



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

Thirty-second Session

Virtual, 16-20 May 2022

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOD SYSTEMS AND THE ROLE OF CODEX

(Prepared by FAO and WHO)

1. Adopting sustainable, holistic food systems¹ to deliver healthy diets and improve food safety, security and nutrition, is a priority in the European region. While, food sector transformation has historically focused on production, trade and nutrition – often in silos, with limited policy coherence, there is now a major shift towards integrating broader sustainability considerations with a strong focus on capitalizing on possibilities for enhanced sustainability – particularly for nutrition, food safety, climate, natural resources, livelihood equality and resilience. Food systems transformation is recognised as one of the key levers to unlocking progress towards the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. A wide variety of food systems can exist or coexist at local, national, regional and global levels, including traditional, mixed and modern ones. Common drivers which will further transform all these types of food systems in the European region, include economic development at all levels; agrifood chain development for resilient, stable and safe food supplies; overcoming malnutrition challenges, including obesity; natural resources management and climate adaptation (land, soil, water); improving sustainability and bioeconomy; and environmental protection (promoting organic, using less pesticides, etc.).
3. Sustainability of food systems is demonstrated when nutritional and food security needs are met, and the system does not unduly degrade the natural resources base. Improving resilience is becoming increasingly important in the region. Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, governments and stakeholders see opportunities, when building back better to build in nutrition-sensitive and green solutions, and increase local actions, as part of strengthened food systems resilience.
4. Investment in food safety through effective policies and preventive controls by food chain actors is a priority to protect consumers' health and ensure trade in safe food. Preventing health threats through the One Health approach also supports resilience throughout the food system. Codex standards, guidelines and codes of practice on nutrition, food safety and hygiene, food quality and aspects of One Health contribute to resilient food systems, by enabling governments and stakeholders to strengthen the capacity of food systems to meet the health, nutrition and food security needs of today and into the future.
5. The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) held in 2021 was strongly supported by the European region with around 96 Independent Dialogues organised². Member state dialogues took place and national pathways³ were published. Work is ongoing to follow up on the UNFSS and commit the national pathways to national policy processes. The UNFSS has pushed food systems transformation higher up the political agenda, representing a key opportunity to set out a new direction for the food systems that respects planetary boundaries and focuses on healthy and safe diets for all, and reinforces the ambition of science-based solutions. This is further galvanized by a number of parallel processes in 2021, including the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, COP15) and the

¹ The term “food system” covers “all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes.”

² For more information, see <https://summitdialogues.org/explore-dialogues>.

³ As of 29 April 2022, 25 countries have published UNFSS National Pathways: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uzbekistan. For more information, see <https://summitdialogues.org/overview/member-state-food-systems-summit-dialogues/convenors/>.

Nutrition for Growth Summit. Furthermore, the “Farm to Fork” strategy, and the Green Deal launched in 2020 by the European Union, represent an example of tackling the transition towards sustainable food systems.

6. Using the keynote address as a basis for further discussion, Codex Members in the European region are encouraged to share information and discuss the role of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its food standards work in contributing to sustainable food systems, and any considerations on how the standard setting process may take account of sustainable food systems work.