the country in the medium and long term.

The significance of this step in the analysis lies not in identifying precisely the tipping and breakdown points or the exact and exhaustive list of drivers but in reviewing and considering different options for the future and coming to a common understanding that current approaches to agrifood systems are not sustainable. Annex 4 provides detailed information about these steps.

Step 4. Drafting and submitting

1. Drafting the Main Messages and the full VNR document

If FAO is part of the VNR drafting team, the preparation of a narrative, based on strong evidence and data analysis, can be supported by FAO Country Offices through the preparation of an overall narrative of the country's status and progress on the SDG areas under FAO custodianship. For this exercise, the following tools can be useful:

- [FAO Country Profiles](#) can be a useful tool as they collect information from the entire FAO website and provide a fast and reliable way to access country-specific information with no need to search through individual databases and systems.
- A statistical progress assessment of SDGs is included in in [FAO's annual SDG Progress Report](#).
- [FAO Country profile tool](#) provides both SDG data and visualizations to support assessments of trends.
- Common Country Analyses and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
- FAO [Food Systems Assessments. Country Profiles](#).
- [Member States Dialogues](#) and National Pathways prepared for the Food Systems Summit.
- FAO [Country Gender Assessments](#).

Recognizing the challenges that individuals and institutions that oversee or conduct VNRs and SDG reporting are faced by in successfully communicating data messages, the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) prepared the [Practical Guide to Data Storytelling in Voluntary National Reviews](#) and SDG reporting, to help countries and national statistics offices to tell data stories more effectively for their audience. This practical guide is intended to help statisticians, data scientists, policy-makers, analysts, managers and communicators tell convincing data stories in VNRs and SDG reporting, with a focus on understanding the context and constructing the narrative. It contains examples drawn from VNRs and SDG reporting as well as other external sources.

2. Interventions in various sections of VNR draft

The following section presents the major sections of the VNR as proposed in the official UN DESA Handbook, with a focus on where and how FAO may contribute to the report. FAO can i) provide inputs for respective sections based on the following recommendations addressing each section, and ii) check the degree of inclusion of SDG data for indicators and other FAO contributions to the draft report circulated by the national VNR team.

1. Opening statement

2. Highlights

Offer salient points or case studies, if available, that could be emphasized to the international community, including key success and challenges where support is needed.

3. Introduction

Provide a brief description of the importance of agrifood systems transformations for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting the importance of building strong evidence to serve as the foundation of well-informed interventions towards the SDGs.

4. Methodology and process for preparation of the review

It is essential to emphasize the participatory approach in the preparation of the VNR, including focus on the vulnerable and the marginalized groups.

5. Policy and enabling environment

a. Creating ownership of SDGs and the VNRs

b. Incorporation of the SDGs in national frameworks

c. Integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions

This subsection is key to ensuring that agrifood systems are included as an example of how different dimensions of sustainable development are integrated and can be achieved coherently through agrifood systems transformation.

d. LNOB

Analysis of the key groups under risk of being left behind, the barriers that prevent their access to agrifood systems services and benefits, potential solutions and measures to be taken.

e. Institutional mechanisms

Analysis of existing institutional mechanisms to support or promote policy coherence in agrifood systems, which levers can be used to promote agrifood systems transformation, and so on.

f. Systemic issues and transformative actions

This subsection needs to include the results of the analysis of policies and mechanisms in place that present systemic challenges, as seen through the analysis of the transformative pathways towards sustainable agrifood systems. It can, similarly, help to use the critical drivers of agrifood systems and related trends as a lens for looking at structural issues, which define the state of agrifood systems, and negative externalities – such as labour exploitation, obesity, poverty and natural resource depletion – and how they are, or can be, accounted for.

6. Progress on Goals and targets and evaluation of policies and measures taken so far

This is the most important section with regard to the inclusion of inputs on SDG data and progress compiled through the VNR preparation exercise. Through the analysis and narrative prepared along the lines of the recommendations in the previous section, FAO can support the report's identification of trends, successes and challenges in SDG implementation, backed by evidence. It can also include

explanations of the SDG monitoring system, including gaps in data and areas where support is needed.

7. New and emerging challenges

This section can include the results of the analysis and discussion of current unsustainable versus emerging sustainable pathways, and the tipping and breaking points that indicate when to phase out current dominant unsustainable practices and accelerate the adoption of sustainable agrifood systems transformation.

8. Means of implementation

FAO Country Offices can provide information on the current status of financing, capacity-building and technology (digital agriculture, geospatial data, big data), gaps and opportunities of financing sources (public/private, domestic/international) and non-financing means of implementation, such as capacity development and data needs, technology and partnerships.

9. Conclusions and next steps

This section needs to include analysis of the next steps to be taken to ensure agrifood systems transformation that have emerged from the analysis and discussion of the trends of SDG implementation, the integrated analysis of pathways towards the sustainability of agrifood systems, the identification of portfolios of pathways and potential next steps.

10. Annexes

Ensure the inclusion of a statistical annex using the global SDG indicators and adding priority indicators identified at the regional and national levels where appropriate.

3. Preparation of the audiovisual files to support the presentation of the VNR at HLPF

It has become a widely accepted practice to prepare accompanying audio or visual files for the HLPF presentation of a VNR. Taking into account the length of the presentation, the tight schedule of the HLPF segment with the VNR and the significant number of reporting countries, audio and visual files help the presenting countries to transmit their key points to other Member Nations and the HFLP audience with greater clarity and a more powerful outcome.

The steps outlined above aim to provide a framework for thinking about the support that the national authorities and other partners may need in the process of VNR preparation. The practice of VNR preparation shows that there is never enough time to provide good quality inputs and materials unless they are already available or their preparation has been initiated before. It is, therefore, crucial for the FAO Country Office to start with a strategic planning of what is already available and can be provided as support (materials, resources, financing and expertise) and of what needs to be produced to be ready to respond to last-minute requests for support.

While 2023 HLPF will not review SDG 2 in detail, FAO can still ensure that the lens of agrifood systems transformation is applied **throughout the process of analysing the progress towards SDG 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17**. Annex 5 provides additional information about how FAO can engage in the in-depth analysis of the five SDGs for review in 2023.

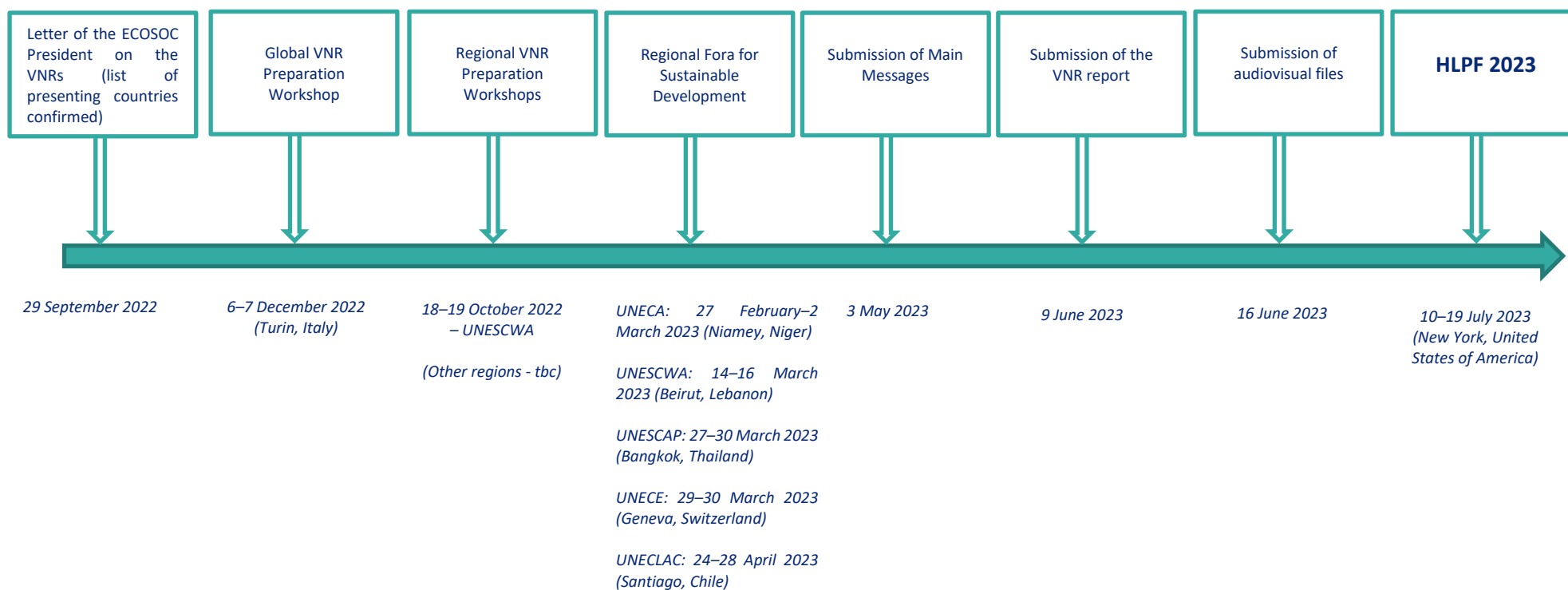
Active support to and engagement in the VNR preparation process presents opportunities for FAO to further share its expertise and knowledge with its Member Nations and to contribute to wider global efforts to support the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda implementation.

Timeline

Useful dates to keep in mind

Figure 1: Timeline of the VNR preparation

HLPF 2023 “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”



VNR stages and FAO Country Office engagement

Figure 2: Stages of the VNR preparation and FAO Country Office Engagement

	National VNR team activities	FAO Country Office engagement in VNR preparation
Initial Preparation (October – November/ December)	Establish national VNR team Estimate and identify resources required Consider scope of review Develop workplan	Designate FAO VNR focal point Contact national VNR team and/or UNCT’s VNR team to identify the national workplan and timeline Identify key FAO stakeholders (key groups or networks) that need to be consulted Identify the resources that will be needed for the process Prepare a country assessment of progress on SDGs in areas under FAO’s mandate using resources in the guidelines for this purpose
Stakeholder Engagement (December – January/ February)	Contact relevant government departments and agencies Develop a stakeholder engagement plan Establish awareness-raising and public outreach component Make targeted efforts to reach marginalized groups	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;"> Nature of government plan determines FAO intervention </div> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> </div> <div style="font-size: small; color: green;"> <i>Supplement the FAO assessment based on resources available and CO experience with inputs from stakeholders prior to consultation with national VNR team</i> </div> </div> Offer support in preparing evidence-based narrative on the progress and challenges faced towards achieving the 2030 Agenda in areas under FAO’s mandate – <u>determine deadline for submission of content</u>
Assessment and Analysis (March – May)	Review and incorporate material received, including data, other reports and previous VNRs Prepare zero draft Submit Main Messages and Report	Prepare FAO’s input to VNR, using available data sources, results of stakeholder consultations, discussions with government team and submit it <u>before</u> or early in the process (as per agreed deadline) of report drafting by the national VNR team Review the zero draft to ensure accuracy of data, inclusion of at least the available SDG indicators, statistical annex
Drafting and Submitting (May – July+)	Prepare audiovisual materials for the VNR presentations	Provide AV support (such as videos on projects, human interest stories) to transmit key messages

Annex 1

Step 1. Initial preparation

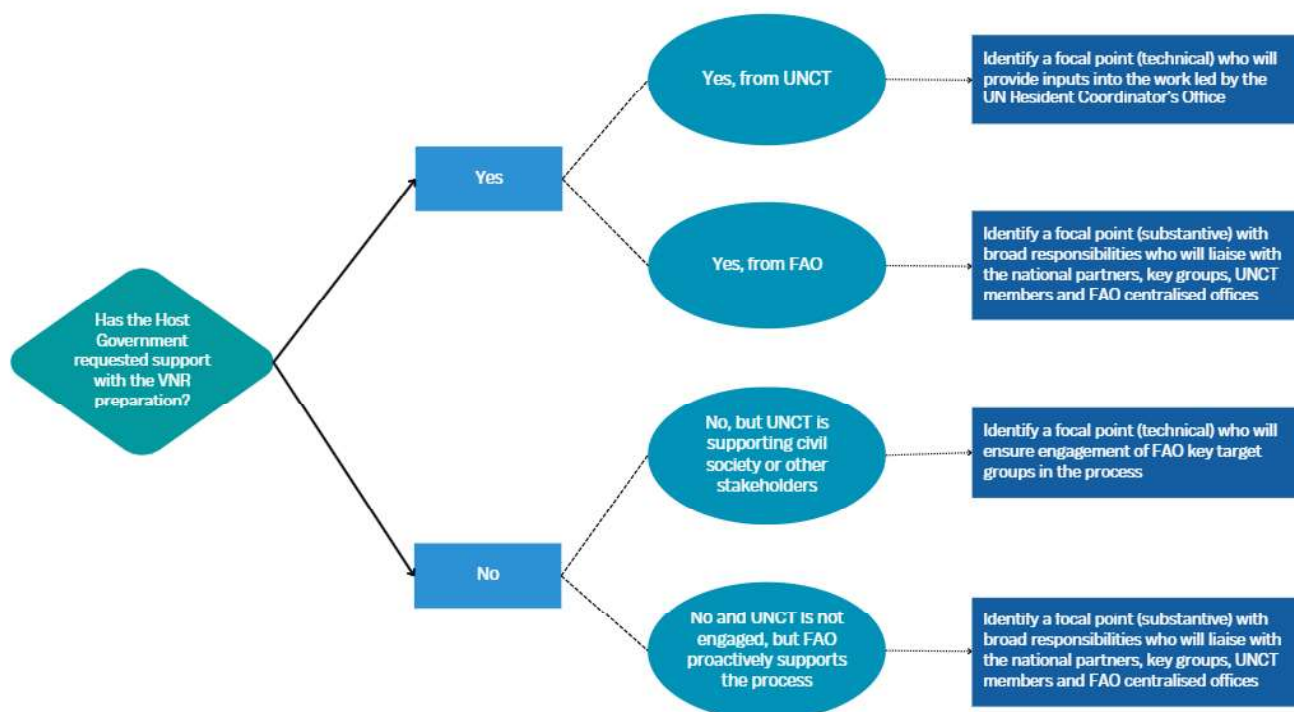
The main objectives of the preparatory stage are:

- to designate a focal point who will lead and support the process from the FAO side
- to identify key FAO stakeholders (key groups or networks) that need to be involved in the preparation process
- to identify the resources that will be needed for the process
- to define a communications strategy to inform the wider public about the VNR preparation process

1. Designate a focal point who will lead and support the process from the FAO side

The FAO Country Office (CO) will need to appoint a focal point or a team to lead and support the process of VNR preparation from the FAO side. The responsibilities and options for opting for a focal point will depend on the country context and decisions of national authorities. Below are some options to consider:

Figure A1.1: Deciding on the VNR focal point



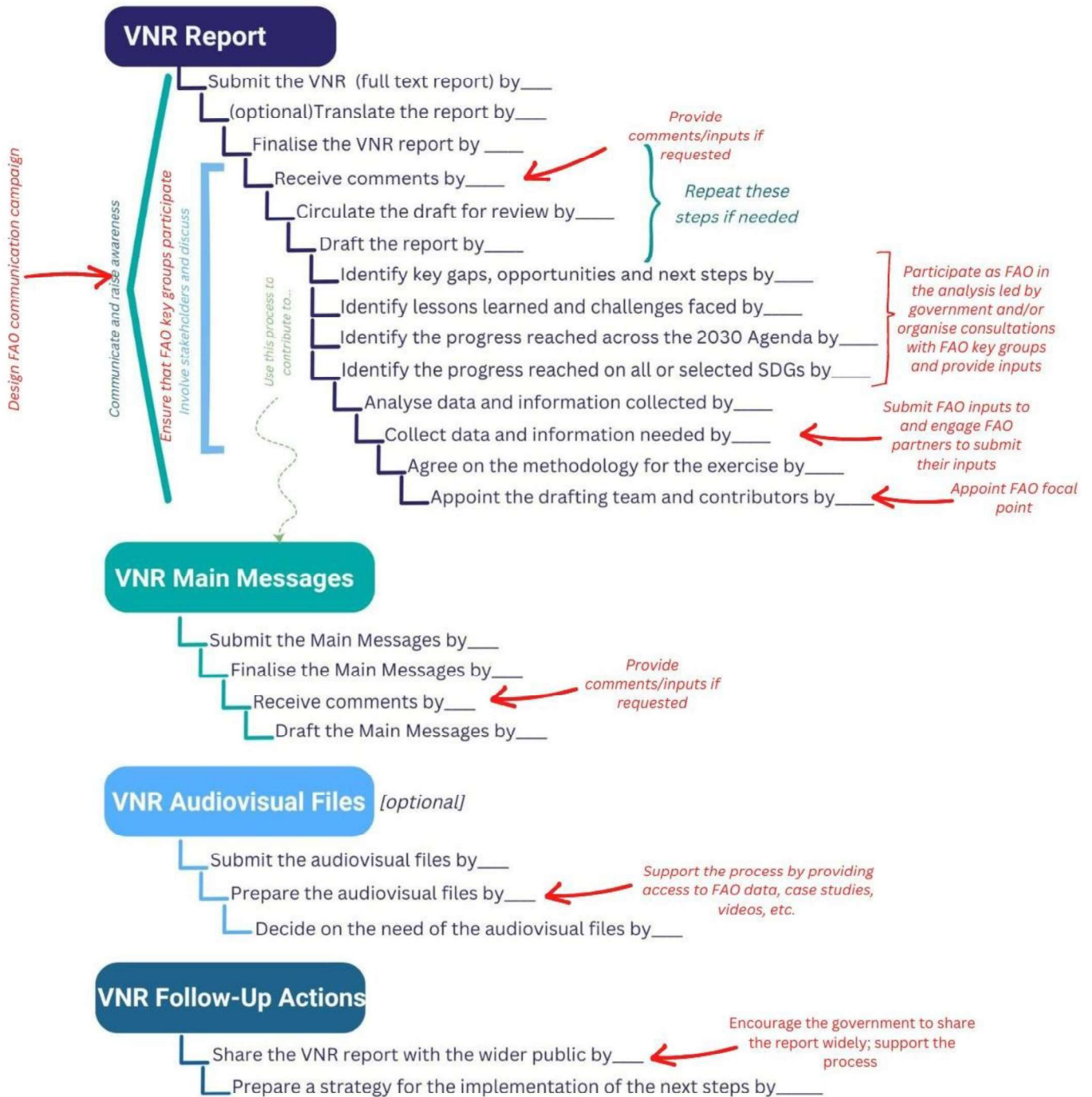
Source: Authors' own elaboration

The final decision as to whether the focal point or a team should lead the process will ultimately depend on the country context and the extent to which the national authorities play an active role. If a standard Terms of Reference for the VNR focal point is required, contact the FAO Office of Sustainable Development Goals.

The focal point will need to understand the VNR preparation process step-by-step (see a sample graph below) and ensure that the FAO Country Office is aware of the key deadlines to keep in mind.

Figure A1.2: Identifying the stages where FAO can actively participate to support the VNR process

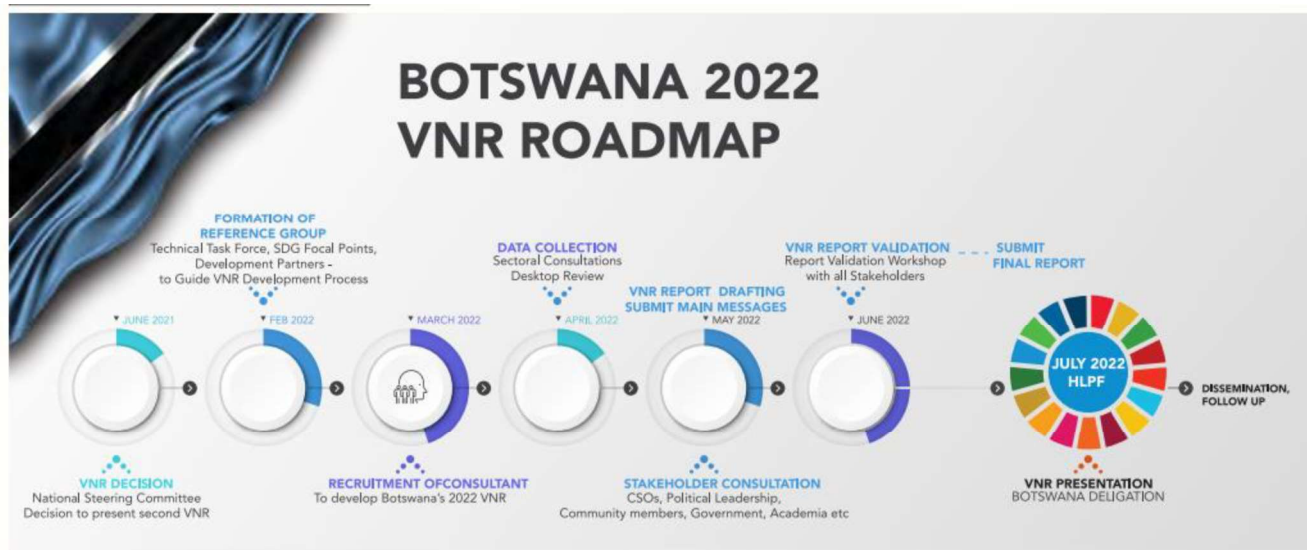
VNR Preparation Process (sample)



Source: Authors' own elaboration

This sample VNR preparation plan can be customized to the country’s needs and be based on the context in which the FAO Country Office finds itself. Below is an example from Botswana with the key steps in the preparation of the VNR, including the dates of recruitment of consultants, stakeholder consultations, report validation, etc.

Figure A1.3: Botswana’s 2022 VNR Roadmap



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It is recommended that the FAO Country Office request that the RC (through the RCO) share the government’s roadmap if available and that it build its own roadmap when inputs, data, etc. need to be provided.

2. Identify key FAO stakeholders (key groups or networks) that need to be involved in the preparation process

As indicated in the Guidance note, the key for FAO is to ensure that FAO target groups and constituents are aware of the VNR preparation process, are able and willing to participate in it and contribute to it, and are committed to joining the follow-up actions to ensure continuity of the process. This means that FAO COs need to be aware of the stakeholder engagement plan of the national authorities and, if the latter does not exist or is not publicly circulated, have their own stakeholder engagement plan. At the preparation stage, it is important to identify stakeholders that are key to ensuring the participatory approach of the process. This can be done through the mapping of key stakeholders.

Box A1 below contains a sample list of questions to ask in order to identify key actors and partners relevant for the VNR preparation process:

Box A1.1: Identifying key actors and partners

- *Who are the stakeholders that are now (or have been in previous years) involved in the different aspects and dimensions of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs within the area of agrifood systems?*
 - *Which are the national authorities involved in the process (within the area of agrifood systems?)*
 - *Which local authorities are contributing to the VNR preparation?*
 - *Who are the key actors from academic, think tanks and other research institutions in the area of agrifood systems?*
 - *Which are the key civil society organizations working with the 2030 Agenda implementation and agrifood systems?*
 - *Who are the main actors along the production-collection-consumption-waste management chain?*
 - *Which are the main donors/bi- and multilateral partners involved in the process (within the area of agrifood systems?)*
- *What is the mandate/mission of this organization in relation to the 2030 Agenda and the food system? What is its main area of operation? Its main target groups?*
- *What is its actual involvement with the 2030 Agenda implementation, follow-up and review through the lens of the agrifood systems?*
 - *What are the past, ongoing and planned activities in this field?*
 - *Does it collect data of any kind with regard to the SDG indicators?*
 - *Does it provide its own assessment or analysis of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?*
- *What are the existing formal and informal relations and networks between the different stakeholders?*
- *Has it been involved in the previous cycles of VNR preparation?*
- *Has it been actively involved in the government-led (at national or local level) process of SDG implementation?*
- *How active is (or can be) its role in promoting and catalysing agrifood systems transformation for sustainable development and in follow-up action after the HLPF?*

The list of questions above is not final and can be modified with questions that are relevant for a specific country context. Following the initial research, a template of an organizational profile can be filled in to facilitate information-gathering about the stakeholders:

Box A1.2: A sample organisation profile

Organization name		
Level of engagement (national, local, etc.)		
Type of organization (e.g. Ministry, CSO, think tank, farmers association, etc.)		
Mandate/mission of the organization		
Target audience/group		
	Past, ongoing, planned activities	
	Data collection work	

Involvement with the 2030 Agenda through the lens of the agrifood systems	Assessment/analysis/review of the implementation
SDGs (including targets and indicators) to which the organization contributes	
Member of formal or informal networks of stakeholders	
Involved in previous VNR preparation? If yes, in what capacity?	
Interested to take part in the follow-up action and review	

Additional information may be collected based on the country context and the set-up suggested by the national authorities.

FAO can promote and support peer-to-peer dialogue with other countries developing VNRs. FAO Country Offices can suggest countries with FAO presence and facilitate such dialogues for the mutual benefit of two or more countries (with the support of FAO Offices and UNCTs). For example, when developing its VNR, Denmark established contact with the governments of Norway and Kenya to initiate collaboration and dialogue regarding the preparation and content of the report. The aim was to exchange experiences and provide an opportunity for comments and recommendations on each other's reports. See how the VNR of Denmark presented the results of this process below:

Figure A1.4: Denmark's VNR presenting comments and recommendations to its VNR from Norway and Kenya

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4.3 Main Messages from the Peer Dialogue

In pursuit of the goal of an open and inclusive follow-up process, the Danish Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark established contact with the Norwegian Government and initiated a collaboration and dialogue regarding the preparation and content of the report. The aim here was to exchange experiences and provide an opportunity for comments and recommendations on each other's reports, thus illuminating strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately improving the quality of both countries' reports. Furthermore, contact was established with the Kenyan Government, who presented a VNR in 2020 and expressed interest in reading and commenting on the first draft of the Danish VNR.

The main messages from the dialogue are presented below. Denmark greatly appreciates the comments and valuable recommendations on future work.

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Kenya's main messages to Denmark

- First, we thank the Government of Denmark for the honour bestowed on the Government of Kenya together with Norway to review their 2021 Voluntary National Review. We consider this process important as it provides an opportunity for the members states to share experiences and also for mutual learning which is critical in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- We congratulate the Government of Denmark and the technical staff for the comprehensive VNR document.
- Denmark is perceived a good performer in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and is placed at top positions in several SDGs ranking. This could be attributed to the high level of SDGs awareness where according to the VNR, 3 out of 4 Danes (75%) are aware or heard about SDGs. The SDGs awareness is critical for their implementation as it creates genuine ownership and support. It is recommended that the VNR include an analysis of what Denmark government has done to achieve this high level of awareness within a very short time where the awareness level has increased from 16% in 2017 to 75% in 2020. This would be a good practice to be replicated by other member states. The civil society has done a commendable job in awareness raising as outlined in the report and which other civil societies internationally can benefit from.
- The Government of Denmark has a strong commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda which is evidenced by the National Action Plan for the implementation of the SDGs. This action plan is a strong instrument to strengthen coordination of all the stakeholders in SDGs process. We consider this a good practice as the Agenda puts more emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnership. It is recommended that an elaboration of its preparatory process which is important for ownership, how this action plan is aligned to the mandates of the ministries and how it is monitored to ensure stakeholders adhere to its implementation be included in the report. It is also important to show how it is linked to the finance bill and budget negotiations to ensure adequate funding.
- Denmark has a long history of sustainable development. The integration of sustainable development into Denmark's annual finance act and budget negotiations is something worth emulating by the international community as a good practice. This is in line with the 2030 Agenda which emphasises on domestic resource mobilization to implement the Agenda.
- The Government is committed to working with other stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs. Specifically, the implementation of the SDGs has benefited from close working relationship with Danish parliament. This is well reflected in the different structures that have been put in place to advance this course. Owing to the critical role of parliament in advancing the SDGs through financing and legislative functions, the VNR could benefit more from highlighting the level of interaction between this parliamentary engagement on SDGs and the Government specifically the Ministry of Finance which is the SDGs Coordinating entity in Denmark.
- The approach of capturing in the VNR how the private sector, civil society, parliament, academic institutions, municipalities and regions integrate the SDGs into their core strategies is a clear indication that the Government is willing to let the voices of other stakeholders be heard which is quite commendable. Owing to the many stakeholders working on SDGs, the VNR could give a detailed description on how these stakeholders were identified, the methodology used by the Government in engaging these stakeholders both in the implementation and the review process.

20 VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2021

Norway's main messages to Denmark

Norway is grateful to be given the opportunity to collaborate with Denmark throughout the VNR-process resulting in this peer review. Denmark has provided Norway with excellent support in the preparation of the VNR-report, and we highly appreciate the insight and experience that has been shared in the process.

The following comments are based on the first draft of Denmark's VNR-report.

- Denmark's second VNR is logically structured in accordance with the VNR-handbook. This provides the reader with a good structure for reading the report and enables them to easily navigate to the topics they are most interested in.
- The report provides a comprehensive overview of how Denmark works towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, and how far the country has progressed since the first VNR-report.
- Norway is impressed by how the Danish society as a whole works together to ensure progress on the SDGs. In particular, it is interesting to read about how the 2030 panel and the Expert Councils had a positive effect on implementing the 2030 Agenda.
- Denmark has successfully integrated views and recommendations from civil society, business organisations and other stakeholders in the report. This provides valuable knowledge and a more in-depth perspective on how Denmark works towards the SDGs.
- Engagement with stakeholders is key to a meaningful VNR-process, and Denmark demonstrates that it is prioritised, especially by including the assessment of the progress on each goal from civil society.
- Norway welcomes how Denmark included how much local and regional governments contribute to the SDGs, and we would take the opportunity to congratulate the municipality of Gladsaxe with the completion of their first Voluntary Local Review.
- Denmark includes a chapter on Leaving no one behind (LNOB) which provides the reader with an informative overview of Danish policies. The list of policy initiatives clearly shows that LNOB is a priority in the country's work towards the 2030 Agenda. Norway would however for the next VNR recommend that the digital aspect of LNOB is also addressed.
- The chapter on the recovery after COVID-19 is thorough and it is interesting to read how the recovery plan is connected to achieving the SDGs. This is something everyone should consider. Norway recommends expanding this part in Denmark's next VNR in order for lessons learned and best practice to be shared further.

Norway would like to thank Denmark for being an excellent partner in the VNR-process and to send our congratulations for delivering an inclusive and thorough VNR-report.

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Box 4.1

3. Identify the resources that will be needed for the VNR preparation process

It is important for the FAO CO to know the needs of the national stakeholders, the existing financial gaps and the resource available to FAO and/or within the UN system to support any of these stages.

With regard to the travel of national partners to global and regional VNR preparation workshops, the travel costs of at least one representative are covered by UN DESA in the case of the global workshops and by the Regional Commissions in the case of the regional workshops. Another important avenue for support is the organization of national- and/or local-level consultations with stakeholders. FAO Country Offices are encouraged to actively engage with the national partners to identify and promote the need for national- and local-level consultations for VNR preparation and to support such consultations and meetings in various ways: providing premises for the consultations, providing expertise and sharing lessons learned, and so on. Consultations and meetings are key to investment for FAO as they are the avenues for future VNR follow-up action. The preparation of the Main Messages and VNR document can be supported by contributing a share to the UNCT resources and supporting the preparation of audiovisual materials for the presentation at the HLPF with the available video or audio resources produced by FAO, or by providing access to the repository of video and/or audio files available to FAO CO.

Below is a short checklist to help FAO Country Offices to plan their support for this aspect of VNR preparation:

Box A1.3: Identifying the resources needed for the VNR preparation process

- *Are the national partners' needs for resources for the VNR preparation known? What are the gaps in these needs?*
- *Are the national- and local-level consultations and meetings with stakeholders planned? Can FAO provide support to those that have been already announced? Can FAO CO experts contribute their expertise and knowledge to these meetings and workshops? Can FAO CO facilitate the participation of its counterparts in these meetings and consultations?*
- *Are the resources needed for the preparation of the Main Messages and the VNR document known? How can FAO support the drafting, editing, translation and production of these documents?*
- *Is the UNCT actively involved in proving support to cover the gaps identified in the resources for the preparation process? Will co-financing some of the activities with the UNCTs multiply the impact of UN support?*

When in doubt as to how else FAO Country Offices can support their national partners with regard to the gaps in available resources, FAO Representatives are encouraged to contact FAO Regional Offices as well as centralized offices (Office of Sustainable Development Goals).

4. Prepare a communications campaign to inform the wider public about the VNR preparation process

The main objectives of the communication campaign are to:

- raise the awareness of FAO stakeholders and the general public on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the follow-up and review process;

- inform FAO stakeholders and the general public of the importance of agrifood systems transformation in accelerating the achievement of multiple SDGs;
- share FAO recommendations and latest publications about the role of agrifood systems transformation in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- communicate the role played by FAO in supporting the government and other partners to carry out VNR preparation;
- raise awareness with regard to the need for the participatory preparation process.

The communication campaign for the VNR preparation process can be centred on the following questions:

- *What is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs?*
- *What is a Voluntary National Review? Why should the VNR preparation process be participatory?*
- *What is the role of FAO in supporting VNR preparation?*
- *How can agrifood systems transformation be used as a lever to accelerate the achievement of multiple SDGs?*
- *What are the latest data, recommendations and analysis with regard to agrifood systems transformation (based on FAO flagship or regional and country publications)?*

In order to develop a communications campaign (or support its development for the FAO Country Office), it is important to define:

- the target audience(s): urban or rural population, level of education, level of digital literacy and digital residency;
- most accessible communication channels available to reach the target audience(s): television, radio, messages (SMS), social media (and the exact type of social media: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.), and so
- duration of the communication campaign and frequency of communication.

It is recommended also to identify famous personalities or trusted persons for different groups who can communicate the messages in a way to which the target audience can relate.

Innovative communication approaches and the engagement of young people in the design of the communication campaign is highly recommended: for instance, engaging students of higher educational establishment through competitions for the best short video or poster about the 2030 Agenda and the importance of the review process; engaging movie theatres in showing short videos about the 2030 Agenda and the importance of the review process before the scheduled movies; and organizing lessons for schoolchildren about the 2030 Agenda and the importance of the review process.

FAO Country Offices are encouraged to have a set of key messages that could be used either in the FAO-led communications campaign or that can be incorporated into UNCT-led, government-led or civil society-led communication campaigns about the 2030 Agenda and the importance of the follow-up and review process.

If completed in full, this preparatory step will result in:

- a focal point that will lead and support the process from the FAO side;
- a roadmap for the VNR preparation with key phases of the process and their deadlines;
- a mapping of key FAO stakeholders (with their profiles) to be involved in the process;
- a list of resources that may be needed for the preparation of the VNR;
- a communications campaign to inform the wider public about the VNR preparation process.

Annex 2

Step 2. Stakeholder engagement

While most of the countries that have presented their VNRs have sought to make the preparation (and sometimes even the presentation) of the VNRs participatory, there is still a need – as attested by the analysis of the UN Committee on Development Policy (UN, 2022) – to both promote and support the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement is the primary responsibility of the national government leading VNR preparation. It should take place throughout the entire VNR preparation process.

For FAO, it is essential to promote the participatory engagement of its partners from different sectors (who are, ideally, themselves members of different networks to ensure the further circulation of information and collection of inputs) in a way that will help the stakeholders to understand the process and their role in it, decide on the preparation of their inputs and facilitate their engagement throughout the entire preparation process, including after the VNR presentation, to ensure the dissemination of the VNR report and action on the agreed-on next steps.

The questions below can guide FAO Country Offices in their work with the stakeholders.

Box A2.1: Developing a stakeholder engagement strategy

- *Have the national authorities announced a call for open engagement with different target groups and stakeholders? If so, can FAO further disseminate information to its national and local stakeholders and networks of partners?*
- *If there is no generic stakeholder engagement plan, does FAO CO have its own strategy on how to promote and facilitate stakeholder engagement?*
- *Has FAO Country Office been requested by any of its stakeholders to facilitate their engagement in the VNR preparation process?*
- *Can FAO CO support the capacity building of the national and local stakeholders to ensure that they can contribute to the VNR preparation process and provide high quality inputs into the VNR?*
- *Does FAO CO have a strategy for a longer-term engagement of the national and local stakeholders to ensure their active contribution to the post-VNR follow-up action?*

Usually, the process of effective multistakeholder engagement for the VNR includes three main steps:

1. Initiation of the process

The purpose of the first step is to clarify the objectives of the engagement, the main milestones in the consultation process, and the process of sharing information and inputs throughout the process.

If FAO is requested to lead the engagement process with the stakeholders from the agrifood sector or to advise the government, the initial discussions should take place within the established communities or groups of

partners: civil society organizations, think tanks, the farmers, youth groups, and others. This will help to target the messages and adjust the language, as well as highlighting the elements of the process that are important for different stakeholders. It can be done by initiating “platforms” for discussions (for example, CSO platforms, think tanks and research institution platforms, youth group platforms, and so on). When creating these platforms, it is important to think: Who are the key stakeholders? What are their interests, fears, expectations, issues and power relationships? What politics are involved?

During the initial stage, it is essential to build a shared understanding of the process with regard to:

- What is the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs?
- Why is the review and follow-up process important?
- How will the Voluntary National Review be prepared? What are the main steps?
- What are the roles of different groups?
- Who are the coordinators and facilitators of the process?
- How will different intermediary results be communicated and how can feedback be provided?

2. Build sustainable collaboration and participation

During the next stage, it is important to build sustainable collaboration and participation. It is recommended that there be at least four distinct discussions:

- **Discussion over progress towards the SDG goals and targets:** this discussion can happen in the mixed groups of stakeholders (CSOs, the private sector, academia, etc.). This step needs to ensure that everyone is presented with the same data and conclusions of the analysis, and be informed as to whether there is positive, negative or no trend with regard to the SDG achievement. *This is to ensure the shared understanding of the data and the factual situation.*
- **Analysis of synergies and trade-offs and policy coherence.** This discussion need to happen first in platforms by the key groups. This will allow the facilitators to capture interests, values and diverging approaches to what is seen as a trade-off and synergy or minimal spillover. *It is important to identify and reveal these differences and identify strategies to overcome them during the subsequent meetings.*
- **Joint discussion of the analysis of synergies and trade-offs, and policy coherence.** During this step, the participants of different platforms will come together and will present and discuss what they consider to be a positive or negative interaction between the goals and how these interactions play out in the national context. Discussion facilitators need to be aware of the conflicting interests, biases and mutually reinforcing beliefs. *It is important during this stage to level down the playing field and ensure that a capture risk by one or more groups is identified and mitigated.*
- **Discussion over the next steps to transform agrifood systems.** This discussion can happen in the mixed groups and will build on the results of the previous discussion. This step will help to ensure that the stakeholders have a shared understanding of what changes need to take place in the future and who will play what role in the process.

For FAO it is essential to ensure that consultations and decision-making processes are inclusive and participatory, that trust is built by sharing each other’s values, concerns and interests, and that outcomes are communicated regularly to all stakeholders, including to those who cannot participate in person.

3. Manage collaboration

Sustaining collaboration requires detailed and concrete action plans and the capacities needed to establish a working mechanism. While in-person meetings and discussions are recommended, it is also important to think about a mechanism of capturing the process online and allowing the participation and contribution of the wider public in the process.

In this respect, FAO can support the creation of a dedicated online space to support the discussions between the set meetings, and to store information and relevant documentation for the participants and wider public to access throughout the entire process.

FAO can also encourage different groups to develop their own assessments of the level of implementation of the SDGs and to share them as inputs in the VNR preparation process, allowing them to be used as stand-alone spotlight reports on SDGs progress (see the example of the VNR in Denmark, which includes a civil society assessment of the progress made on each goal alongside the government’s assessment).

Figure A2.1: Denmark’s VNR presenting civil society’s assessments of the progress towards the SDGs



The figure below presents these steps visually:

Figure A2.2: Sample stakeholder engagement plan

Stage 1. Initiate collaboration		November – beginning of February								
<p>Objective 1: Clarify the objectives, the main milestones in the consultation process</p> <p>Note: this discussion needs to happen in separate platforms by groups (below are the groups that are relevant for FAO for agrifood systems discussions and are not exclusive [the entire VNR process may have other groups])</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Civil society organizations</td> <td>The private sector (production, etc.)</td> <td>National authorities</td> <td>Local authorities</td> <td>Youth groups</td> <td>Think tanks and research institutions</td> <td>Other relevant groups</td> </tr> </table>			Civil society organizations	The private sector (production, etc.)	National authorities	Local authorities	Youth groups	Think tanks and research institutions	Other relevant groups	
Civil society organizations	The private sector (production, etc.)	National authorities	Local authorities	Youth groups	Think tanks and research institutions	Other relevant groups				
Stage 3. Manage collaboration	Stage 2. Build collaboration		February – through April							
	<p>Objective 2: Discuss the progress towards SDGs (goals and targets)</p> <p>Note: this discussion can happen with regard to all SDGs if the country has decided to review all of them or only those that are more directly linked to agrifood systems or only the ones under the detailed review</p> <p>This needs to be a joint discussion to ensure that everyone is presented with the same data and the same conclusions as to the positive, negative or no trend reached.</p>									
	<p>Objective 3: Analyse synergies and trade-offs and policy coherence</p> <p>Note: this discussion can first happen in platforms by the key groups to allow the facilitators to capture interests, values and diverging approaches to what is seen as a trade-off and a synergy</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Civil society organizations</td> <td>The private sector (production, etc.)</td> <td>National authorities</td> <td>Local authorities</td> <td>Youth groups</td> <td>Think tanks and research institutions</td> <td>Other relevant groups</td> </tr> </table>			Civil society organizations	The private sector (production, etc.)	National authorities	Local authorities	Youth groups	Think tanks and research institutions	Other relevant groups
	Civil society organizations	The private sector (production, etc.)		National authorities	Local authorities	Youth groups	Think tanks and research institutions	Other relevant groups		
	<p>Objective 4: Jointly discuss the analysis of synergies and trade-offs and policy coherence</p> <p>Note: this discussion can take place in a joint format and be carried out right after the previous analysis in a sequence</p> <p>This needs to be a joint session to ensure that participants discuss what they consider to be a positive or negative interaction between the goals and how these interactions play out in the national context.</p>									
<p>Objective 5: Jointly discuss the next steps to transform agrifood systems to achieve the SDGs</p> <p>Note: This can be a joint discussion to build on the results of the previous sessions.</p> <p>This session will help ensure that the stakeholders have a shared understanding of what changes need to take place in the future and of who will play what role in the process.</p>										

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Designing and leading an effective multistakeholder engagement process for the VNR preparation requires effort and capacities from both the national authorities and the international partners. However, if done properly, the benefits of multistakeholder engagement will lead to:

- **Relevance:** Local stakeholders best understand which activities are truly relevant to their needs and are realistic in a specific context.
- **Ownership and sustainability:** Local stakeholders share information and jointly decide what actions to take. This leads to greater local ownership of activities and outcomes – which makes them more sustainable.
- **Builds partnerships and alliances:** Having a common goal strengthens partnerships and creates opportunities for dialogue and sharing resources.

Annex 3

Step 3. Assessment and analysis

FAO has extensive expertise, capacities, knowledge, information and data at country, regional and global level that can be made available to the national partners. All these are key to an effective preparation for the VNR. Moreover, when these are coupled with the capacities of other partners (think tanks, academia, target groups, civil society and others), they can have a profound impact on the quality of the VNR.

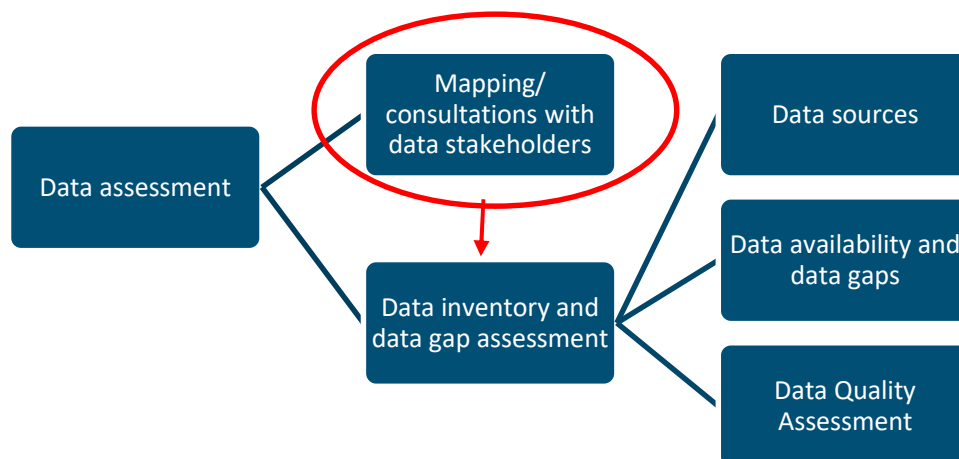
1. Data collection and processing

VNRs provide a snapshot of the progress made by countries on reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, and are essential for sharing experiences and lessons learned in the process of global and national SDG reporting.

To be as comprehensive and informative as possible, it is necessary that they be grounded in a strong evidence base, and that all available and reliable data be utilized. While data availability is an important challenge, another problem is often the under-utilization of the available data resources. FAO publishes a vast array of reliable country-level data, for SDG indicators and beyond. However, past experience shows that such data, even when available, are not included in the VNR report itself.

During the initial step, it is important for FAO to have a special arrangement with the national data collection and analysis team to ensure that data inventory and gap assessment can take place at the outset of the preparation process. This aspect consists of the series of steps described in the figure below. Being prepared with an FAO data mapping exercise and narrative to support the drafting of the report during the stakeholder's engagement would feed directly into the government's data assessment.

Figure A3.1: VNR data team's engagement with external stakeholders



Source: Authors' own elaboration

Pulling together all available data

- First, check availability of **SDG data on the [UN global database](#)**: This is a repository of all SDG data and metadata for all available indicators, updated quarterly.
- **Previous VNRs**: As most countries have prepared at least one [VNR report](#) at this point, these reports should be examined to assess the quality of data used, using previous reporting as a baseline to assess trends over time. A review of previous available VNRs can be an essential component of the feedback that FAO can provide for the country team preparing the current report.
- **Statistical progress assessment**: FAO produces an annual [report](#) tracking progress on food and agriculture-related SDG indicators. This report consists of a statistical annex with all country, regional and global data referenced, as well as a statistical progress assessment of the trends and status of SDG achievement (global, regional or national, based on data availability). These results can be included in the statistical annex of the VNR report, and in the section on Progress on Goals and Targets.
- **National SDG dashboard/tracker**: Since these digital tools are often a highlight of the VNR report, check for use of all available SDG data, the inclusion of national focal points and the availability of metadata for any complementary national indicators. The list of data resources shared in the package contains links to various regional SDG platforms that contain country profiles, data portals and other region-specific information.
- **National strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS)**: If the country has an NSDS, it should be analysed with respect to its focus on activities that fall under FAO's thematic areas (plans to conduct agricultural census, livestock census, agricultural surveys etc. and plans to strengthen data collection or analysis capacity in the country).
- **FAO Statistical Capacity Assessment 2019**: If the country participated in the [FAO Statistical Capacity Assessment](#) exercise, the FAO Country Office can compare the stated plans with the actual status of SDG reporting, whether planned activities (census, surveys) were conducted, and if not, why.
- **National SDG indicator frameworks**: In the process of adopting SDGs locally, countries often prepare a National Indicator Framework, prioritizing the targets and indicators deemed important in the national context. However, it is important to ensure that these indicators are aligned in their methodology with the global SDG indicators, and that any additional indicators are recognized as complementary, and not as substitutes of global indicators. Furthermore, it is essential that metadata for any new indicators be available to ensure transparency.
- Locate sources of non-official data (see the box below) that can be reviewed and incorporated in VNR to help fill gaps.
- UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) guide the entire programme cycle of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda, while [Common Country Analyses \(CCAs\)](#) constitute the basis of UNSDCF formulation. As CCAs draw from and add to existing data, statistics, analyses, reviews, research, capacities and resources from within and outside the UN system and are updated periodically, these documents can enrich the country analysis of the VNR exercise.

Box A3.1: Non-traditional data sources:

- citizen science for SDG monitoring;
- real-time data collection for different types of crime capture and prevention;
- innovative use of social media for SDG monitoring;
- integrated database of the bottom 40% of the population – for poverty alleviation acceleration;
- data from international NGOs, e.g. Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index;
- data from civil society organizations, academia and other stakeholders;
- private-sector data e.g. statistics in company sustainability reports; and
- Big Data – large scale process-collected data from different sources (social media platforms, cell phone data – citizen-generated or from cell phone companies), satellite or sensor collected data, e.g., geospatial data, earth observation data, smart-meter data

The United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) has developed a [Practical guide](#) to help countries to produce evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). The guide is designed as a hands-on resource to help governments to better use data and statistics when preparing their VNRs.

For FAO Country Offices it is critically important to undertake a stock-taking exercise with regard to what data and information are available in order to undertake the assessment or to discover whether any similar assessments have been undertaken in the recent past and how an analysis of the state of these drivers can be carried out (or was carried out). Disseminating any available assessments or analysis prior to discussions can facilitate the effectiveness of such dialogues to move beyond assessment and analysis to reflection and a joint understanding of the drivers and the transformative change that needs to happen.

2. Assessment and analysis

Using the above (as available) data sources, the next step is to conduct an assessment and analysis of where a country stands with regard to the implementation of the SDGs and their targets.

While the report format will influence what data are used and how, for example, coverage by key themes, or by Goals and targets, FAO can support the process with some fundamental analysis of key data. A brief assessment of progress since the onset of the 2030 Agenda or a previous VNR, and identification of the challenges to SDG monitoring and reporting can be prepared for sharing with the VNR team during stakeholder consultations.

Below are the suggested steps to follow, with some examples:

- **Assessment** is a process of identifying where the country currently stands with regard to specific SDG indicators (global or national, whichever the national authorities are using) in absolute numbers. See an example from the VNR of Argentina, assessing how the indicators changed from 2016 until 2021 (the year reported was 2022).

Figure A3.4: Assessment of progress towards SDG 2

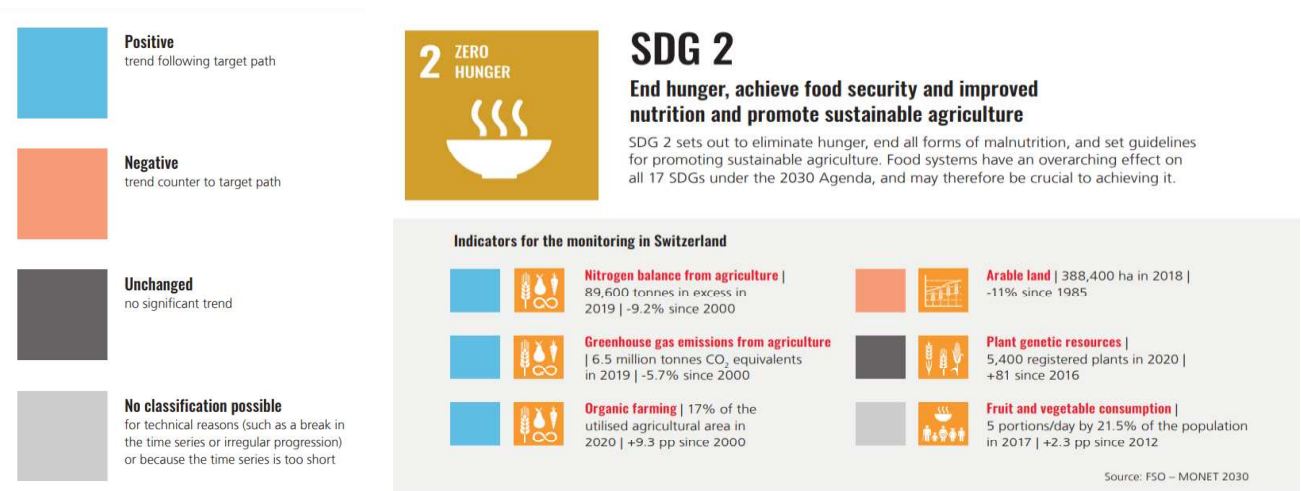


Source: [2021 Voluntary National Review of Antigua and Barbuda](#)

- **Analysis** needs to put the numbers in perspective by **comparing them with the baseline** or the year when the previous assessment was undertaken and by **indicating whether there is a positive or a negative trend, no change** or whether the indicator is impossible to measure.

In the example below a simple colour coding is using to demonstrate the trends.

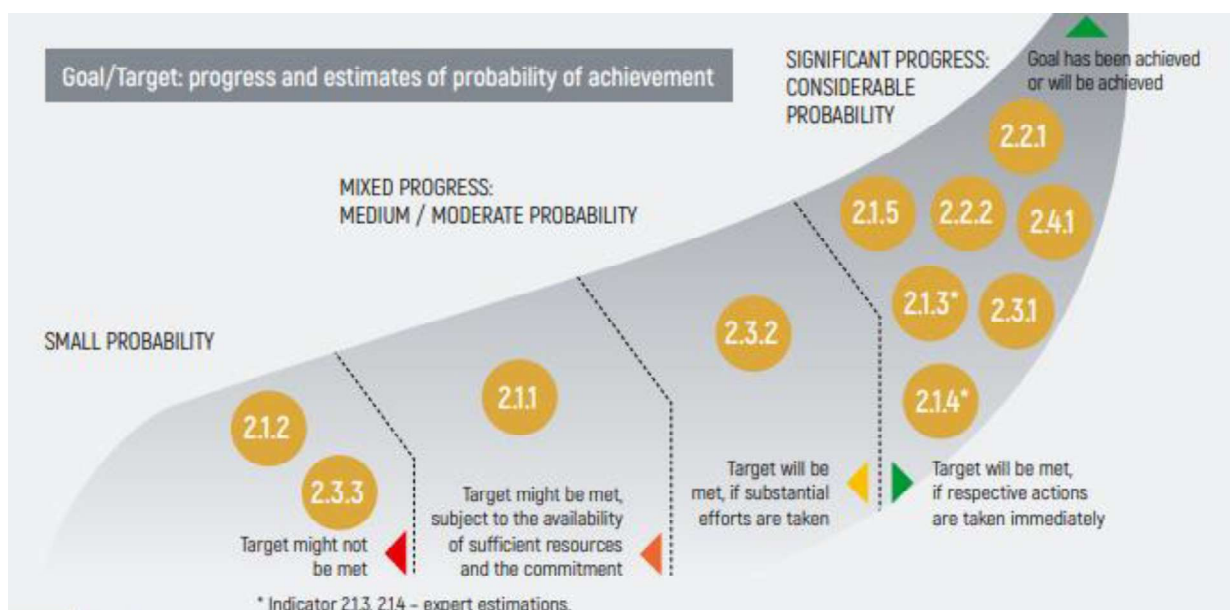
Figure A3.3: Colour coding of the progress towards SDG 2 in Switzerland's VNR



© [2022 Voluntary National Review of Switzerland](#)

- The analysis also needs to put the numbers into context by **demonstrating how close the country is to 2030**, by extrapolating the current trends, taking into account the progress observed during the previous years, or by forecasting progress, based on the reports and evaluations made of national country plans or programmes.

Figure A3.4: Assessment of progress towards SDG 2 in the VNR of Ukraine



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- The important element of moving from data assessment SDG-by-SDG to an **integrated analysis of progress on all SDGs is the analysis of trade-offs, synergies and spillover effects.**

An integrated approach to food systems transformation creates awareness of synergies, trade-offs and spillovers across different Goals and dimensions of agrifood systems. The definitions below come from the OECD [Making Better Policies for Food Systems](#) (OECD, 2021).

Box A3.2: Defining synergies, trade-offs and spillovers

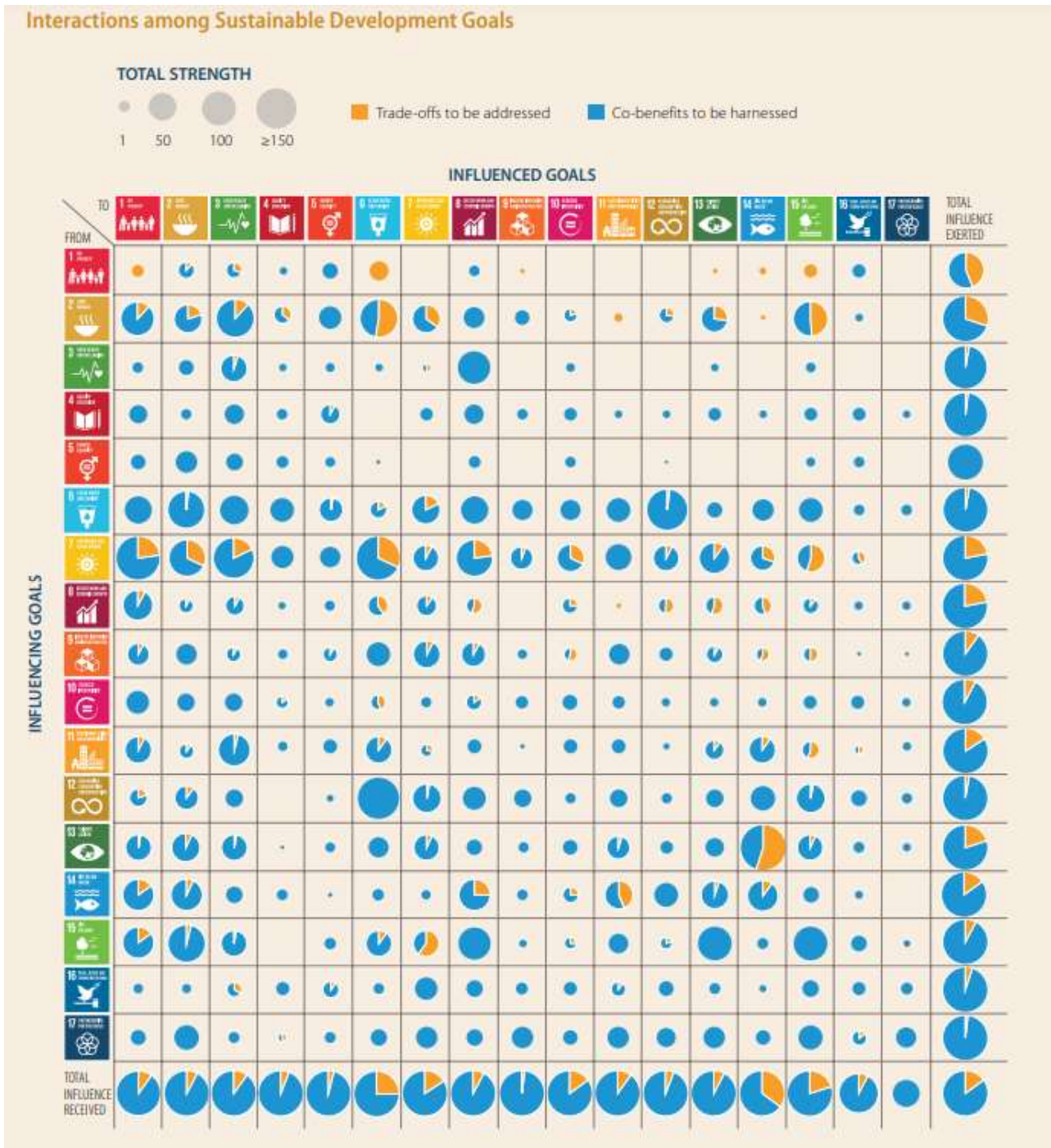
Synergies occur when making progress on one policy objective (in this case, an SDG) makes it easier to make progress on another.

Trade-offs occur when making progress in one area leads to worse outcomes in another area.

Documenting and quantifying potential spillover effects is an important step. Not all hypothesized *spillovers* are large enough to matter for policy coherence.

The [2019 Global Sustainable Development Report](#) (UN, 2019) points out that, “Achieving that transformation – a profound and intentional departure from business as usual – means carefully taking into account the interactions between Goals and targets... The most efficient – or sometimes the only – way to make progress on a given target is to take advantage of positive synergies with other targets while resolving or ameliorating the negative trade-offs with yet others” (p. xxi). The report uses a seven-point scale developed by the International Council for Science (ICSU) in terms of co-benefits and trade-offs (see the graph below), which can be used as a guiding framework for assessing trade-offs, synergies and spillover effects in the preparation of a VNR.

Annex 4 “VNR report: how to maximize the value added” presents the seven-point based methodology for the analysis of the SDGs under review for the 2023 high-level political forum on sustainable development.
 Figure A3.5: Interactions among the SDGs



Source: United Nations. 2019. *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*. Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, New York. https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

For instance, Switzerland in its 2022 Voluntary National Review, presented a brief summary of trade-offs, synergies, positive or negative multipliers and spillovers under each SDG under analysis.

Figure A3.6: Side-effects and trade-offs for SDG 2 in the VNR of Switzerland



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3. Moving from the SDG-by-SDG analysis to an integrated analysis of the progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2019 *Global Sustainable Development Report* (UN, 2019) further points out that, “Advancing the 2030 Agenda must involve an urgent and intentional transformation of socio-environmental-economic systems” (p. xx). It is, therefore, crucial to move beyond the SDG-by-SDG analysis to review and analyse the progress achieved in the transformation of the systems, for FAO-agrifood systems.

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all report by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2021) identifies six possible pathways towards agrifood systems transformation to address major drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and unaffordability of healthy diets (see the graph below):

Figure A3.7: Possible pathways towards agrifood systems transformation



Source: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO. 2021. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4474en>

Based on the country context, a different set of pathways determines which driver or combination of drivers impacts most on the identified food system and on related food security and nutrition outcomes. The pathways may also complement and reinforce each other.

Following the analysis of the trends of progress towards the SDGs, as well as the trade-offs and synergies, the pathways above can be used by FAO to guide discussions with national partners on whether the data collected and analysed demonstrate progress towards a context-based set of transformative pathways. FAO Country Offices can help national partners to identify a set of pathways that can frame the discussion about agrifood systems transformation towards food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all.

This step makes it possible to link SDGs progress analysis with how the country is implementing the leave-no-one-behind principle, as well as the role of policy coherence and stakeholder participation. The list of questions below is based on the six transformative pathways and can be used to guide discussions with national partners (FAO *et al*, 2021). The list of questions is not finite and can be modified/extended based on the country's context and needs.

1. Integrating humanitarian, development and peacebuilding policies in conflict-affected areas

- *Are conflict-sensitive policies, investments and actions to reduce immediate food insecurity and malnutrition implemented simultaneously with those aimed at a reduction in the levels of conflict, and aligned with long-term socio-economic development and peacebuilding efforts?*
- *Are emergency food assistance programmes, emergency support to ensure clean water, quality health services and sanitation, and interventions to maintain livelihoods among the crisis response and social protection mechanisms implemented to ensure minimum levels of food security and nutrition?*
- *Are resilience-building programmes, as well as social protection mechanisms, in place?*
- *Do policies, supported by institutional and legal reforms, address the structural causes of conflict situations (for instance, competition over natural resources, including productive land, forest, fisheries and water resources) and aim to mitigate – and if possible, prevent – their impact on food systems, food security and nutrition, and the economy at large?*
- *Are food and agricultural production maintained and are food supply chains sustained – especially in the context of protracted crisis situations, with possible periods of low (but persistent) levels of conflict and prolonged periods of displacement – to ensure people's access to nutritious foods and healthy diets?*

2. Scaling up climate resilience across food systems

- *Do existing policies aim to increase resilience to climate events along the entire food supply chain to reduce disruptions in food production and supply?*
- *Are the mechanisms to protect smallholders against climate events that could affect their livelihoods, including through climate risk insurance, put in place?*
- *What are the steps to create an enabling environment for promoting sustainable investments in agriculture?*
- *Are climate risk monitoring and early warning systems established to reduce the impact of different hazards, including climate extremes, in both food systems and livelihoods?*
- *Are policies in place to sustainably increase agricultural productivity (with positive effects on natural resources and the environment), including through climate-smart agricultural practices?*

3. Strengthening resilience of the most vulnerable to economic adversity

- *Do policies aimed at strengthening agri-food productivity and market linkages along the food supply chain improve income opportunities for smallholders and other actors of the food supply chain?*

- *Do approaches to curb rises in food prices and excessive price volatility help to reduce the vulnerability of poor households and net food buyers in accessing food?*
- *Are there mechanisms to monitor and avoid undesirable coping strategies during periods of extreme food price fluctuations?*
- *Do policies aimed at boosting job creation help to minimize the short-term impacts of economic shocks among vulnerable households through nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes?*
- *Do the existing policies contribute to the stabilization of incomes and food consumption?*

4. Intervening along food supply chains to lower the cost of nutritious foods

- *Do the existing policies aim at increasing investments for a more productive and diverse agriculture sector, helping to increase the supply of safe and nutritious foods, and lowering their cost?*
- *Do the approaches to increase the efficiency of food value chains contribute to improving the functioning of value chains to realize efficiency gains in storage, processing and marketing of food, thus lowering the cost of nutritious foods?*
- *Are mechanisms in place to reduce food loss and waste through a coherent set of policies and investments in food production, harvesting, handling, packaging, storage, transportation, processing and marketing?*
- *Do the policies aimed at creating an environment that promotes nutritious foods along the supply chain help to adjust fiscal and other policies to influence the relative prices of nutritious foods and of foods high in fats, sugars and/or salt?*
- *Has the country enacted mandatory food fortification in line with international guidelines to increase the supply of fortified foods as part of a programme to address micronutrient deficiencies?*
- *Are mechanisms in place to promote biofortification in line with international guidelines and regulations to increase the production of foods with higher micronutrient content in order to address micronutrient deficiencies?*

5. Tackling poverty and structural inequalities, ensuring interventions are pro-poor and inclusive

- *Are policies in place to empower vulnerable and historically marginalized populations with the aim of reducing inequality within households, with positive effects on the food security and nutrition outcomes of women, children and youth?*
- *Do existing policies help to reduce gender inequalities in food security and nutrition, and support women's economic activities in food value chains with the aim of increasing the productive capacity of men and women by ensuring equitable access to productive resources?*
- *Are mechanisms in place that help to implement financial services support mechanisms targeting women's economic activities as producers, processors, traders and entrepreneurs?*
- *Are reforms with a gender lens to enable more equal distribution of resources and access to social services enacted to improve access to key agricultural productive assets?*
- *Are mechanisms in place that help to increase the access of vulnerable populations to essential services, primary healthcare and expanded social protection mechanisms?*
- *Do the existing policies and mechanisms help to improve income distribution within the country?*

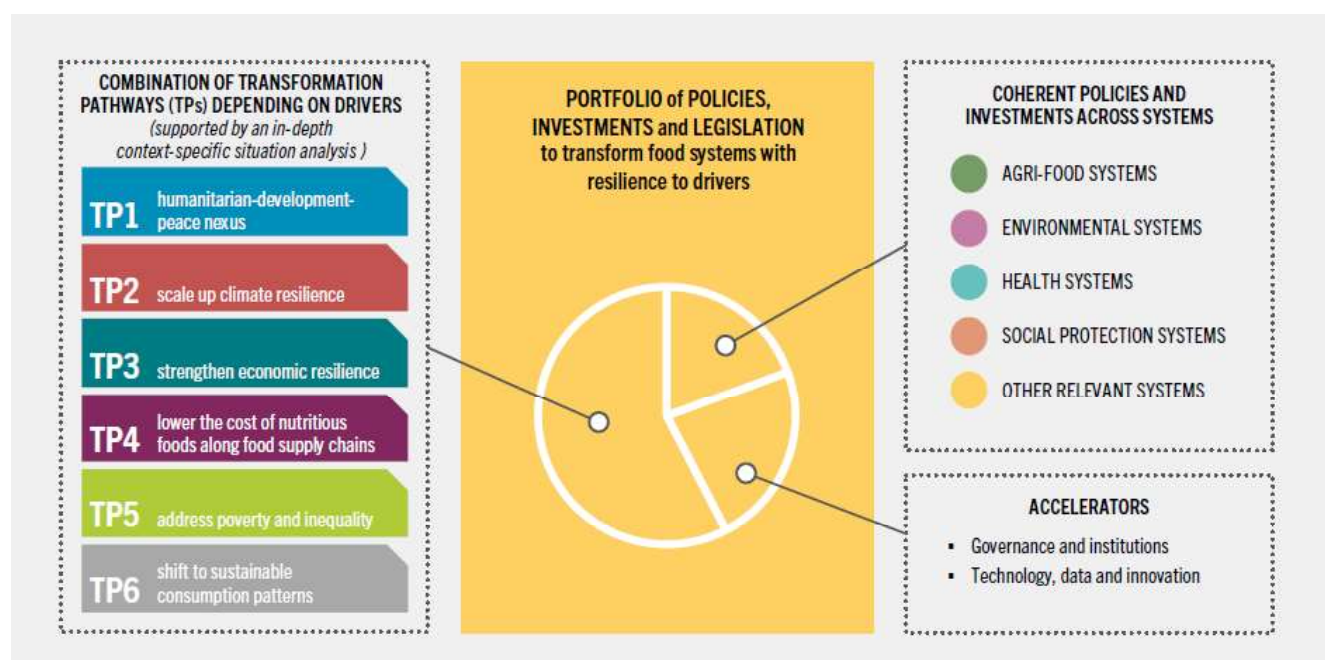
6. Strengthening food environments and changing consumer behaviour to promote dietary patterns with positive impacts on human health and the environment

- *Are healthy public food procurement and service policies implemented to ensure that food sold or served in schools, hospitals and other public institutions contributes to healthy diets?*
- *Do the existing trade standards help to ensure a nutrition-oriented focus to enhance the role of trade in increasing the availability and affordability of healthy diets?*

- Are the taxation schemes of energy-dense foods high in fats, sugars and/or salt in place and are nutritious foods subsidies in place, with the objective of lowering the consumption of food with a negative impact on human health?
- Do the existing policies promote nutritious foods that are more affordable than energy-dense foods?
- Is legislation on food marketing enacted to protect all people and, in particular, children from birth to 18 years from the harmful impacts of food marketing?
- Are labelling rules, including interpretive front-of-pack nutrition labelling, enacted to help consumers to shift their preference towards nutritious foods, using interpretive nutrition labels on the front, as well as nutrition information panels on the back of food packaging?
- Are industrially produced trans fats being regulated to eliminate industrially produced trans fats from the food supply chain?
- Are there existing policies promoting the reformulation of food products and beverages to reduce levels of salt/sodium, sugars, calories and/or saturated fat in highly processed food?

The analysis of the use of these transformative pathways (based on the country context) will help to see how the existing portfolio of policies, programmes and plans impacts agrifood systems and other connected systems (see the diagram below).

Figure A3.8: Key elements of a portfolio of policies and investments



Source: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO. 2021. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4474en>

The analysis of the progress of transitioning towards sustainable agrifood systems needs to reveal **structural issues**, challenges and gaps of existing **institutional mechanisms**, as well as **means of implementation**, including the range of financing sources (public/private, domestic/international) and non-financing means of implementation, such as capacity development and data needs, technology and partnerships. The three highlighted elements above need to be covered in the VNR, according to DESA's [Handbook for the Preparation of the Voluntary National Reviews](#) (UN, 2023).

Analysis of the structural issues in the VNR can be complemented by an analysis of cross-cutting and cross-sectoral accelerators. FAO has identified four accelerators in its Strategic Framework: *technology, innovation, data* and *complements*. Analysis of how each of these accelerators has contributed to the current state of SDGs implementation can help to unlock future transformations and to draft the follow-up actions in the Next steps section of the VNR.

4.a Connecting the dots between the policy analysis and the SDGs progress

Analysis of the key areas under the FAO six transformative pathways will reveal the level of policy coherence or the lack thereof (for instance, when ambitious but divergent goals of agricultural production and environmental performance create more complex problems of policy incoherence).

In line with the Secretary-General’s common reporting guidelines (UN, 2022) for the preparation of VNRs, the section on **policy and enabling environment** needs to analyse policy coherence: “The review could consider highlighting how it was possible to successfully mobilize institutions around the Sustainable Development Goals, enhance systematic collaboration, improve their functioning – making them more responsive, accountable, inclusive and transparent – and promote change to achieve policy coherence and integration across all sectors of Government (p.55).”

Ideally, policy coherence takes into account all synergies and trade-offs and avoids the misalignment of policies at all levels. Achieving policy coherence, however, is both challenging and costly. The objective of this section of the VNR is to analyse, discuss and highlight where the country is with regard to policy coherence and to what can and needs to be done.

From the point of view of promoting agrifood systems transformation, it is important to look at the trade-offs, synergies and spillovers in all connected systems.

Figure A3.9: Coherence and complementarity among agrifood, environmental, health, social protection and other systems for food systems transformation



Source: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO. 2021. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4474en>

After the initial screening of interactions carried out in the previous step, it is important to scrutinize these in a second step to establish where actual interactions exist that may require actions from a policy perspective. This step may require analytical work and involve statistical or experimental evidence and further consultations with experts and stakeholders. What is important is to understand if these interactions warrant adjustments to policies or are themselves a result of existing policies.

In the case of synergies, the key question is one of optimal combination of policy instruments. This may require a minimum effort on the separate Goals policies (OECD, 2021). For spillovers, it is essential to understand if they are significant enough to require action. If they are small, independent policies can be further pursued. Finally, for trade-offs, mediation between conflicting objectives may be necessary. Identifying trade-offs often highlights fundamental differences of opinion about the objectives that should be pursued and how they should be weighed against one another. This requires wide discussions with stakeholders to avoid gridlock, to reach an agreement and to overcome opposition.

The diagram below presents a schematic description of the policy analysis for agrifood systems.

Figure A3.10: Elements of policy coherence in agrifood systems



Source: OECD. 2021. *Making Better Policies for Food Systems*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/ddfba4de-en>

Effective analysis of policy coherence and the steps taken or needed to account for synergies, trade-offs and spillovers requires awareness of the complexity of agrifood systems. Analysing policy coherence in agrifood systems may reveal frictions around facts, interests and values. Disagreements over policy coherence or lack thereof need to be addressed. When supporting national partners with policy coherence analysis, FAO Country Offices need to be aware of good practices to design robust, inclusive, evidence-based processes that help to analyse policy coherence and manage diverging opinions and interests (Annex 2 on stakeholder engagement describes how to lead discussions to build a shared understanding of the facts and balance diverging interests).

This analysis is key for both this and the next step. According to *The Future of Food and Agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation* (FAO, 2022b), “Agrifood sectors are key, yet no longer enough on their own, to

ensure sustainable development and equitable access to food... Strong institutions, supported by efficient fiscal systems, are needed to support the emergence of other sectors, ensure economy-wide income-earning opportunities, effective social protection, protection of savings for capital accumulation and widespread asset ownership. In addition, interventions to reduce GHG emissions of agrifood systems will not pay off significantly if efforts to boost energy efficiency are not simultaneously undertaken on an economy-wide basis” (p.xx). Policy coherence analysis can help to highlight these issues and identify the steps needed to undertake change.

4.b Ensuring that leave-no-one-behind principle is applied throughout the VNR

Member Nations are encouraged to include specific information (and analysis) on how they apply the leave-no-one-behind principle in the course of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For the VNR preparation process, it is important for FAO to ensure that disaggregated data is used to account for FAO key target groups (rural populations, women, youth, indigenous peoples, migrants, etc.).

- FAO [Guidelines on data disaggregation for SDG Indicators using survey data](#) (FAO, 2021) offer methodological and practical guidance for the production of direct and indirect disaggregated estimates of SDG indicators, with surveys as their main or preferred data source. Furthermore, the publication provides tools to assess the accuracy of these estimates and presents strategies for the improvement of output quality, including Small Area Estimation methods.
- [An indirect estimation approach for disaggregating SDG indicators using survey data – Case study based on SDG Indicator 2.1.2](#) (FAO, 2022), discusses the adoption of the so-called projection estimator to produce indirect disaggregated estimates of SDG indicator 2.1.2 by integrating data from two independent surveys.
- FAO’s [Using small area estimation for data disaggregation of SDG indicators – A case study based on SDG Indicator 5.a.1](#) (FAO, 2022), presents a case study based on the use of an SAE approach to produce disaggregated estimates of SDG Indicator 5.a.1 by sex and at granular subnational level. The discussed estimation approach could be extended or customized for the integration of survey data with alternative data sources, such as administrative records, and/or geospatial information, and for the disaggregation of other (SDG) indicators based on survey microdata.
- FAO, in collaboration with other UN and non-UN agencies – the European Commission, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and The World Bank – developed a harmonized methodology to facilitate international statistical comparisons and to disaggregate the entire territory of a country along an urban-rural continuum. In [Applying the Degree of Urbanisation – A methodological manual to define cities, towns and rural areas for international comparisons](#) (2021), the authors develop a degree of urbanization classification, which defines cities, towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas.

It is essential to analyse in this section not only the groups that are left behind, but also the barriers that hinder access to services and opportunities for some groups.

For instance, Cabo Verde in its 2021 Voluntary National Review identified not only the groups being left behind but also the collective or individual barriers (institutional or structural in nature), and causal and staggered risk factors for falling behind, and included measures to leave no one behind.

Figure A3.11: VNR of Cabo Verde addressing the leave no one behind principle

Development of the social economy

The social and solidarity-based economy will be developed, through the improvement of the legal framework, the approval of a Mutuality Code a law on Private Social Solidarity Institutions the revision of the legal framework for foundations, approval of a specific tax statute for social economy entities with a specific accounting plan for non-profit CSOs, with the exception of cooperative societies, mutual societies and social enterprises, and a legal regime of public funding for non-profit CSOs and expansion of the contracting law to social and solidarity economy entities, within the scope of promoting an inclusive public market. It will also be developed through the reinforcement of financing through provision in the State budget and capacitation of human capital of CSOs.

E). LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Leaving no one behind is one of the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals. As Cabo Verde is a Middle-Income Country, not leaving anyone behind is, above all, a challenge of allocation, - that is, of distribution of national wealth.

Despite our successful history over the course of these 46 years as an independent nation, Cabo Verde continues to be a country of profound inequalities and regional asymmetries. The COVID-19 pandemic is deepening existing social vulnerabilities and increasing impoverishment to the point that increasingly large numbers of people are at risk of being left behind during the period of economic and



social recovery. The fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda, operationalized in the short and medium term by the economic and social response and recovery plans and in the long term by the next two Strategic Sustainable Development Plans, should be taken advantage of as an opportunity not to continue to leave certain groups behind, but also not to allow new groups to be left behind. Action must be early, starting with those furthest behind.

For Cabo Verdean authorities, leaving no one behind means not leaving any child, teenager, young person, adult or elderly person behind. It means not leaving any neighborhood, location, zone, town, city, municipality or island behind. It is also mean not leaving Cabo Verde behind.

The 2018 VNR identified the groups that have been left behind and we made commitments were made to include them, to ensure the number of those left behind

does not increase, - namely the poor, especially people living in extreme poverty, young people without higher education, families without access to water or electricity and people with special educational needs.

Within the scope of the 2021 VNR, and to prepare the new programming cycle (PEDS 2022-2027), the Government of Cabo Verde and the United Nations developed a detailed study "Leave No One Behind", following United Nations guidelines for the "LNOB Assessment". This study allowed for a deeper analysis of groups at risk of being left behind, the barriers they face in their access to social services and economic opportunities, and the causes of this exclusion.

In this VNR we will start by looking briefly at the barriers that hinder access to services and opportunities for some groups. We will identify, on the basis of these barriers, those

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For FAO, it is important to consider, among other things, barriers to access to food and nutrition, access to land and rights to land, opportunities to benefit from ecosystems services, etc. The analysis needs to reveal if the policies:

- promote and ensure food security and nutrition for the vulnerable, the extreme poor and other marginalized groups
- promote the economic inclusion of the vulnerable groups in agriculture and food systems
- foster environmentally sustainable livelihoods
- strengthen resilience against shocks and the restoring of livelihoods

Finally, to ensure that analysis of how the country addresses the 'leave no one behind' commitment, FAO could promote the use of its cross-cutting themes as outlined in the FAO Strategic Framework (*gender, youth and inclusion*). A multi-dimensional look at inequalities and vulnerabilities, and their interconnections and interdependencies for agrifood systems is key to producing a high-quality Voluntary National Review.

4. Moving from analysis towards follow-up action points and next steps

The review of the state of implementation of the 2030 Agenda also needs to be forward-looking in that it needs to identify next steps and post-review follow-up action points. In line with the Secretary-General’s common reporting guidelines for the preparation of VNRs, the section on conclusions and next steps “could outline what steps are planned to enhance and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda... It could highlight what lessons the country has learned from the review process, how it will apply them in the continuing implementation and what support it would need in the future for preparing such reviews. Next steps should be as concrete as possible, to allow targeted follow-up in subsequent VNRs or related documents” (UN DESA, 2022b7, p.56).

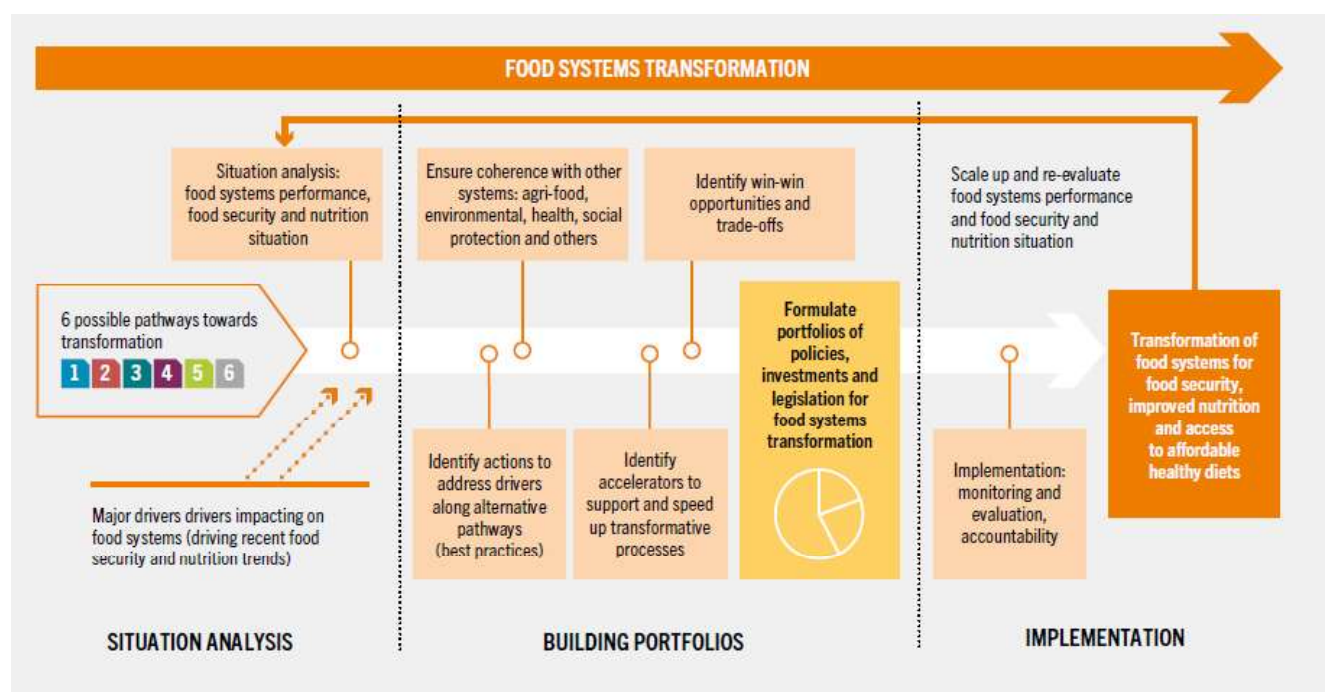
This step is key for FAO as it makes it possible to identify and discuss steps towards food systems transformation.

Based on discussion of the results of the analysis of the use of transformative pathways, national stakeholders could look beyond the analysis towards identifying portfolios of policies, investments and legislation for food systems transformation, using the four steps below:

- Ensure coherence with other systems: agrifood, environmental, health, social protection and others
- Identify win-win opportunities and trade-offs
- Identify actions to address drivers along alternative pathways (best practices)
- Identify accelerators to support and speed up transformative processes.

The diagram from *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all* below can be used to guide the discussion (FAO et al., 2021)

Figure A3.12: Steps towards agrifood systems transformation

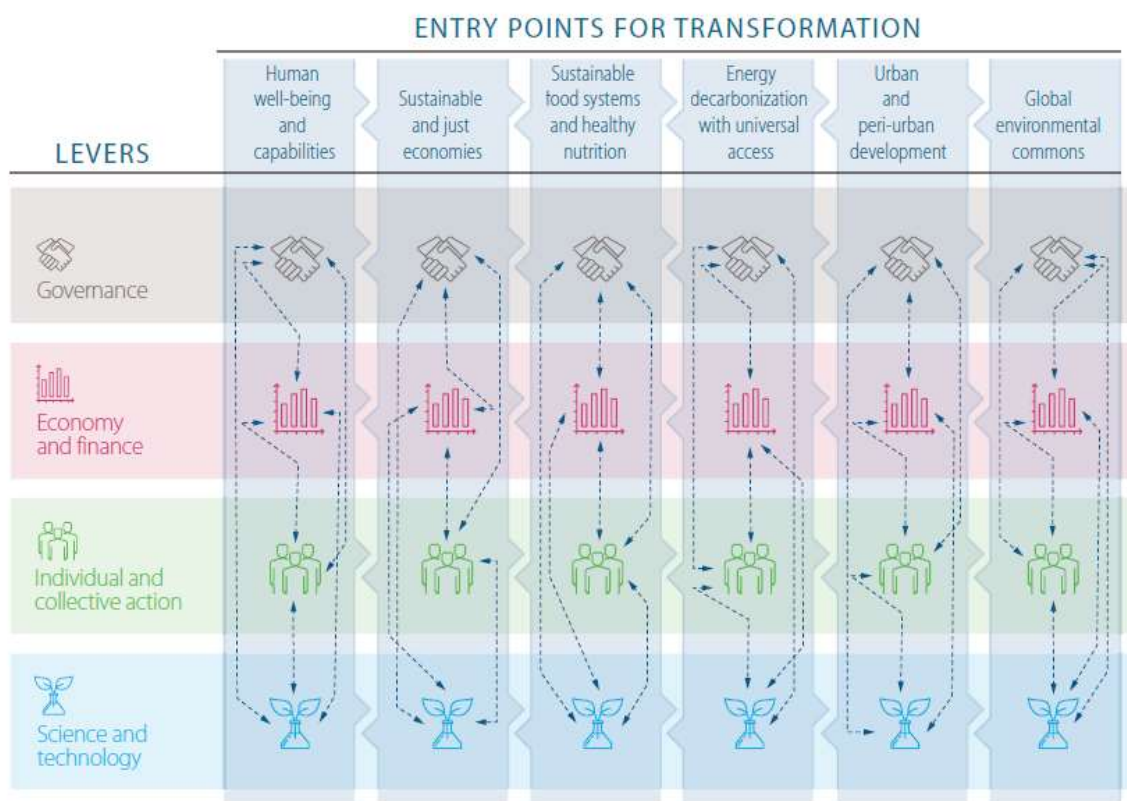


Source: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO. 2021. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4474en>

Identifying accelerators is key to ensuring that the country can leapfrog from the current rate of transformation towards an accelerated pathway to sustainable development by means of identifying and using breakthrough points of acceleration.

The *2019 Global Sustainable Development Report* (UN, 2019) presented six entry points towards sustainable development transition. These entry points offer the most promise for achieving the desired transformations at the necessary scale and speed. They take into account urgency, forward-looking expectations about a growing global population seeking higher levels of well-being, and normative considerations, such as leaving no one behind. These are not entry points into individual or even clusters of Goals, but rather into the underlying systems. At the same time, not attending to the interlinkages that are intrinsic to these entry points, and cutting across them – for example, by focusing on individual Goals and targets – would imperil progress across multiple elements of the 2030 Agenda. The selected entry points are:

Figure A3.13: Key elements of a portfolio of policies and investments



Source: United Nations. 2019. *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*. Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, New York. https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/24797GSDR_report_2019.pdf

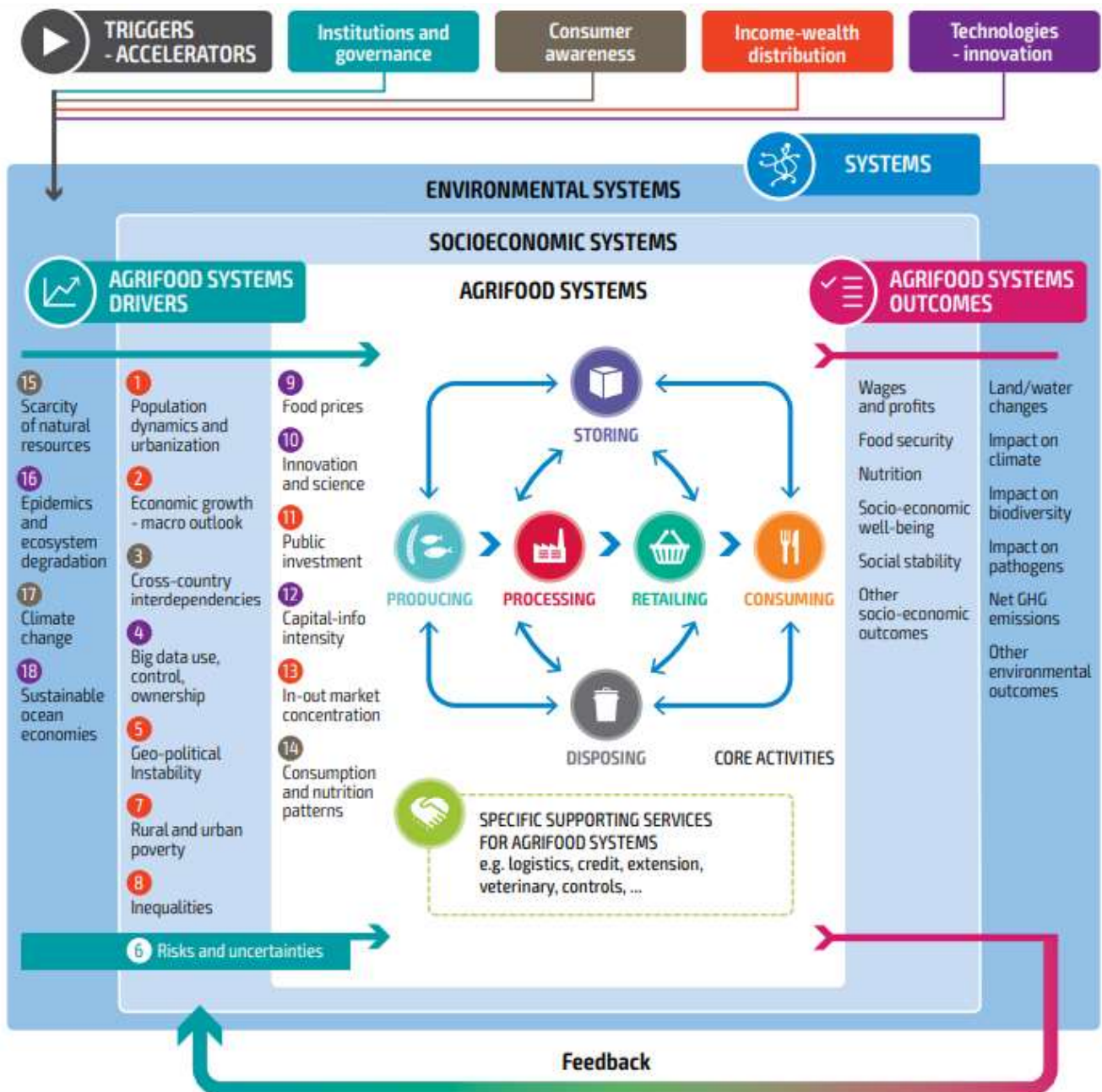
The Report also identifies four levers, which can be coherently deployed through each entry point to bring about the necessary transformations:

- Governance
- Economy and finance
- Individual and collective action
- Science and technology

The levers are related to the means of implementation characterized in Goal 17, but are also different, in that they accommodate the multiple, complementary roles that individual actors and entities play in bringing about change.

The Future of Food and Agriculture 2022 (FAO, 2022b) quoted above has identified 18 drivers and triggers (see the diagram below). This conceptual framework can be used to analyse and discuss the drivers and triggers that will influence agrifood systems in the country.

Figure A3.14: Agrifood systems: key drivers, activities, outcomes and priority triggers for transformation



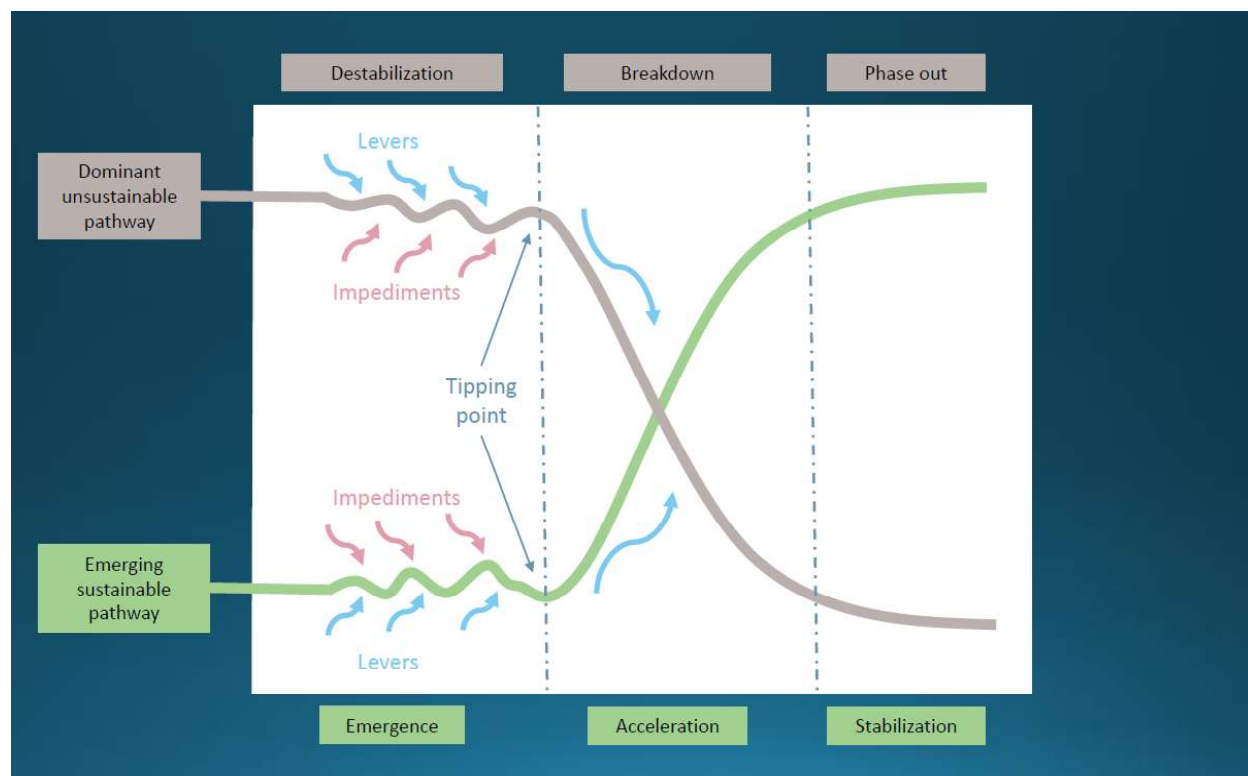
Source: FAO. 2022b. *The future of food and agriculture – Drivers and triggers for transformation*. The Future of Food and Agriculture, No. 3. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0959en>

The forthcoming 2023 *Global Sustainable Development Report* (UN, forthcoming) refers to the need to identify those tipping points when current dominant unsustainable pathways can lead to the breakdown and phase-out of unsustainable approaches and the levers that can support emerging sustainable pathways accelerate and then stabilize as accepted and dominant pathways (see the graph below).

Using the image below, a discussion around the following questions can be built:

- For the pathways defined as unsustainable, what are the levers and impediments that can lead to a breakdown away from the unsustainable practice towards the phase-out of its elements?
- What can this breakdown point look like? What is needed to accelerate it?
- For the pathways defined as sustainable, what are the levers that can lead to a breakthrough towards acceleration towards sustainability and later stabilization? What are the impediments that can prevent or affect this emergence of an emerging pathway?
- What can this breakthrough point look like? What is needed to accelerate it?

Figure A3.15: Dominant unsustainable pathways vs emerging sustainable pathways



Source: United Nations. (forthcoming). *Global Sustainable Development Report 2023: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development*. Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, New York.

The significance of this step in the analysis lies not in precisely identifying the tipping and breakdown points but in reviewing and considering different options for the future and coming to a common understanding that the current approaches to agrifood systems are not sustainable.

Annex 4

VNR report: how to maximize the value added

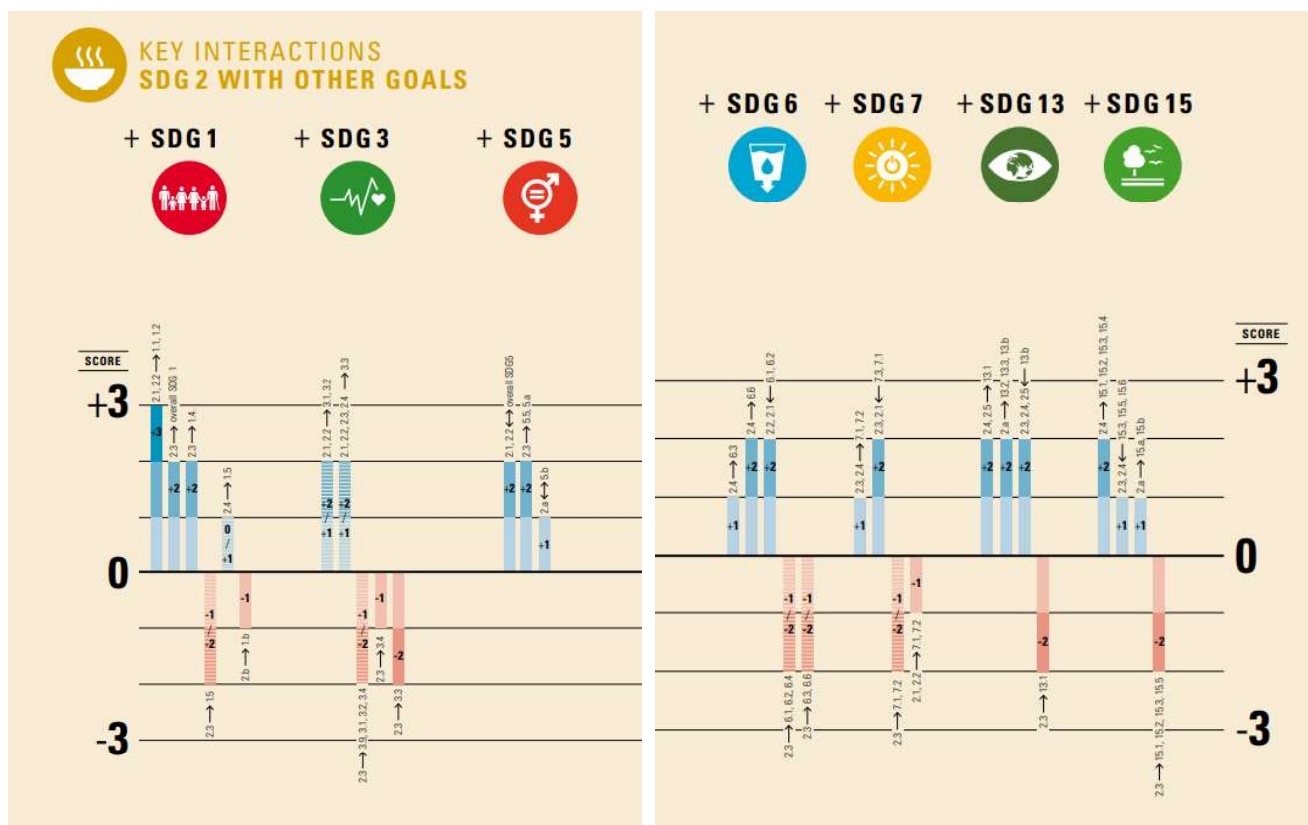
As indicated by the UN Committee on Development Policy (UN CDP, 2022), most current VNRs do not reflect the transformative ambition of the 2030 Agenda, are largely descriptive, and lack substantive assessments and analyses. This is the result of an approach in which the integrated nature of sustainable development is lost and interconnections, interdependencies, trade-offs and synergies are often not visible (or are simply ignored).

In this regard, FAO can support its national partners by promoting an in-depth review and analysis of the state of agrifood systems from a holistic and systems-thinking point of view. Since agrifood systems are much more complex than is required by SDG 2 (zero hunger), the 2023 HLPF, with a review of a set of SDGs that cover clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG7), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17), presents a number of opportunities for FAO to raise both national and global awareness with regard to the interconnected and transformative role that agrifood systems play in a given context and to how their transformation can promote the transition towards sustainable development.

To support the national authorities, FAO Country Offices can promote and facilitate in-depth and reflective dialogues and discussion of what has been achieved so far through the lens of an integrated assessment and analysis.

Since 2015, the International Council for Science (ICSU) (which in 2018 merged with the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and is now known as the International Science Council [ISC]) has been working on a seven-point scale methodology to account for the interactions between the targets of the SDGs (see an example of the interactions between SDG 2 and SDG 6 below) (ICS, 2017). In 2019, the independent group of scientists appointed by the UN Secretary-General used this methodology in the Global Sustainable Development Report (UN, 2019), which provides a science-based account of what it will take to achieve the promise of the 2030 Agenda.

Figure A4.1: Interactions of SDG 2 with other SDGs



Source: International Council for Science. 2017. *A Guide to SDG Interactions: from Science to Implementation*. <https://council.science/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/SDGs-Guide-to-Interactions.pdf>

The questions below are based on this framework for analysis and contain general questions to be considered with the national partners when discussing progress on SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17.

SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)

With food production responsible for the largest share of freshwater withdrawals, SDG 2 is highly dependent on the achievement of several SDG 6 targets.

The following questions could help the discussion to ensure that an agrifood systems lens is applied in the analysis of progress on SDG 6:

- Do the policies and programmes aimed at improving water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing the release of hazardous chemicals and materials (target 6.3) target sustainable agricultural technologies as an enabler to bring additional synergies (target 2.4)?
- Do the policies and programmes to protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes (target 6.6.), target sustainable agricultural technologies as an enabler to bring additional synergies (target 2.4)?
- Do the policies and programmes to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all align with the efforts to address undernutrition (target 2.1)?

- *Do the policies and programmes to improve water quality (target 6.1), achieve access to adequate sanitation and hygiene for all (target 6.2) and substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors (target 6.4) align with the programmes to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3) and promote sustainable agricultural technologies and research to reduce water in agriculture (potential trade-offs)?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to protect and restore water-related ecosystems (target 6.6) and improve water quality by reducing pollution (target 6.3) align with the programmes to double agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3) (potential trade-offs)?*

The interactions between SDG 2 and SDG 6 are undisputable, with some targets enabling the achievement of others, while others are constraining and yet others are in conflict. It is essential to understand and analyse these interactions.

Additional and very detailed analysis of the interactions between SDG 6 and other SDGs was prepared by UN-Water in 2016. It is highly recommended that FAO Country Offices consult the Policy Brief by UN-Water when supporting the assessment and analysis of progress towards SDG 6.

SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)

Agriculture aiming at energy production can enable the increase of small farmers' revenues through more diversified production, and support universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services (ICS, 2017).

The following questions could help the discussion to ensure that an agrifood systems lens is applied in the analysis of progress on SDG 7:

- *Do the policies and programmes to increase access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services (target 7.1) and increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix (target 7.2) align with the objective of increasing agricultural productivity (target 2.3) and increasing farmers' revenues (target 2.4) to avoid competition for land between energy and food purposes (synergy)?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to increase access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services (target 7.1) and double the global rate of energy efficiency improvement (target 7.3) align with the efforts to increase food production (target 2.1) and farmers' revenues (target 2.3) as potential synergies?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to increase access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services (target 7.1) and increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix (target 7.2) take into account a risk of trade-offs caused by competition over land and water as a way to double agricultural productivity (target 2.3)?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to increase access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services (target 7.1) and increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix (target 7.2) through the production of bioenergy on degraded land take into account a risk of trade-offs caused by efforts to increase food production (target 2.1)?*

Competition over the same resources (land and water) may result in negative interactions between SDG 2 and SDG 7. However, there are numerous possibilities of positive interactions that can enable the targets on productivity and enhanced incomes (2.3) and on ending hunger and malnutrition (2.1, 2.2) that need to be harnessed.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)

There is a growing need for the design and development of more efficient integrated systems of food production, processing, preservation and distribution, as well as reliable transportation and logistics infrastructure with roads facilitating access to markets (ICS, 2017). The interactions important for agrifood systems transformation can be revealed through the following questions:

- *Do the policies and programmes to develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure (target 9.1) reinforce access to food (2.1) and farmers' access to markets (2.3) in such a way as to benefit from a synergy?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to enhance science, technology and innovation (target 9.5) help to enable agricultural productivity and increase the incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3) in such a way as to benefit from a synergy?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to enhance science, technology and innovation (target 9.5) avoid targeting or favouring certain producers over others (e.g. the needs of big agri-exporters over those of smallholders) in such a way as to reduce equity in access to such infrastructure to prevent trade-offs with the objective to enable agricultural productivity and increase the incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3)?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure (target 9.1) aim to prevent biodiversity loss, the over-extraction of water resources and other unsustainable practices that can prevent the efforts to increase food production (target 2.1) and the objective to enable agricultural productivity and increase the incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3)?*

Infrastructure, including affordable and water-use efficient irrigation, transportation, communication and market facilities, can be a major contributor to the achievement of SDG 2. It is essential that FAO help national partners to see the synergies and potential trade-offs in the process of promoting quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure and innovation (Nilsson, M., 2017).

SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

The inclusiveness of cities and their sustainability can be reinforced by progress in food security and nutrition. However, in order to ensure that rural and urban areas do not compete over agricultural land, it is important to recognize and address potential trade-offs and benefit from synergies.

The following questions could help discussion to ensure that an agrifood systems lens is applied in the analysis of progress on SDG 11:

- *Do the policies and programmes to reduce adverse environmental impacts of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management (target 11.6), align with the objective to enable agricultural productivity (target 2.3)?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces for all (target 11.7) align with the objectives to enable agricultural productivity (target 2.3) avoiding competition over land and water?*

-
- *Do the policies and programmes to support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas (target 11.a) align with the objective to increase the incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3)?*

Addressing the needs of urban dwellers through healthy, affordable, accessible and sustainable food for all can be achieved if the linkages between SDG 11 and SDG 2 are harnessed.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

SDG 17 is key to the achievement of SDG 2. There are multiple positive interactions that can promote the achievement of SDG 2 and the transformation of agrifood systems towards sustainability. The following indicative questions can help to lead the discussion:

- *Are the policies and programmes in the agrifood sector aligned to promote policy coherence (target 17.14) in such a way that they reinforce access to food (2.1) and help to enable agricultural productivity and increase the incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3) as a way to benefit from a synergy?*
- *Do the policies and programmes to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and facilitate timely access to market information (target 2.c) align with the global objective to promote a multilateral trading system under the WTO (target 17.10)?*
- *Do the national policies and programmes to reinforce access to food (2.1) and to enable agricultural productivity and increase the incomes of small-scale food producers (target 2.3) align with global efforts to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data (target 17.18)?*

Annex 5

Useful tools and resources

Selected data-related resources

UN databases and resources

- [SDG Global Database](#)
- [Data for evidence-based VNRs](#)
- [UNINFO](#) is the UN Sustainable Development Group's data portal. Although the datasets are not yet complete for all countries, the portal contains key programmatic documents such as the UNSDCFs (or UNDAFs), and Common Country Analyses (CCAs), which constitute the basis of UNSDCF formulation. CCAs draw from and add to existing data, statistics, analyses, reviews, research, capacities and resources from within and outside the UN system and are updated periodically.

Regional and national SDG platforms (examples, the list is not full)

- [Arab SDG Gateway](#)
- [SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: Statistical Knowledge Management Hub](#)
- [Africa UN Data for Development Platform](#)
- [SDG Gateway Asia Pacific](#)
- ESCAP [Sustainable Development Goals Helpdesk](#)
- [Africa Information Highway](#) (network of live open data platforms (ODPs) electronically linking all African countries and 16 regional organizations)
- [SDG Reporting Platforms](#) (webpage contains links to various national SDG reporting platforms as available)

FAO databases and resources

- [FAO webpage on SDG indicators](#)
- [Accelerating FAO support on SDG monitoring – Resources to support Decentralized Offices](#)
- [FAO Country Profiles](#) – these profiles bring together information from the entire FAO website and provides a fast and reliable way to access country-specific information. They also include direct links to the Country website for in-depth information.
- [FAO Statistics webpage](#)
- FAO. 2021. [Guidelines on data disaggregation for SDG Indicators using survey data](#). Rome.
- [FAOSTAT](#) – provides free access to food and agriculture data for over 245 countries and territories and covers all FAO regional groupings from 1961 to the most recent year available. There is an extensive set of data domains which can be explored for VNR data extraction.

Surveys and census data

- [Food and Agriculture Microdata Catalogue \(FAM\)](#) – provides an inventory of datasets collected through farm and household surveys that contain information related to agriculture, forests, food security and nutrition.

-
- [RuLIS – Rural Livelihoods Information System](#) – supports the monitoring of SDG indicators 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 5.a.1. The platform has harmonized indicators, standardized micro-variables (as available), a tool to build customized indicators and documentation on surveys processed.

Natural resources

- Water Resources and Management – [AQUASTAT](#)
- [Global Forest Resource Assessment \(FRA\)](#) – produced every five years, the Assessment is based on two primary sources of data: Country Reports prepared by national correspondents and remote sensing, conducted by FAO together with national focal points and regional partners.

Plant, animal and fishery resources

- [Domestic Animal Diversity Information System \(DAD-IS\)](#) – provides access to searchable databases of breed-related information and photos and links to other online resources on livestock diversity.
- [WIEWS](#) – World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) is used for the preparation of periodic, country-driven global assessments of the status of conservation and use of PGRFA, and for monitoring the implementation of the Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
- [EMPRES-i+ \(Global Animal Disease Information System\)](#) – supports veterinary services by facilitating the organization and access to regional and global disease information.
- Fishery and Aquaculture – [FishStat](#).

Food prices monitoring

- Food prices – [Food Price Monitoring and Analysis \(FPMA\)](#)
- [Agricultural Market Information System](#) – AMIS is an inter-agency platform to enhance food market transparency and policy response for food security. It provides information on four grains important in international food markets: wheat, maize, rice and soybean.
- [GIEWS - Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture](#) – monitors food supply and demand and other key indicators for assessing the overall food security situation in all countries of the world. GIEWS Country Briefs provide up-to-date information on the food security situation of monitored countries in the current agricultural season and harvest prospects for the main staple food crops and livestock situation, as well as estimates and forecasts of cereal production and imports, together with food price and policy developments.

Food consumption and nutrition

- [International Network of Food Data Systems \(INFOODS\)](#) – worldwide network of food composition experts aiming to improve the quality, availability, reliability and use of food composition data.
- [FAO/WHO GIFT](#) – Global Individual Food consumption data Tool – the platform provides food-based indicators in the field of nutrition and food safety as well as microdata, and seeks to make existing quantitative individual food consumption data from all countries around the world publicly available.
- [Food Loss and Waste Database](#) – contains data and information from openly accessible databases, reports and studies measuring food loss and waste across food products, stages of the value chain, and geographical areas. Data can be queried, downloaded and plotted in an interactive and structured way.

Geospatial data/Geographic information

- [Remote Sensing for Water Productivity \(WaPOR\)](#) – near real-time database using satellite data that allows the monitoring of agricultural water productivity at different scales.
- [GAEZ v4 Data Portal](#) – comprises a large volume of spatial natural resources indicators and results of agro-ecological crop analysis.
- [Hand in Hand \(HiH\) Geospatial Platform](#) – provides open-access geographic information, key food security indicators and agricultural statistics sourced from FAO and from external stakeholders.

Legal databases and policy resources

- [Gender and Land Rights Database \(GLRD\)](#) – provides country profiles analysing national legal frameworks, land-related statistics disaggregated by gender and a legal assessment tool that uses available information to identify areas where action is required and to advance gender-equitable land tenure.
- [Family Farming Knowledge Platform](#) – contains digitized quality information on family farming from all over the world (national laws and regulations, public policies, best practices, relevant data and statistics, researches, articles and publications) as well as country profiles with information on family farming related issues by country.
- [FAOLEX Database](#) – database of national legislation, policies and bilateral agreements on food, agriculture and natural resources management.
- [Right to Food around the Globe](#) – platform to access the extensive commitments on the right to adequate food made at national level.

Emergencies

- [Data in Emergencies \(DIEM\)](#) Hub – provides regularly updated and highly accessible picture of food insecurity in fragile environments.
- [Locust Hub](#) – provides information, maps and resources about the state of the locust upsurge and UN's ongoing response efforts.

Assessment tools

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