

Issue Based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems

Terms of Reference

I. Background

Sustainable food systems lie at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Transforming food systems - to be more productive, more inclusive of poor and marginalized populations, environmentally and economically sustainable and resilient, and able to deliver safe, healthy and nutritious food to all - is a key accelerator for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are complex and systemic challenges that require the combination of interconnected actions at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Food systems encompass the entire range of activities involved in the production, processing, marketing, consumption and disposal of goods that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, including the inputs needed and the outputs generated at each of these steps. Food systems also include people and institutions as well as the socio-political, economic and technological environment in which these activities take place. A sustainable food system extends the scope of a policy outcome to address all three dimensions of sustainability, defined broadly - economic, environmental and social¹. The food system approach can strengthen, among others, also rural urban linkages, better connecting producers with markets, and consumers, rural areas providing ecosystem services, and serves as a way to connect multiple SDG goals through food.

As part of the Decade of Action to deliver on the SDGs, the Food Systems Summit (FSS) that the UN Secretary-General is convening in 2021 will support establishing the future direction and accelerate action for sustainable food systems.

The Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region is unique in many ways. Its vast land area is home to more than 50 countries, and includes a wide variety of topographies, climates and growing conditions. A number of structural transformations are taking place in the food and agriculture sector. The Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia 2020², produced by the IBC, points out to the progress made in reducing the percentage of hungry people, as measured by the prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) in Central Asia and the Caucasus, although the report highlights that the rate of reduction of the PoU since 2014 is slowing and even reversing.

In addition to food insecurity, many countries in the region continue to be challenged by the burden of malnutrition in all its forms. Overall, the Europe and Central Asia region is making progress and is on track to achieve the 2025 and 2030 SDG2 targets in most countries in the areas of child stunting, child wasting and low birth weight. In other areas, however, the ECA region is not making progress and is not on track to meet the 2025 and 2030 targets: adult obesity (all ECA countries), anaemia (all ECA countries) and exclusive breastfeeding (some ECA countries).

Moreover, the number of people is estimated to have increased significantly, and the situation has worsened as the COVID-19 pandemic has unfolded and continued. Although children have been less affected by the immediate health risks, their education and nutrition have been reported to be severely impacted by school closures and the deteriorated income situation of their families, typical of an economic recession.

¹ FAO, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, UNECE & WMO. 2021. Technical note on sustainable food systems. Issue-based Coalition on sustainable food systems. Budapest.

² FAO. 2020. Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia 2020. Affordable Healthy Diets to Address All Forms of Malnutrition for Better Health. Budapest.

Additional priorities across the ECA region include, but are not limited to, the need to protect the natural environment including water resources, prevent and restore biodiversity loss, mitigate climate change and improve the resilience of food systems to all shocks, develop economically viable and efficient value chains, support small holders and family farms, provide decent employment opportunities, prevent food loss and waste, address inequalities in food systems, and support the vulnerable and marginalized to be able to access affordable healthy diets.

The IBC on Sustainable Food Systems was established in April 2020. The main rationale in support of the proposal for an Issue-Based Coalition (IBC) on Sustainable Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) was the recognition that responding to these challenges requires multi-sectoral approaches involving, among others, food, agriculture, health, climate, social protection and education.

II. Main goal and Objectives

The main goal of the IBC on Sustainable Food Systems is to ensure a coordinated UN system response to cross-cutting issues related to sustainable food systems in Europe and Central Asia, as key to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

The main expected [Outcome](#) of the IBC is to advocate for high-level political commitment to make food systems more sustainable and resilient, and share knowledge on suitable actions and best practice to transform food systems.

The [Outputs](#) are:

1. **Advocacy:** Sustainable food systems promoted among UNCTs and Member States through multi-sectoral approaches, involving the food, agriculture, health, education sectors among others.
2. **Knowledge sharing and Institutional capacity development:** Capacities of UNRCs and UNCTs developed and improved and knowledge transferred to support countries in developing and implementing appropriate policy measures to strengthen sustainable food systems.
3. **Emergency preparedness and response-related relevant information and guidance material:** Technical guidance provided to UNRCs and UNCTs in a coordinated manner to strengthen countries' preparedness and response to food systems challenges caused by disasters and emergencies.

III. Typology of activities / Menu of Services

IBC thematic coverage	Geographic Coverage	Main support modalities	Linkages and coordination with regional/country-level mechanism
<i>E.g. Environment and CC IBC: water management; waste management, etc.)</i>	<i>List countries/sub-regions for support</i>	<i>(E.g. regional advocacy, regional policy guidance, technical support to CCAs and UNSDCFs, trainings/webinars, etc).</i>	<i>E.g. Mention consultation and coordination with RC/UNCT/results groups, PSG and other regional mechanisms (to show demand for support)</i>
<i>Food supply chains; Food security and nutrition; food affordability; food quality and safety; consumer behaviour, education; trade and market; climate & weather impact on food systems sustainability; food loss and waste; emergency response and disasters</i>	<i>Europe and Central Asia</i>	<p>Regional advocacy: UN joint statements, key messages, issue papers and policy recommendations.</p> <p>Regional policy guidance:</p> <p>Capacity development and knowledge sharing: technical webinars and workshops; briefs on best practices; repository; guidelines; analytical tools; regional reports providing data and analysis of selected issues; regional dialogues on sustainable food systems (including for the UN Food Systems Summit).</p>	<i>Consultations with RCs/UNCTs/result groups will be regularly organized through R-DCO. Regular exchange with PSG and other regional mechanisms (such as the Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform; the Sustainable Food System Mediterranean Platform; and other IBCs; Food Systems Summit) will be ensured through IBC members who are also members of PSG/other mentioned groups.</i>

Moreover, define clear criteria for:

- *IBC performance assessment*
- *a knowledge product to be considered / branded as an IBC result (as opposed to single-agency product). The minimal guidance could include, inter alia, a minimum number of AFPs that need to contribute to or clear an IBC product; working procedures or division of labour under well-defined task teams to lead on specific topics/ knowledge products, etc.*

The IBC performance will be assessed through the completion of the annual IBC workplan, which will clearly identify the products to be delivered, and the contribution to the annual Regional Result Report prepared by the Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) Secretariat.

A knowledge product will be considered an “IBC product”(as opposed to single-agency or bilateral agency cooperation) if the following three criteria are met:

- 1) at least three IBC members are contributing to the product;
- 2) half of the IBC membership provides technical clearance to the product;
- 3) it falls under the IBC mandate/workplan.

The IBC does not engage in operational activities, resource mobilization for programmes or projects, nor in their implementation thereof. All types of support services provided by the IBC to UNCTs are request based.

All types of support services provided by the IBC to UNCTs are request based. Requests for support may be channeled through different routes, or a combination thereof, including the R-DCO, the IBC members with country presence as well as directly from UNRCs/UNCTs in IBC-organized webinars/consultations.

IV. Membership

The IBC Co-Chairs are FAO, WHO and UNICEF. Other IBC members are: WFP, UNECE, WMO, UNDP and IFAD.

The membership of the IBC on Sustainable Food Systems is open to all UN funds, agencies and programmes. At any time, interested agencies can notify the UN System of their interest in joining the IBC. Other entities working at the regional level on issues related to food systems may also be invited as observers. Their membership will be determined case-by-case every year based on specific needs or joint activities included in the annual work plan. Observers may be invited on a case-by-case basis as necessary and when relevant.

Each member agency will designate a focal point and an alternate, ideally a technical officer with extensive knowledge and experience on the work on food systems and food security, or someone equivalent in their respective office. Any cost of participation will be met by each participating member agency.

The focal points represent their agency and are responsible for providing information and knowledge from their respective organization to ensure the smooth identification, formulation and implementation of the activities and plans. The focal point is also responsible for keeping their colleagues in the respective agencies informed on the activities of the IBC.

V. Management Arrangements

Chairing arrangements (including rotation frequency)

The IBC has four co-chairs, which are currently FAO, WHO and UNICEF. Chair rotation can be requested by any IBC members and introduced upon agreement of all members. In case of agreement on chairing rotation the agency, which provides the secretariat will be a co-chair by default. The Regional Directors of the agencies are the official IBC Co-Chairs. However, the IBC focal points of the related agencies act as day-to-day Co-Chairs.

The IBC Co-Chairs are responsible for setting the IBC objective, strategic guidance and workplans, after consultation with the IBC members. They are accountable for the implementation of the IBC workplan and they ensure that adequate capacities and resources are allocated to the IBC from its members for the successful implementation of its workplan.

Secretariat arrangements

The Secretariat of the IBC is provided by FAO. The Secretariat is responsible for coordinating the IBC activities. Any IBC-related communications should be sent to the Secretariat (IBC email: un-ibc-sustainable-food-systems@fao.org), who is responsible for informing the IBC focal points.

Accountability and reporting lines

The IBC is accountable to the Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP), as official regional coordination mechanism established under the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) mandate. The IBC regularly reports to the RCP who reports annually to Member States through the Regional Results Reports. The IBC will join any consultations with Members States to report on its work, as requested by the RCP.

Frequency and modality of holding internal meetings

The IBC members will meet at least twice a year (once in the first half of the year, e.g. in spring, for planning and decision-making and once in the second half of the year, e.g., in autumn, for status update and plan adjustment, as needed), but quarterly in 2021 due to the Food Systems Summit, either face to face or in virtual meetings organized by the Secretariat. Coordination related to the implementation of the planned activities

will be done via the correspondence and the FAO Microsoft Teams channel dedicated to IBC SFS. Additional ad-hoc meetings may be convened, if deemed necessary, by the members.

Annual planning arrangements

In order to ensure that the IBC work is driven by all members, who equally contribute to the design and implementation of the work plan activities, the IBC annual work-plans will identify for each area of work/deliverable a specific IBC member that will lead the work and will be responsible for initiating and coordinating it with the other IBC members.

Each IBC members can draw on external expertise to contribute to the implementation of the IBC workplan, although the responsibility for the inputs provided remains with each IBC members.

Reporting frequency

Each lead agency will regularly report to the IBC SFS on the progress of their respective areas of work/deliverables and will submit, to the Secretariat, the final deliverables/ materials to be shared with the UNRCs and UNCTs through the Knowledge Management Hub. The IBC will join consultations with Members States to report on its work, upon requested by the RCP or by DCO as required.

Cooperation with the other (non-UN) regional mechanisms

The IBC on Sustainable Food Systems will promote inter and intra - regional cooperation, partnership and knowledge and information exchange. The IBC will exchange information, as required, with other existing regional mechanisms, including:

- Regional Nutrition Capacity Development and Partnership Platform (RNPP)³
- FAO Sustainable Food Value Chains Platform
- One Planet Network
- Sustainable Food System Mediterranean Platform (SFS-MED) – currently being established
- Food Systems Summit Secretariat and Dialogue Convenors
- UN Economic Commissions
- European Union
- WMO and UNCCD Drought Management Center for Southeastern Europe
- [Evolving WMO Regional Specialized Center for Agricultural Meteorology](#)
- [European Drought Observatory](#)
- Integrated Drought Management Programme [for Central and Eastern Europe](#)
- Global Water Partnership for Central Asia, Caucasus and Central and Eastern Europe
- Other IBCs from within and outside of the region

The listed regional mechanisms will be regularly consulted for capacity development activities of the IBC in the region, to build on synergies that can maximize the work on food systems in the region as well as to capitalize on their networks to further ensure that IBC's work is demand driven as well as that national stakeholders benefit from the activities implemented by the IBC.

The IBC might invite other regional mechanisms to engage in cooperation and collaboration.

³ For more info: <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/Central-Asia-and-Caucasus-Food-Systems-and-Nutrition-Governance-Statement....pdf>

South-South and Triangular Cooperation mechanisms of the IBC members will also be considered in order to develop technical capacities in the countries and to transfer knowledge to the relevant stakeholders of the region.

VI. Sunset Clause

The IBC members acknowledge that the IBC can discontinue its work in case of:

- insufficient resources made available by the IBC members and thus jeopardizing the production of agreed outputs, or
- any situations in which the work of the IBC is taken over by other mechanisms, or
- if the thematic support provided by the IBC will no longer be considered a priority for the regional UN system.

Should any of the mentioned cases occur, the IBC based on the views of the majority of its members brings this to the attention of the RCP requesting the approval of the termination.