

Notes Meeting with USDA ADUS Jason Hafemeister  
April 28, 2021

On April 28, members of the Coalition met with USDA ADUS Jason Hafemeister and USDA staff on the UN FSS. Staff included Cathy Mckinnell, Betsy Basinger, Daniel Whitley, Andrian McAdams and Elise Golan.

The Coalition team opened with an overview of the Coalition, our goals, and aligned principles and asks. From there, Coalition members presented specific challenges, opportunities, and contributions to meet FSS goals. Members of AFIA, NAMI, AFFI, NCGA and Grains Council, NMPF/USDEC contributed points to the discussion. USDA team was appreciative of the meeting and is open to working closely with the Coalition members. USDA noted:

- They are leading Summit engagement efforts, working closely an interagency working group including USAID and State among others. This group meets weekly
- USDA is working to align messaging and have similar concerns with FSS on transparency
- t is clear the USDA is still early in aligning on a “USG position” on the FSS
- USDA is willing to push back on “biased” positions within the FSS work.
  - It would be helpful for the Coalition to identify the initiatives that USDA should be highlighting
- Internationally USDA is
  - 1) Working with Posts to understand where FSS is being run (responses are all over the place)
  - 2) Regional outreach (APEC, IICA)
  - 3) Working with a communications firm for bilateral and multilateral to ensure our message sticks
  - 4) Elise has been involved directly in Action Tracks
- USDA noted strict bilateral engagement on FSS has not happened yet

*Detailed Notes*

ADUS opened the call and welcomed Coalition members and he noted that:

- FSS presents a unique opportunity in a new administration. It has been a challenge to get things coordinated
- Secretary Vilsack is committed to a Systems approach and work continues on the Summit (US has hosted a dialogue already and will continue to weigh in)
- It seems the July meeting is starting to shape up with a virtual hybrid meeting and the expectations are that the meeting will result in something on paper that will drive us toward meeting the SDGs
- The challenge of how we produce more using less (efficiency and productivity) needs to be at the core of what we do
- Noted appreciation for the Coalition

Questions:

**Coalition: How is the interagency collaboration working? Next steps piece. Narrow down a concrete set of what the US can get behind and building out a Coalition.**

- **USDA:** ADUS noted that USDA is leading the FSS work and working closely with an interagency working group. USDA is active in the process and has the attention of the US folks. Need to make sure what USDA is doing is complementing what the Coalition is doing. It would be helpful for the Coalition to identify the initiatives that USDA should be highlighting
- Andrian noted that they are engaged to align messaging and have similar concerns with FSS on transparency.
- Elise noted that FSS is a full government effort. When it comes to bias of messages USDA is looking to push back. FSS asked for “input from everyone”, however there is the difficult task of streamlining that input. USG has some obvious things it supports (Reducing greenhouse gases, food loss/waste, and soil quality) but needs to make sure all the great ideas from US stakeholders are represented.
- Cathy noted they are looking forward to working with this group to amplify messaging with other countries

**Coalition: How do you make sure the recommendations out of FSS don’t contain the crazy ideas?**

- USDA: Elise, hoping to gather a wide enough list or parking lot would help. We are not going into negotiations on the document of outcomes, the UN Sec General is just going to put something out. There is already jockeying for what is going to be highlighted in this work.
- ADUS: USDA plans to push back and ask for outcomes to be supported by data (this is a consistent theme from USDA) also solutions can not be overly prescriptive.

**Coalition: Who from USG is attending the pre-summit/Summit?**

- USDA: ADUS is still trying to determine this, as July is a long time away [challenge with a lack of confirmed leadership].

**Coalition: How is USDA coordinating responses?**

- USDA: Andrian noted that they are coordinating with different agencies (USAID/State). They meet weekly with an interagency advisory council. They also communicate with Rome based Ambassadors in participation on the Action Tracks and also directly with the Secretariat. There is an agency staff member who sits on each Action Track.

**Coalition: Any governments in particular where they should be more engaged where we can be of help?**

- USDA: Andrian: Our engagement with other countries 4 prong
  - Working with Posts to understand where FSS is being run (responses are all over the place), more in Europe less in Africa.
  - Regional outreach (APEC, IICA, more with the AU?)
  - Working with a communications firm for bilateral and multilateral to ensure our message sticks
  - Elise has been involved in Action Tracks
- Strict bilateral engagement has not happened yet

- ADUS noted that Secretary Vilsack has communicated with 10 agricultural ministers on this issue highlighting climate, trade, nutrition and soil health. Secretary Vilsack talks explicitly about data driven approaches and evidence based approaches to achieve these goals.