UN Food Systems Summit (FSS)
Current status of process
June 23, 2021

Introduction

While many details on the FSS remain unclear, Member state and stakeholder engagement in the FSS process has picked up substantially in the last two to three months, including as a result of sustained and well-coordinated engagement by U.S. food and agriculture stakeholders and their international counterparts.

Member states have repeatedly raised concerns about the FSS process - including about the limited role for Member States; the lack of consistent, evidence-based approaches in the action tracks/game changers; and the continuing lack of transparency about the format, agenda, and outcomes of the July ministerial and September Summit.

The U.S. government has begun to more directly advance specific initiatives like the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate and Global School Meals[1] and has articulated priorities for the Summit that are broadly aligned with U.S. food and agriculture stakeholders' principles - supporting the role of innovation and technology; adhering to evidence-based approaches that are consistent with previous consensus and international obligations; recognizing the value of diet diversity; not demonizing specific foods or production systems. There has been progress with other Member States' positions and game changers, as well (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, the UAE).

However, issues remain, as the FSS continues to advance documents, workstreams, and potential outcomes despite the clear absence of Member State consensus or an inclusive, transparent, evidence-based process.

Secretary General's statement

A draft outline of the Secretary General's statement includes some positive references to international trade, science and innovation, farmers' livelihoods, and a priority focus on ending hunger but also reflects several unbalanced, unscientific approaches that are not consistent with evidence, nor with previous consensus. For example, the draft outline uses terms (e.g., "planetary boundaries," "true cost of food," and "harmful food") that do not have internationally agreed definitions and does not reference the Committee on Food Security's Voluntary Guidelines on Nutrition and Food Systems.

The draft outline states that annexes will include "analysis and list of solutions," as well as Member State and multistakeholder commitments. It is not clear whether all solutions submitted will be included in the annex or only a subset (if so, chosen by whom and according to what methodology?), nor whether the Secretary General's statement will directly or indirectly imply endorsement of solutions/commitments.

Science Group "True cost of food" paper

The methodology and scientific evidence to support the paper's sweeping claims are not clear, yet the "true cost of food" features prominently in the draft outline of the UN Secretary General's remarks discussed above and in multiple game changers.

Relying on only a small set of academic papers selected by the paper's authors, the paper argues that food pricing should reflect externalities it argues should make food at least 33% more expensive. The costs assigned to externalities are not clearly supported by evidence, range wildly over an extremely broad estimated base, and do not adequately reflect the positive benefits of nutrient-density, food processing, or diet diversity.

The paper relies heavily on the 2019 EAT-Lancet Report (EAT is a privately-funded NGO that supports plant-based diets) and on previous research by EAT-Lancet authors, despite admitting the EAT-Lancet reference diet did not "consider differences in protein quality and nutrient bioavailability" (pg 19). The paper repeatedly demonizes specific foods and nutrients (e.g., animal-source foods, fat, sugar), which is not consistent with many national and international dietary guidelines, nor with evidence on building and maintaining overall balanced

[1] https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/06/21/led-usda-us-join-global-school-meals-coalition

diets. While admitting that organic production can result in higher greenhouse gas emissions, the paper promotes "agroecological systems" (e.g., pg 7) and organic production (e.g., pg 37) over modern agriculture.

"Game changers" lack consistency, scientific evidence, and exclude many perspectives

The FSS has so far released two "waves" of so-called "game changers." Many of the "game changers" propose punitive and unscientific restrictions on specific foods (e.g., processed food broadly; nutrient-dense meat and dairy); take a negative view of modern agriculture and international trade; and do not reflect the innovation and efficiency embodied in U.S. policy and practice. While Wave 2 appears to more faithfully reflect ideas submitted by all stakeholders (whereas the Wave 1 lists appeared quite limited to certain submission), there is still little indication of any overarching rationale, evidence base, or Member State input/review utilized to make the selections. Examples of opportunities and challenges from these game changers are presented in appendix 1. [SECTION WILL BE UPDATED TO REFLECT SOLUTION CLUSTERS]

Appendix 1: UN Food Systems Summit - Updated status including wave 2 game changers

- After each UN FSS action track released in late March a "synthesis paper" highlighting chosen solutions from Wave 1 submissions, the secretariat further narrowed the game changers it proposes to advance in the FSS process and reorganized the game changers into 15 "action areas." In June, a second wave of synthesis papers was published. While the second wave of synthesis reports appear to more faithfully reflect ideas submitted by all stakeholders (whereas the Wave 1 lists appeared quite limited to certain submissions), there is still little indication of any overarching rationale, evidence base, or Member State input/review utilized to make the selections. For example, solutions continue to include:
    - Proposals targeting specific foods (e.g., meat and dairy, processed foods broadly) with unjustified restrictions, e.g., taxes, warning labels/labels "related to carbon footprint), marketing restrictions, product formulation mandates, measures based on the "true cost of food."
    - Proposals seeking to restrict or denigrate conventional agriculture and modern practices in favor of agroecology/organic production
    - Proposals that could undermine or conflict with existing international standards.

The following comments are not exhaustive but provide highlights of opportunities and challenges. More information is available here.

Action Area 1.1 *Promote food security and reduce hunger*	●Wave 1 solutions 1.2, 1.5, and 1.16 support (to varying degrees) use/expansion of technology (e.g., clean energy, precision ag, digital connectivity, biofortification). ●Wave 2 solution 128[2] at least acknowledges the value of livestock farming in developing economies.	●**Updated action area excludes multiple action track 3 wave 2 proposals on technology, biotechnology, gene editing, nutrient use, and even the US/UAE Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate.** ●Misses opportunities to broadly encourage innovation and to specifically promote the value of biotechnology, ensure evidence-based regulatory frameworks, and promote consumer acceptance. ●Technological innovations have facilitated dramatic improvements in food security while reducing environmental impact, enabling farmers to produce high quality, high-yielding crops that have a direct bearing on improved food security and poverty alleviation, while also, for example, increasing resilience to heat and drought. ●Misses opportunities to focus on nutrient density, e.g., through encouraging production and consumption of nutrient-dense meat, milk, and eggs.
Action Area 1.2 *Improve access to nutritious foods*	●Wave 1 solution 1.6 focuses on cold chain. ●Wave 1 solution 1.15 focuses on ending anemia but fails to explicitly encourage increased production and consumption of high-quality iron from animal-source foods. ●Wave 1 solution 1.13 value of innovation; should be careful not to mischaracterize or denigrate food processing, which allows	● Wave 2 solution 138 differentiates "helpful processing" from "ultra-processing" which is inconsistent with previous consensus and with evidence ● There is no single, universal healthy diet or definition of individual foods as nutritious without context of an overall balanced diet. Solutions should ensure that consumers are supported in accessing and choosing foods that meet their needs, tastes, budget, cultural context, etc. Innovation in food processing, product formulation, storage, and distribution support these needs. ● Should include greater emphasis on the positive role of rules-based international

[2] Wave 2, AT1, solution 7

	many such innovations to be brought to market.	trade: Rules-based international trade is a major contributor to food security around the world, as it increases access, availability, and affordability of food.
Action Area 1.3 *Make food safer*	● Focus on food safety is appropriate, but should increase focus on internationally food safety standards under Codex Alimentarius leadership, as well as evidence-based food safety regulation.	● Misses opportunities to highlight lessons learned such as from the U.S. regulatory framework where science, data and research have led to tremendous innovations, for example USDA has worked to: patent new technology for protecting pasteurized liquid eggs; examine the safety of beef trim imports; and publish genomes of six dangerous strains of E. coli.
Action Track 1: Cross-cutting *Food systems pathways and data*	Wave 2 solution 144[3] proposes national development plans for sustainable livestock, acknowledges the value of livestock for farmers and nutrition. Solution 9.1[4] proposes FAO lead development of holistic solutions to address LCA methodological weaknesses.	● **Updated action area excludes multiple AT3 wave 2 proposals (including some from member states) on sustainable livestock, net zero emissions in dairy, animal feed, and livestock feed additives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.** ● Wave 2 solutions 145 and 146[5] reflect many of the issues raised with the Science Group's paper on the "true cost of food."
Action Area 2.1 *Enabling, inspiring and motivating people to enjoy healthy and sustainable options*	● Solutions focused on education could be beneficial in theory, but not if they fail to promote nutrient-density, diet diversity, and overall balanced diets and also reflect the value of science, technology, innovation in building healthy and sustainable diets. ● Similarly, school feeding, procurement, and market-based solutions should allow adaptation to national and other contexts and should not erect barriers to trade, which is instrumental in increasing access to and availability of diverse foods.	● Multiple proposals are overly narrow, prescriptive, and unjustifiably target specific foods (including nutrient-dense meat/dairy, "processed food" broadly) ○ Wave 1: Solution 1.3 - Fiscal Policy, Solution 1.8 - Equitable food marketing, Solution 2.8 - Labeling, Solution 2.10 - Demand package ○ Wave 2: 2.1.1 - Demand generation, Solution 2.1.2 Challenging the masculinity of meat, Solution 2.1.3 - Consumer information, Solution 2.1.4 - Public sector marketing, Solution 2.5.2 - Government-led reformulation, Solution 2.5.3 - Emphasis on appropriate food processing ● These approaches and proposed actions (e.g., taxes, warning labels/eco-labels, marketing restrictions, product formulation mandates, "true cost of food") are not based on evidence and contradict previous international consensus, may undermine ongoing work on international standards (e.g., food labeling in Codex). ● Wave 2 solutions 8.1 and 8.2 require careful examination for evidence-based approaches to managing antimicrobial use responsibly and understanding the impact of animal health on human AMR.

[3] Wave 2, AT1, solution 23
[4] Wave 2, AT2, gap 9, solution 1
[5] Wave 2, AT1, solutions 25 and 26

Action Area 2.2 *Slashing food loss and waste*		● **Updated action area excludes proposal (AFIA) to encourage the use of natural positive co-products to reduce waste.**
Action Area 3.1 *Protect natural ecosystems*		Solution 4 proposes to create a "Codex Planetarius" international standard-setting with no detail on creation, governance, mandate, scope, funding, etc.
Action Area 3.2 *Manage sustainably existing food production systems*	● Wave 1 solution 3.7 acknowledges the role of livestock as a sustainability solution. ● Wave 2 solution [AT2] 7.2[6] proposes to develop for meat a "definition of sustainability that is visible and traceable all the way along the value chain to consumers." ● Wave 1 solution 3.8 refers to regenerative practices but lacks specificity	● **Updated action area excludes multiple AT3 wave 2 proposals (including some from member states) on sustainable livestock, net zero emissions in dairy, animal feed, and livestock feed additives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.** ● Wave 1 solution 2.15 mischaracterizes the environmental and nutritional impact of producing nutrient-dense animal source foods from livestock and calls for restrictions that are not consistent with previous international consensus or evidence. ● Wave 1 solution 3.9 focuses narrowly on agroecology and does not acknowledge that all production systems can be made more sustainable and that producing enough food for the world's population is not feasible without technology and innovation.
Action Area 3 *Restore degraded ecosystems and rehabilitate soil function*	Offers potential space (including Wave 1 solutions 3.22 and 3.23) to increase focus on modern agricultural practices, regenerative agriculture, land use, conservation, sustainable livestock production practices, soil health, carbon sequestration, land use.	**Updates to the action area do not include all relevant submissions, for example multiple AT1 wave 2 proposals on sustainable fertilizer use, nutrient principles, and soil health.**

[6] Wave 2, AT2, gap 7, solution 2