

# **The United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021: Understanding the Controversy About the Leadership and Governance that Led to Protests and the Boycott, and Examining the Outcomes**



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# Discussion Points

1. Rationale for UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Sept 2021
  - Previous UN Summits had focused on hunger & food insecurity (1974, 1996, 2002 and 2009)
  - Shift from multi-lateral to multi-stakeholder governance to enable UN System & agencies to support “*Food Systems Transformation*”
2. Planning: UN agencies and key actors
3. Timeline: Actors involved in protesting and UNFSS boycott
4. Response: UN Secretary General and other organizers
5. Outcomes: Global coalitions for 4 action areas
6. Reflections on future actions for actors to strengthen governance and accountability for safe, healthy, green, fair & affordable (equitable), resilient and sustainable food systems

# UN Secretary General and WEF Chairman Announced Strategic Partnership Framework June 2019



## Five Focus Areas to Collaborate to Achieve SDG Agenda

1. Climate change
2. Health
3. Digital cooperation
4. Gender equality & empowerment of women
5. Education

- The UN-Forum Partnership was signed in a meeting held at United Nations headquarters between UN Secretary-General António Guterres and World Economic Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Source: World Economic Forum. World Economic Forum and UN Sign Strategic Partnership Framework. June 13, 2019.  
[https://www.weforum.org/press/2019/06/world-economic-forum-and-un-sign-strategic-partnership-framework/.](https://www.weforum.org/press/2019/06/world-economic-forum-and-un-sign-strategic-partnership-framework/)

## The Food Systems Summit will serve as a turning point in the world's journey to achieve the SDGs.

With 10 years to go, we are not on track to achieve many of the SDGs.

There is **scientific consensus** that **transforming food systems also offers one of the single strongest opportunities** we have to change course and realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda, and to support the Secretary-General's call to **"build back better" from COVID-19**.

The **Summit will unleash bold new actions, innovative solutions, and strategies to transform our food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all of the SDGs.**



*"Transforming food systems is crucial for delivering all the Sustainable Development Goals."*

- António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, 2019



**2019-2021: UN agencies and partners organized activities that culminated in UNFSS held in NYC on Sept 23, 2021.**





# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**Source:** United Nations. *Sustainable Development Goals*. September 25-27, 2015.

SDG Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXTBYMfZyrM>

# NUTRITION IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF ALL THE SDGS

Optimal nutrition is essential for achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals, and many SDGs impact nutrition security. Nutrition is hence linked to goals and indicators beyond Goal 2 which addresses hunger. A multisectoral nutrition security approach is necessary for success.



Governments, private sector and civil society actors must work with UN System agencies to raise **US \$172.5 trillion** to achieve the 17 goals and 169 targets in the SDG Agenda (2015-2030).

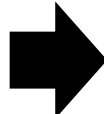
UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF  
**ACTION ON NUTRITION**  
2016-2025

UN Decade of Action on Nutrition Secretariat  
 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
 World Health Organization

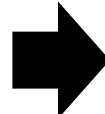
# UN Food Systems Summit Timeline

## June 2019 to Dec 2020

**Jun 2019**  
**UN & WEF Partnership**



**Oct 2019**  
**UNFSS 2021**  
**Announced on**  
**World Food Day**



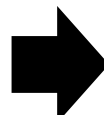
**Dec 2019**  
**Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President of**  
**AGRA, appointed as Special Envoy**  
**for UNFSS 2021**



**Jan 2020**  
**Global Food Sovereignty actors**  
**(IPCFS) sent letter to UNSG re:**  
**WEF, AGRA & CFS for UNFSS**



FOODSOVEREIGNTY.ORG  
CSOs Letter on UN Food Systems Summit - International  
Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)



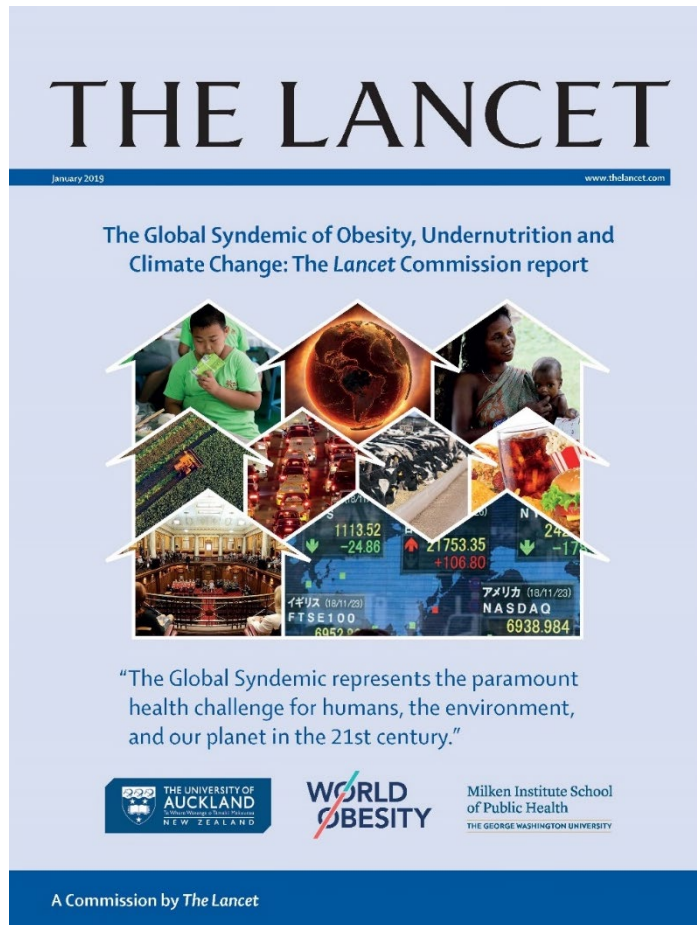
**Feb – Dec 2020**  
**Leadership & planning for**  
**UNFSS 2021 selected by UN**  
**Deputy SG, Amina Mohammed**  
**& Dr. Agnes Kabata**





# Summit Rationale

## The Global Syndemic: undernutrition, obesity and climate change



THE LANCET

The best science for better lives



**“The current food systems are becoming more industrialised, globalised, and dominated by large actors capable of economies of scale and of maintaining long supply chains.”**

The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition and Climate Change

**Source:** Swinburn B, Kraak V, Allender S et al. The global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change: The Lancet Commission report. *The Lancet*. 2019;393:791–846. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)32822-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)32822-8).

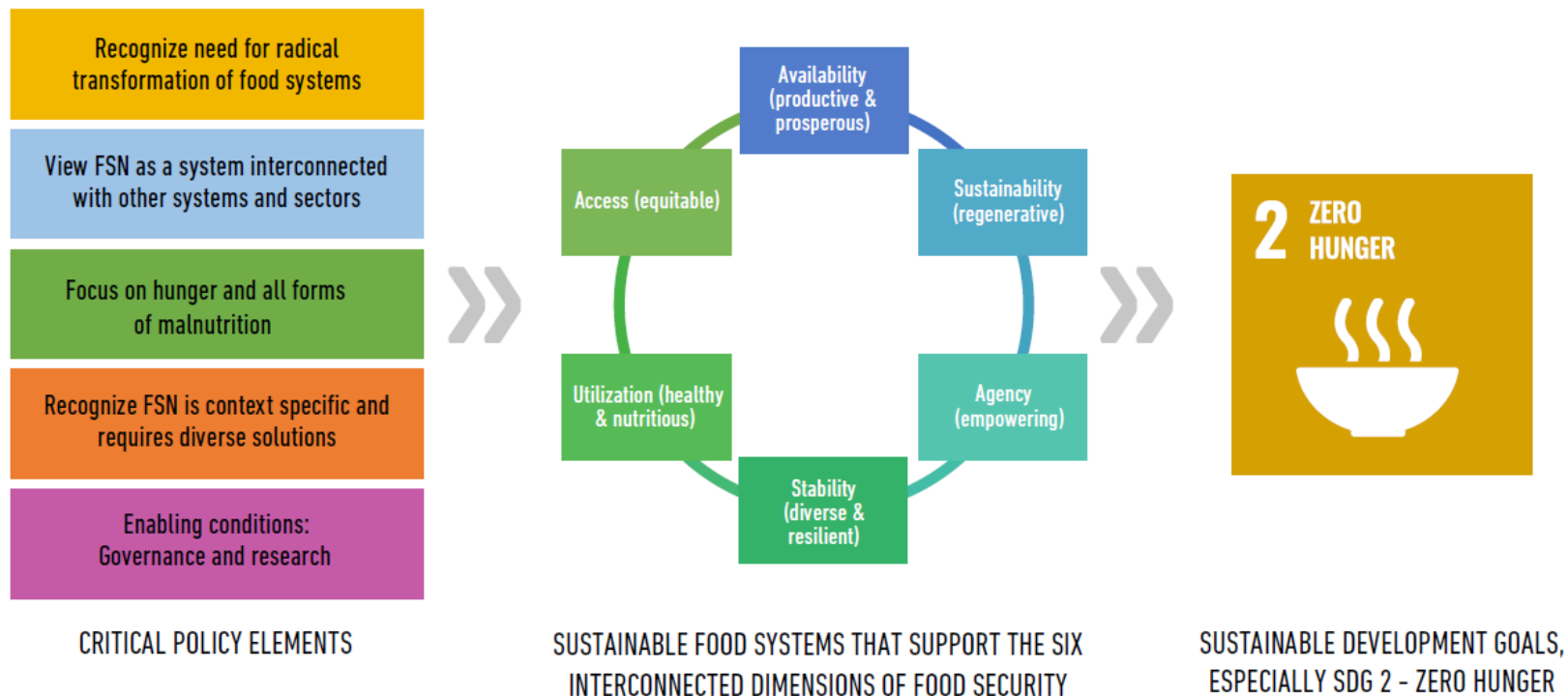
# Global Food System is Unhealthy & Unsustainable

- ***Global Syndemic*** = three interacting pandemics that include obesity, undernutrition, climate change
- ***Common system drivers*** = food, transport, energy, urban design and land use
- ***Policy inertia*** = weak/ineffective policies by decision-makers, opposition by commercial vested interests, and lack of public and civil society demand for change
- ***Coordinated triple-duty actions*** by many actors needed to achieve healthy people and planet

**Source:** Swinburn B, Kraak V, Allender S et al. The global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change: The Lancet Commission report. *The Lancet*. 2019;393:791–846. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)32822-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)32822-8).



# Six Food Security Dimensions



**Source:** Committee on World Food Security. *Food Security and Nutrition: Building a Global Narrative Towards 2030*. 2020. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf>.

**SUSTAINABLE  
HEALTHY  
DIETS...**

**REGARDING THE HEALTH ASPECT**

**1**

...start early in life with early initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age, and continued breastfeeding until two years and beyond, combined with appropriate complementary feeding.

**2**

... are based on a great variety of unprocessed or minimally processed foods, balanced across food groups, while restricting highly processed food and drink products.<sup>18</sup>

**3**

... include wholegrains, legumes, nuts and an abundance and variety of fruits and vegetables.<sup>11</sup>

**4**

... can include moderate amounts of eggs, dairy, poultry and fish; and small amounts of red meat.

**8**

... contain minimal levels, or none if possible, of pathogens, toxins and other agents that can cause foodborne disease.

**7**

... are consistent with WHO guidelines to reduce the risk of diet-related NCDs, and ensure health and wellbeing for the general population.<sup>12</sup>

**6**

... are adequate (i.e. reaching but not exceeding needs) in energy and nutrients for growth and development, and to meet the needs for an active and healthy life across the lifecycle.

**5**

... include safe and clean drinking water as the fluid of choice.

**REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

**9**

... maintain greenhouse gas emissions, water and land use, nitrogen and phosphorus application and chemical pollution within set targets.

**10**

... preserve biodiversity, including that of crops, livestock, forest-derived foods and aquatic genetic resources, and avoid overfishing and overhunting.

**11**

...minimize the use of antibiotics and hormones in food production.

**12**

... minimize the use of plastics and derivatives in food packaging.

**REGARDING SOCIOCULTURAL ASPECTS**

**16**

... avoid adverse gender-related impacts, especially with regard to time allocation (e.g. for buying and preparing food, water and fuel acquisition).

**15**

... are accessible and desirable.

**14**

... are built on and respect local culture, culinary practices, knowledge and consumption patterns, and values on the way food is sourced, produced and consumed.

**13**

...reduce food loss and waste.

**Source:** FAO and WHO. *Sustainable Healthy Diets - Guiding Principles*. Rome: FAO and WHO, 2019.

# Governance

- ***Governance*** is the “total political, organizational, and administrative processes through which actors or stakeholders (i.e., governments, private-sector businesses, foundations, non-governmental organization interest groups and civil society) articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, make decisions, mediate their differences, and meet their obligations.
- *Implicit in governance are...*
  - political ideology
  - politics
  - power

# Multi-lateral vs. Multi-stakeholder Governance

February 2021

CFS 2021/47/7/Rev.1



## COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Forty-seventh Session <i>"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"</i>
8-11 February 2021
THE CFS VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION (VGFSyN)

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## UN Food Systems Summit 2021 – Private Sector Engagement Guidelines

## Seven Engagement Principles

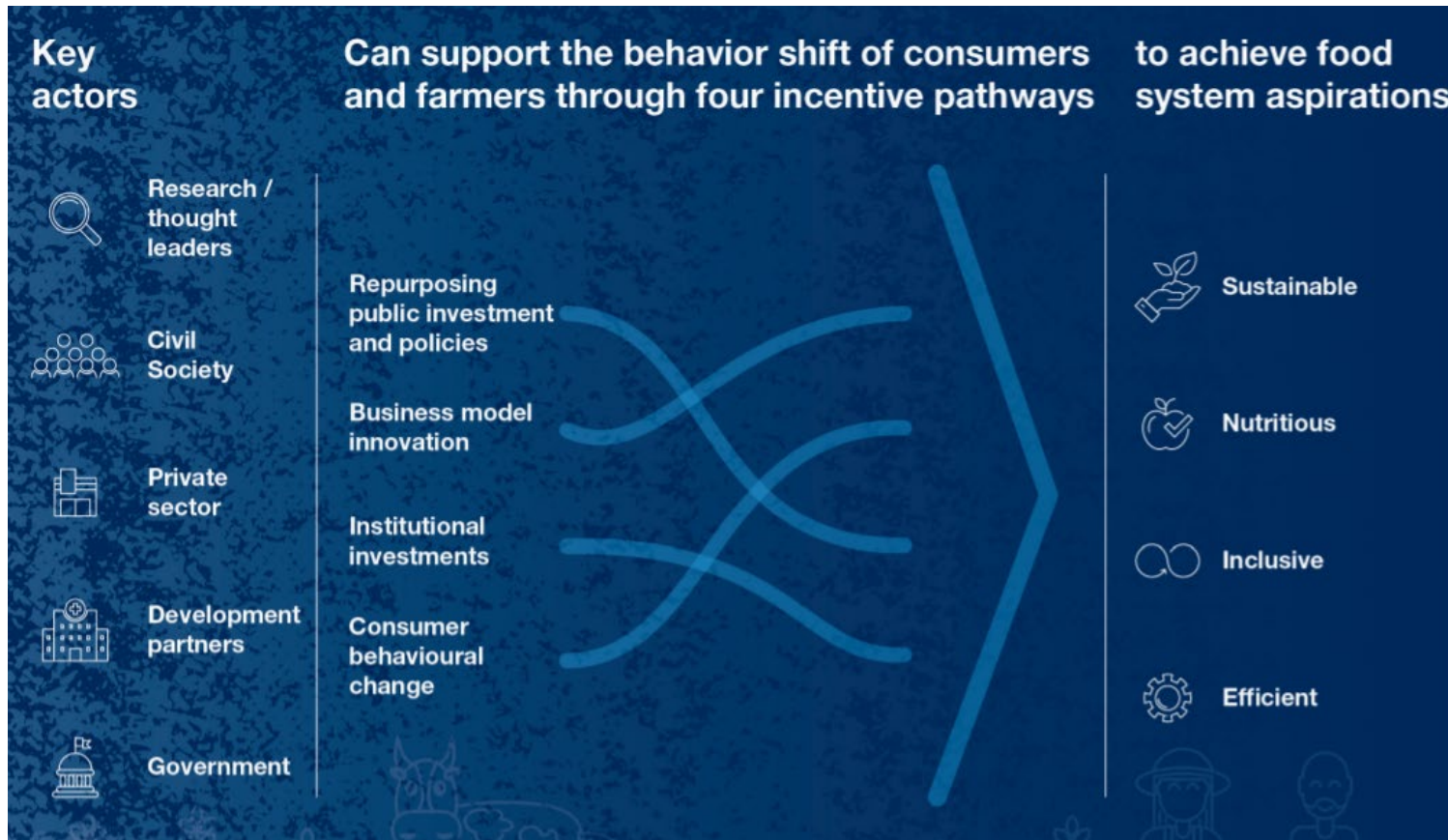
1. Act with urgency
2. Commit to the Summit
3. Be respectful
4. Recognize complexity
5. Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity
6. Complement the work of others
7. Build trust

**Sources:** Committee on World Food Security. Food Security and Nutrition: *Building a Global Narrative Towards 2030*. 2020. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf>; and UNFSS 2021 - Private Sector Engagement Guidelines. February 2021. [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/unfss\\_private\\_sector\\_guidelines\\_feb2021.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/unfss_private_sector_guidelines_feb2021.pdf).





An international organization based in Geneva that promotes public-private cooperation by engaging political, business and other leaders to shape global, regional and industry agendas.



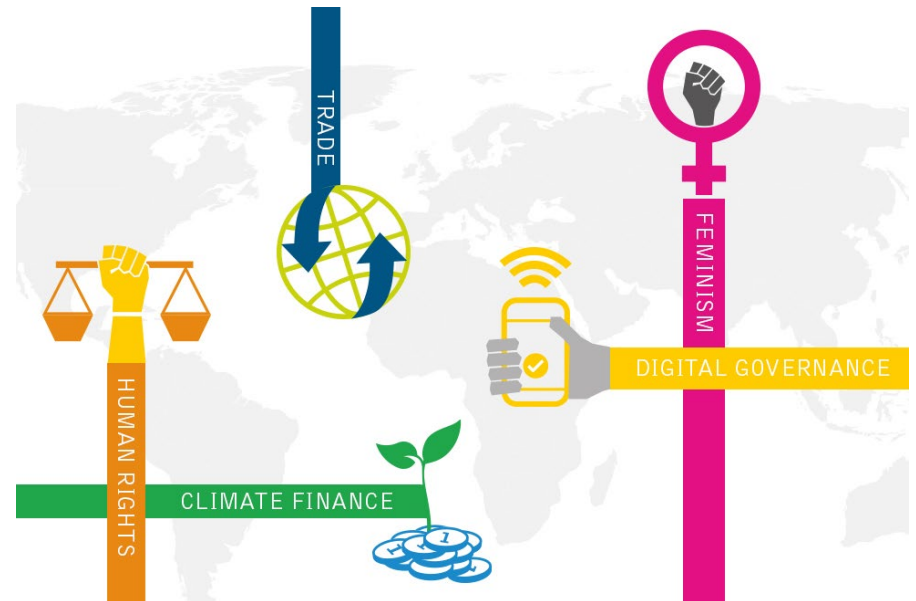
**Source:** World Economic Forum and McKinsey & Company. Incentivizing Food Systems Transformation. January 2020. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Incentivizing\\_Food\\_Systems\\_Transformation.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Incentivizing_Food_Systems_Transformation.pdf)



# UNFSS Aimed to Re-Shape Global Governance Structure from Multilateral to Multi-Stakeholder Market-Led Governance Approach



Multistakeholderism: a new way for corporations and their new partners to try to govern the world



Development  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41301-021-00312-1>

UPFRONT



## Reconfiguring Food Systems Governance: The UNFSS and the Battle Over Authority and Legitimacy

Matthew C. Canfield<sup>1</sup> · Jessica Duncan<sup>2</sup> · Priscilla Claeys<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

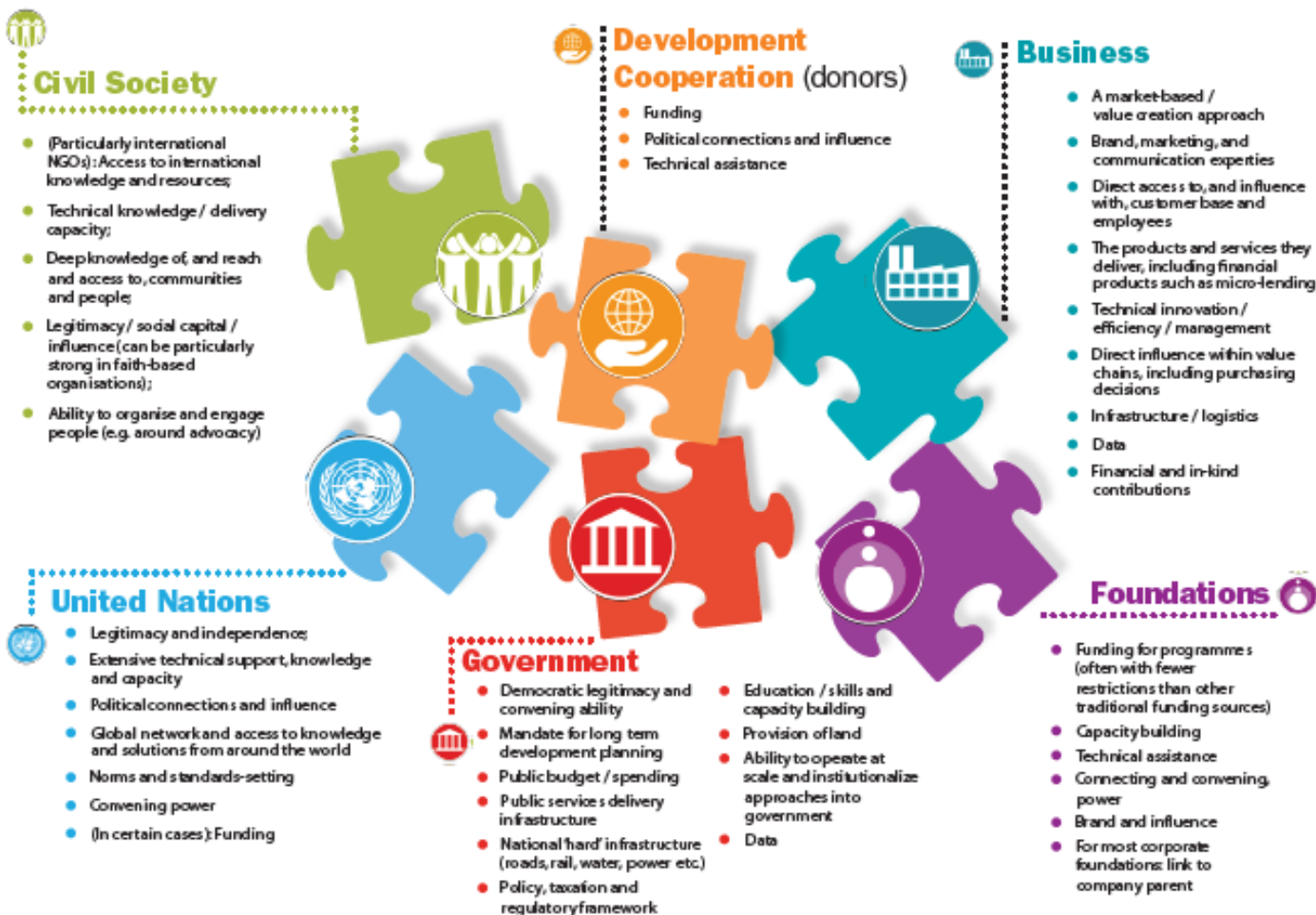
The UN Food Systems Summit was an ambitious and hotly contested event that brought competing approaches to global food governance into relief. In this article, we unpack the rival visions that circulate around how food systems should be governed, focusing on two issues that we feel are at the heart of these divergences: authority and legitimacy. We illustrate how both corporate-philanthropic and food sovereignty networks are struggling to establish epistemic authority of food systems as well as produce legitimacy through very different approaches to participation and accountability.

**Keywords** Multilateralism · Multi-stakeholderism · UN Committee on World Food Security

Canfield et al. Reconfiguring food systems governance: the UNFSS and the battle over authority and legitimacy. *Development*. Oct 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41301-021-00312-1>.

# UN Collaborations & Partnerships

Stakeholder resource map



**Source:** United Nations and The Partnering Initiative. *The SDG Partnership Guidebook. A practical guide to building high impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals*. First Edition. 2020.

<https://www.thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SDG-Partnership-Guidebook-1.0.pdf>

# UN System Agencies & Global Partners





# Scaling Up Nutrition



**63 countries** are leading  
a **global movement**  
to **end malnutrition**  
in all its forms.



A SUN Movement Call to Action for Nutrition ahead of  
the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit:

**A multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach  
to nutrition must be front and centre in food  
systems transformation**

**The UNFSS represents a key milestone in the Year of Action for Nutrition**, which kicked off in December 2020 and will culminate at the Nutrition for Growth Summit this December. An inclusive and equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will not be achieved unless people's nutrition is improved globally, as good nutrition is an indispensable foundation to lift individuals, families, and nations out of poverty and safeguard good health. **We must make use of this historic opportunity for governments, donors, the private sector, UN agencies, and civil society to step up and announce bold commitments at the UNFSS to drive progress against the global nutrition targets.**

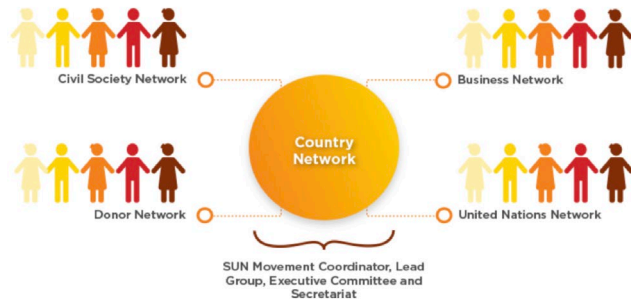


A SUN Movement Call to Action for Nutrition ahead of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit:

**A multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to nutrition must be front and centre in food systems transformation**



## UN Network



In this regard, the SUN Movement asks the UNFSS Secretariat and all stakeholders involved in the upcoming Summit to join forces and ensure that:

- **Nutrition is elevated as a key driver for food systems transformation throughout the UNFSS agenda and panel discussions, and that all National Pathways for food systems transformation are geared towards ending malnutrition in all its forms by 2030.**
- **The Summit is inclusive and ensures a balanced representation of stakeholders, providing meaningful space to nutrition grassroots movements, particularly those involving young people, women, and indigenous peoples.** These organisations and networks are uniquely positioned to create awareness, involvement, and commitment to improve food systems in a way that is owned by communities and rooted in human rights. They are instrumental in achieving a country-led, bottom-up transformation by using locally generated evidence and solutions.
- **Private sector representatives - from multinational companies to small enterprises - commit to everyone's right to healthy, affordable, and sustainable diets to end all forms of malnutrition.** This includes, but is not limited to, supporting every mother's right to breastfeed without undue influence from manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes. The infant and young child feeding industry must publicly commit to full compliance, globally, with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions. Companies must also support and comply with regulatory measures around the labelling, promotion and marketing of unhealthy foods.
- **The Summit weaves all sectors together to enable a true systemic transformation to improve nutrition.** It is particularly key that the One Health approach is strongly referenced in the Summit's narrative, along with **concrete recommendations for how food systems can address global nutrition targets** (such as reaching wasting or anaemia targets). Biodiversity's pivotal role in food systems also needs to be elevated: it contributes to mitigating climate change, but it also ensures diet diversity, crop resilience and eventually, improved nutrition.
- **The Summit upholds the systemic approach with an accountability mechanism that transparently engages all sectors and stakeholders and ensures links with other global summits and processes** such as the World Health Assembly, the COP of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ocean Conferences, and, last but not least, **Nutrition for Growth Summits.**

The SUN Movement remains determined to support the success of the UNFSS and to drive progress in food systems transformation through a truly multistakeholder and multisectoral approach to nutrition, in the lead up to and beyond the Nutrition for Growth Summit.

  
**Gerda Verburg**  
 UN Assistant Secretary-General and SUN Movement Coordinator

  
**Emily Heheghan**  
 on behalf of the SUN Business Network co-convenor

  
**Melanie Bruns**  
 on behalf of the SUN Donor Network

  
**Rory Maylan**  
 on behalf of the SUN Civil Society Network

  
**Stineke Oenema**  
 on behalf of the UN Nutrition



# Many actors are engaging through global alliances, networks, coalitions to address hunger, food insecurity, poor diet, obesity and NCDs

## Five Dimensions of Sustainability for Diets and Food Systems

1. Markets and Value Chains	2. Food Security and Agriculture	3. Environment and Ecosystems	4. Sociocultural and Political	5. Health and Nutrition
Improve livelihoods, availability and affordability of healthy sustainable diets	Improve agricultural productivity, food safety, food and nutrition security, and dietary diversity	Improve environmental stewardship, soil and water health, preserve biodiversity and regenerative agriculture	Improve equity, human labor conditions and animal welfare	Improve consumer demand, food safety and nutrition security (diet quality) to reduce wasting, stunting, micronutrient deficiencies, obesity and non-communicable disease risks

## Global and Regional Alliances, Networks and Partnerships



## National Alliances, Networks and Partnerships



## Global, Regional and National Forums, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms and Coalitions



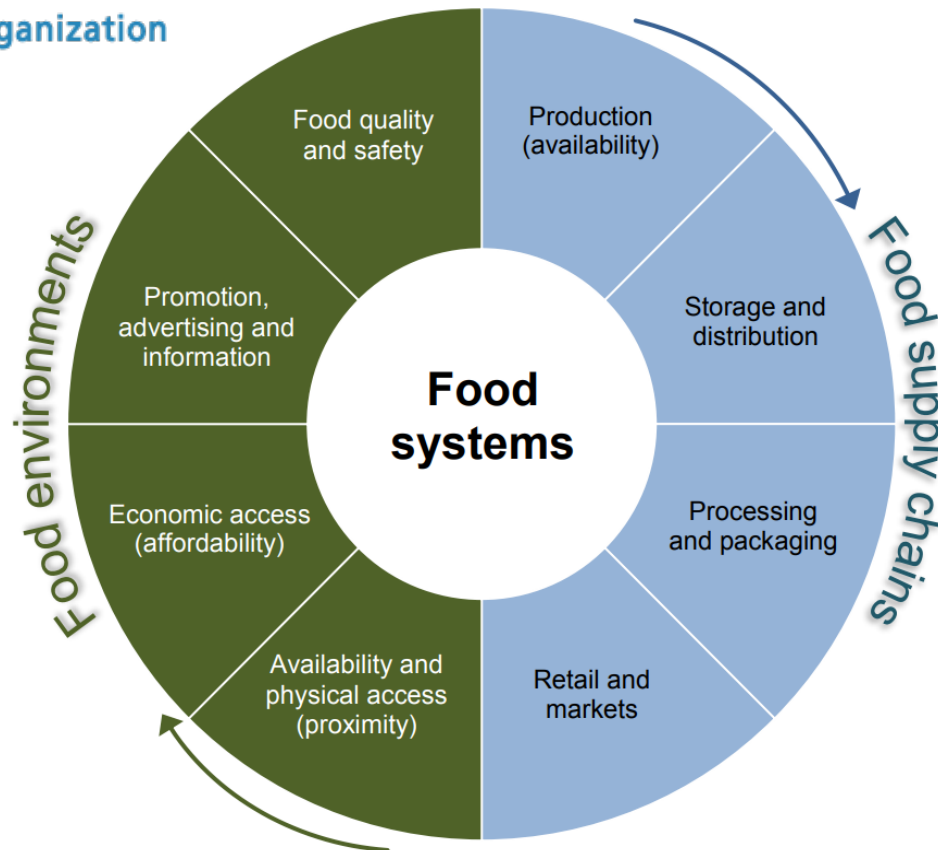
**Source:** Kraak VI. Advice for Food Systems Governance Actors to Decide Whether and How to Engage with the Agri-Food and Beverage Industry to Address Malnutrition Within the Context of Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems. Comment on "Challenges to Establish Effective Public-Private Partnerships to Address Malnutrition in All Its Forms." *Int J Health Policy Manag.* 2021.

# Food Systems

## *Food Supply Chains & Food Environments*



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations



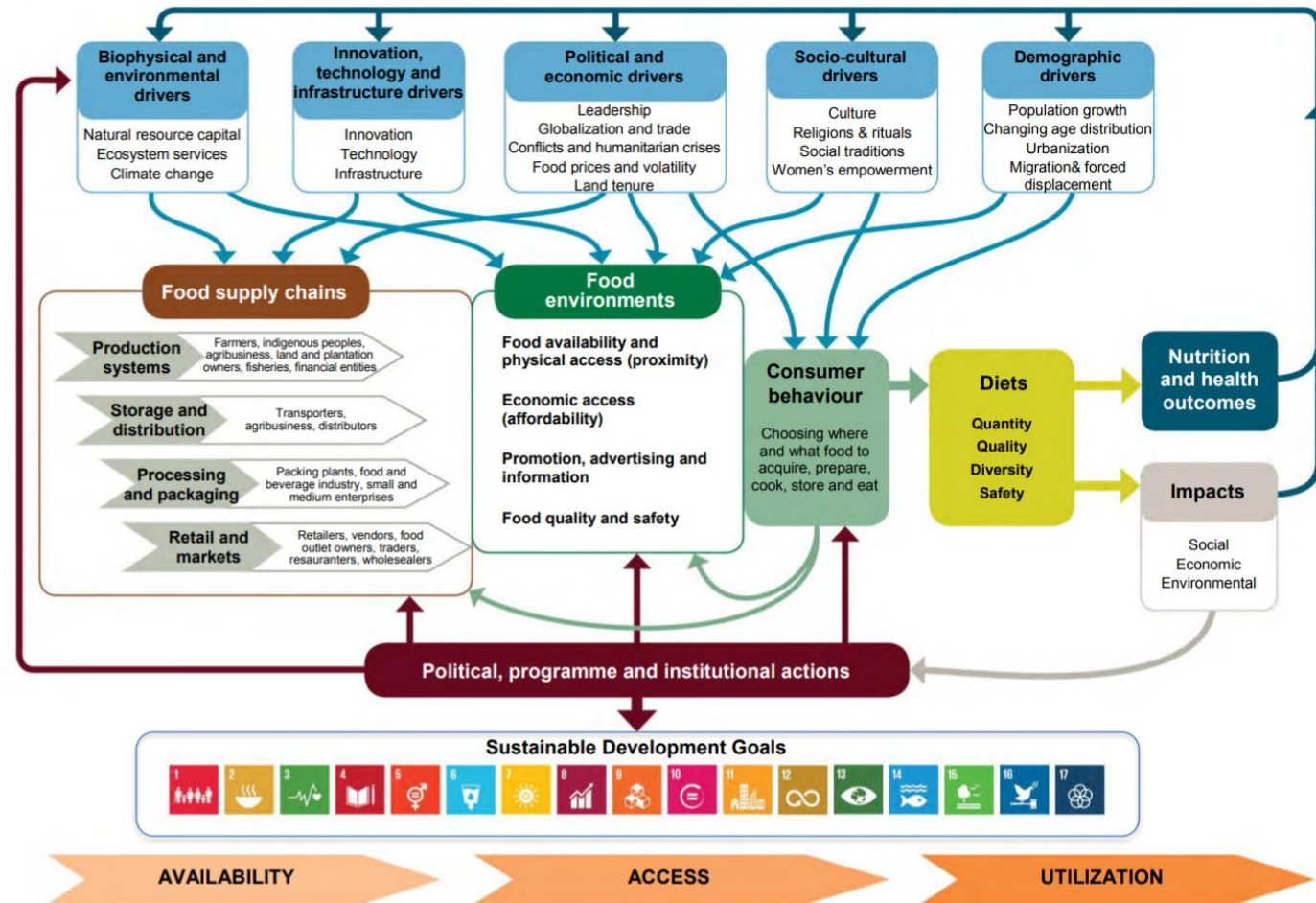
Source: Adapted wheel concept from Ranganathan *et al.* (2016).

**Source:** Committee on World Food Security. *Nutrition and food systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Sept 2017.

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7846e.pdf>.

# FAO Food Systems Approach

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of food systems for diets and nutrition



**Source:** Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2017) *Nutrition and Food Systems. A report by The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security*. Rome: United Nations. 2017. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7846e.pdf>

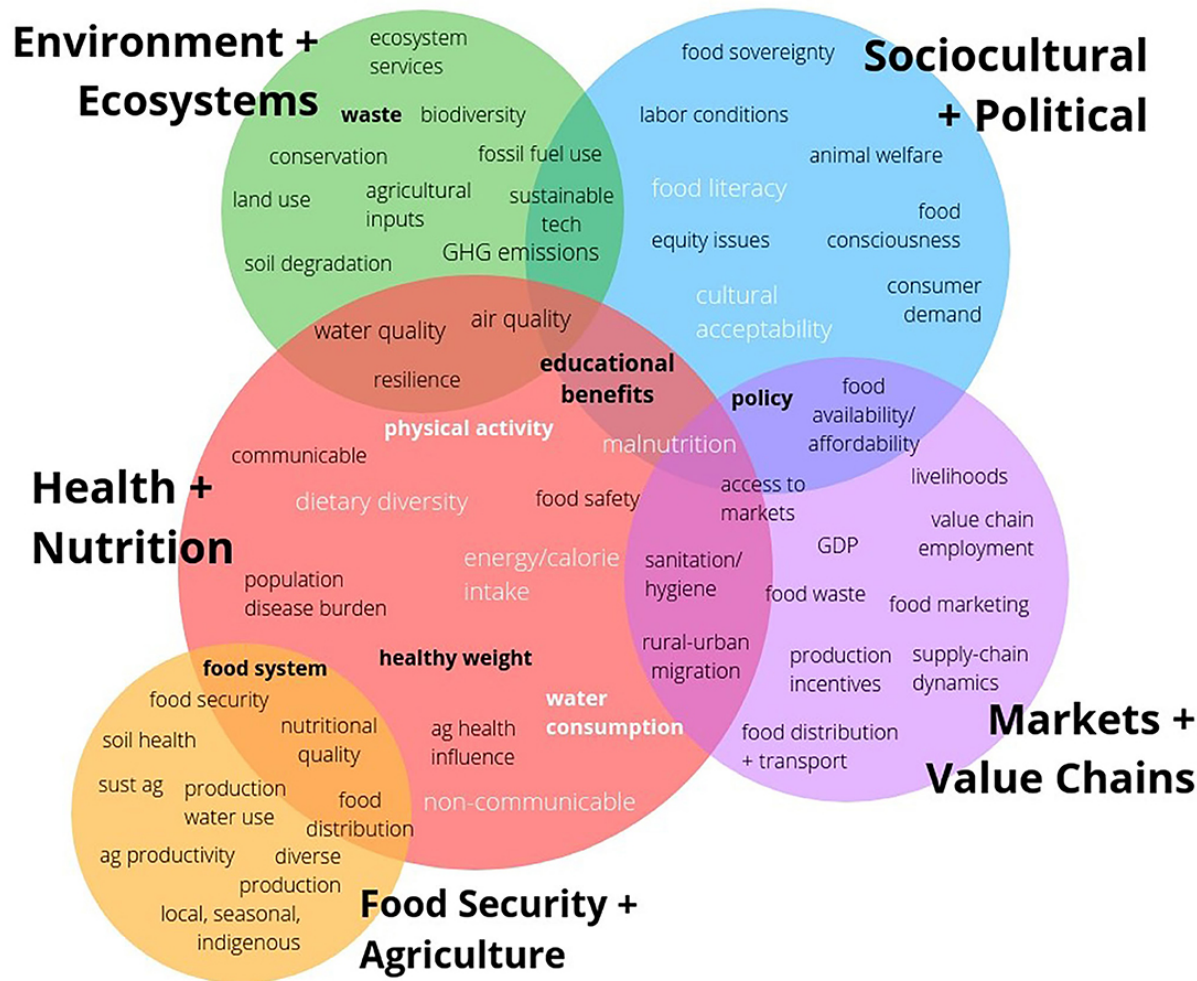


# Agri-Food System Actors or Stakeholders



**Source:** One Planet and United Nations Environment Programme. *Collaborative Framework for Food Systems Transformation. A multi-stakeholder pathway for sustainable food systems.* 2019.

# Five Dimensions of Sustainability for Diets and Health



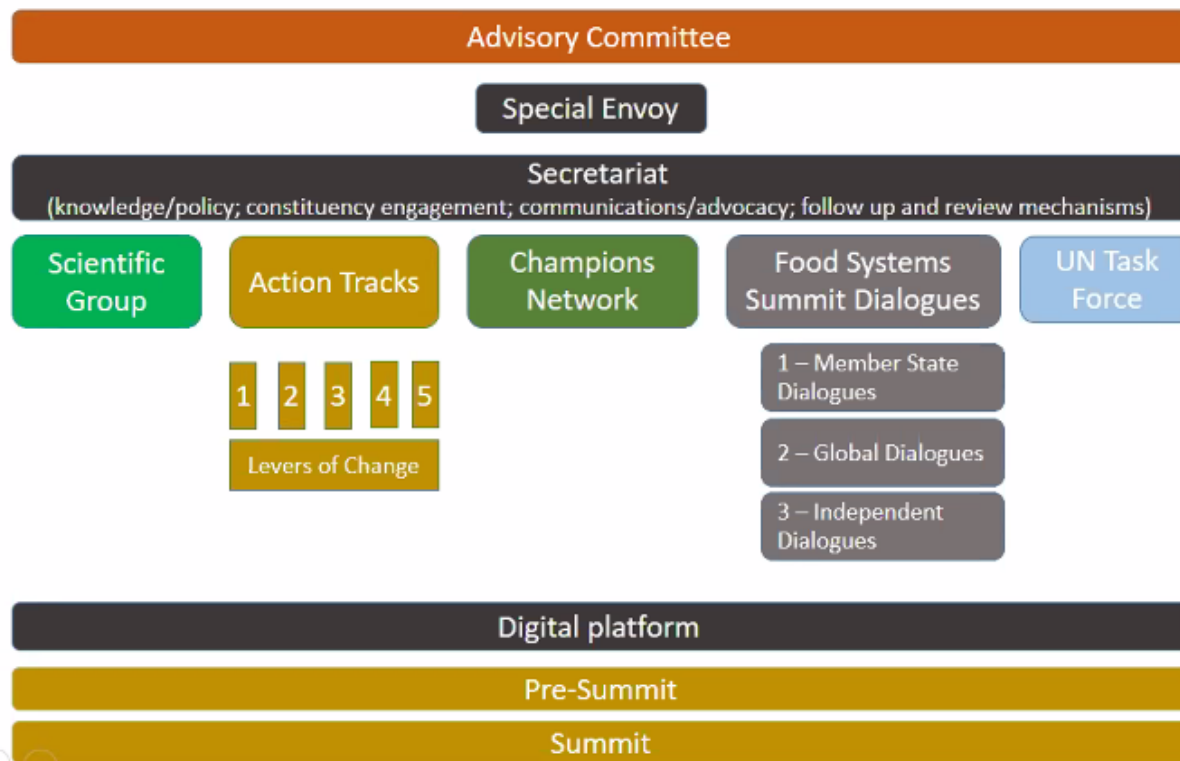
**Source:** Mazac R, Renwick K, Seed B, Black JL. An approach for integrating and analyzing sustainability in food-based dietary guidelines. *Front Sustain Food Systems*. 2021;5(84):1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2021.544072>



# UN Food Systems Summit 2021

## Overview of Areas of Work to Deliver on the Food Systems Summit Vision

We are moving forward an ambitious process to make this both a “People’s Summit” and a “Solutions Summit”, and the following image depicts how all components come together.



#### Action Track 1:

### Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all

Action Track 1 will work to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition and reduce the incidence of non-communicable disease, enabling all people to be nourished and healthy. This goal requires that all people at all times have access to sufficient quantities of affordable and safe food products.

Achieving the goal means increasing the availability of nutritious food, making food more affordable and reducing inequities in access to food.

#### Updates:

December 2020: [Public Forum](#) - [Report](#) - [Watch](#) | [Discussion Starter Paper](#)

[ACCESS PUBLIC SURVEY](#)



#### Action Track 3:

### Boost nature-positive production

Action Track 3 will work to optimize environmental resource use in food production, processing and distribution, thereby reducing biodiversity loss, pollution, water use, soil degradation and greenhouse gas emissions. In its pursuit of this goal, the Action Track will aim to deepen understanding of the constraints and opportunities facing smallholder farmers and small-scale enterprises along the food value chain. It will also strive to support food system governance that realigns incentives to reduce food losses and other negative environmental impacts.

#### Updates:

December 2020: [Discussion Starter Paper](#) | [Public Forum](#) - [Watch](#)

[ACCESS PUBLIC SURVEY](#)



#### Action Track 2:

### Shift to sustainable consumption patterns

Action Track 2 will work to build consumer demand for sustainably produced food, strengthen local value chains, improve nutrition, and promote the reuse and recycling of food resources, especially among the most vulnerable. This Action Track recognizes that we need to eliminate wasteful patterns of food consumption; it also recognizes that we need to facilitate a transition in diets towards more nutritious foods that require fewer resources to produce and transport.

#### Updates:

December 2020: [Discussion Starter Paper](#) | [Public Forum](#) - [Watch](#)

[ACCESS PUBLIC SURVEY](#)



#### Action Track 4:

### Advance equitable livelihoods

Action Track 4 will work to contribute to the elimination of poverty by promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all actors along the food value chain, reducing risks for the world's poorest, enabling entrepreneurship and addressing the inequitable access to resources and distribution of value. Action Track 4 will improve resilience through social protection and seek to ensure that food systems "leave no one behind."

#### Updates:

December 2020: [Discussion Starter Paper](#) | [Public Forum](#) - [Watch](#)

[ACCESS PUBLIC SURVEY](#)



#### Action Track 5:

### Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

Action Track 5 will work to ensure the continued functionality of sustainable food systems in areas that are prone to conflict or natural disasters. The Action Track will also promote global action to protect food supplies from the impacts of pandemics. The ambition behind Action Track 5 is to ensure that all people within a food system are empowered to prepare for, withstand, and recover from instability. Action Track 5 also aims to help people everywhere participate in food systems that, despite shocks and stressors, deliver food security, nutrition and equitable livelihoods for all.

#### Updates:

December 2020: [Discussion Starter Paper](#) | [Public Forum](#) - [Watch](#)

[ACCESS PUBLIC SURVEY](#)



**Source:** United Nations Food Systems Summit. 2021. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/food-systems-summit-2021/> and <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/action-tracks>.

# UN Food Systems Summit Timeline

## February to October 2021

**Feb 2021**

UN CFS released Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (CGFSyN) endorsed by 138 FAO member states



UN Food Systems Summit 2021 – Private Sector Engagement Guidelines

**Aug 2021**

Ad hoc UNFSS Governance Committee & > 100 people from 17 countries sent letter to UNSG & > 500 African faith leaders and agriculturalists sent letter to Gates & Rockefeller Fdns rejecting AGRA approach

**Apr 2021**

Scientists launched online petition to boycott UNFSS

Scientists Boycott the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit

Leave a Comment / Solidarity Actions / By AJC

Together, we build... among objectivity. That is, we build fragile and increasingly sturdy contact zones where diverse knowledges dialogue. – Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor at The City University of New York and co-founder of The Public Science Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 4/15/2021

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
agroecologyresearchaction@gmail.com

Sign the petition here

La versión en español está aquí.



**July 2021**

IPES withdrew from UNFSS



**Oct 2021**

UN released list of global coalitions for 4 action areas



# Critiques of UNFSS Planners

## Food sovereignty civil society actors & scholar activists

1. Summit lacked clarity, transparency and sufficient accountability mechanism.
2. Summit used “human rights rhetoric” but did not use human rights equity or justice lens to analyze problems and viable solutions.
3. Summit overly focused on scientific and technical solutions to transform unhealthy and unsustainable food systems even though organizers described it as “People’s Summit.”
4. Summit failed to address corporate power over global food system; was dominated and “co-opted” by corporate interests; private-sector actors portrayed as “investors and innovators”; limited focus on their role in predatory marketing practices of unhealthy UPFs especially targeted to children globally; vague engagement principles shared.
5. Undermined existing governance structures (UN Committee World Food Security) and shifted from multi-literalism to multi-stakeholderism to reshape global food systems governance.



# Forms of Protest for UNFSS 2021

Global Food Security 30 (2021) 100569

frontiers  
in Sustainable Food Systems

POLICY AND PRACTICE REVIEWS  
published: 13 April 2021  
doi: 10.3389/fsys.2021.661552



## UN Food Systems Summit 2021: Dismantling Democracy and Resetting Corporate Control of Food Systems

Matthew Carfield<sup>1\*</sup>, Moly D. Anderson<sup>2</sup> and Philip McMichael<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leiden Law School, Van Vollenhoven Institute, Leiden, Netherlands, <sup>2</sup> Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT, United States, <sup>3</sup> Department of Global Development, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, United States

This article analyzes the development and organization of the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), which is being convened by UN Secretary General António Guterres in late 2021. Although few people will dispute that global food systems need transformation, it has become clear that the Summit is instead an effort by a powerful alliance of multinational corporations, philanthropies, and export-oriented countries to subvert multilateral institutions of food governance and capture the global narrative of “food systems transformation.” This article places the upcoming Summit in the context of previous world food summits and analyzes concerns that have been voiced by many within civil society. It elaborates how the current structure and forms of participant recruitment and public engagement lack basic transparency and accountability, fail to address significant conflicts of interest, and ignore human rights. As the COVID-19 pandemic illuminates the structural vulnerabilities of the neoliberal model of food systems and the consequences of climate change for food production, a high-level commitment to equitable and sustainable food systems is needed now more than ever. However, the authors suggest that the UNFSS instead seems to follow a trajectory in which efforts to govern global food systems in the public interest have been subverted to maintain colonial and corporate forms of control.

**Keywords:** United Nations food systems summit, food systems, global governance, right to food, multi-stakeholder partnerships, Committee on World Food Security, multilateralism, corporate control

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### Commentary

### BMJ Global Health

## The need to reshape global food processing: a call to the United Nations Food Systems Summit

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### INTRODUCTION

The UN Food Systems Summit is taking place later this year at a crucial time. Food systems are manifestly failing to enhance human health, social equity or environmental protection. One symptom is the pandemic of obesity and related non-communicable diseases with their vast consequences. As we show here, one of the main drivers of this pandemic is the transformation in food processing. In the modern, globalised food system, useful types of food processing that preserve foods, enhance their sensory properties and make their culinary preparation easier and more diverse, have been and are being replaced by deleterious types of processing whose main purpose is to increase profits by creating hyperpalatable and convenient products that are grossly inferior imitations of minimally processed foods and freshly prepared dishes and meals. The Summit has a unique opportunity to confront this calamitous change, and to recommend effective policies and actions to UN agencies and member states.

### PROCESSING AND INDUSTRY

The key issue here is the nature, purpose and

### Summary box

- In the modern, globalised food system, useful types of industrial food processing that preserve foods, enhance their sensory properties and make their culinary preparation easier and more diverse, have been and are being replaced by food ultra-processing.
- The main purpose of food ultra-processing is to increase profits by creating hyperpalatable and convenient food products that are grossly inferior imitations of minimally processed foods and freshly prepared dishes and meals.
- In the last decades, obesity, type 2 diabetes and related diseases have become global epidemics, leading the health systems of many countries to or beyond breaking point.
- Taken together, the totality of evidence summarised here shows beyond reasonable doubt that increased consumption of ultra-processed foods is a major contributor to the pandemic of obesity, type 2 diabetes and related diseases.
- The 2021 UN Food System has a unique opportunity to urge countries to implement policy interventions required to reduce ultra-processed food production, distribution and consumption, while simultaneously making fresh or minimally processed foods more available, accessible and affordable.

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## UN food systems summit leaders must not remain silent on its inadequate rules of engagement with commercial actors

September 1, 2021

The pre-summit to September's [United Nations Food Systems Summit](#) (UNFSS), held in Rome at the end of July 2021, confirmed the fears of [a broad range of international actors](#) that the UNFSS model allows for corporate capture of international policy on healthy and sustainable food systems. Coverage in the BBC [Food Programme](#) demonstrates that concerns have moved into the mainstream, despite the hopes of many that the UNFSS could still help fix a broken food system.

Development  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/941301-021-00303-2>

### THEMATIC SECTION

## The Food Systems Summit's Failure to Address Corporate Power

Jennifer Clapp<sup>1</sup> · Indra Noyes<sup>2</sup> · Zachary Grant<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

Based on analysis of documentation associated with the UN Food Systems Summit process, we identify three main ways in which the Summit failed to address the problem of corporate power in food systems in a meaningful way. First, the Summit was ‘strategically silent’ on the problem of corporate power, mentioning the problem only very infrequently and in a way that failed to identify corporations as holding disproportionate power in food systems. Second, it advanced technology and innovation-based solutions that benefit large agri-food companies rather than seeking structural transformation of food systems. Third, it gave corporations a priority seat at the table by engaging them in various settings in the lead up to the Summit.

**Keywords:** Corporations · Strategic silence · Technology and innovation · Food systems governance



# Insights From Past Effective Boycotts

## 1960s – 1980s



**United Farm Workers**

(SJ) Se Puede!®

ORGANIZING

CREATING CHANGE

TAKE ACTION

NEWS AND EVENTS



HISTORY

PHOTOS

AUDIO/VIDEO

CESAR C

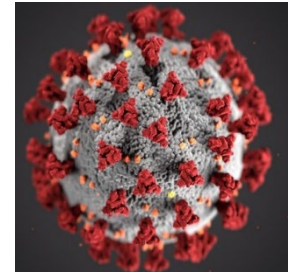
### The 1965-1970 Delano Grape Strike and Boycott

Posted on March 7, 2017 by Inga Kim



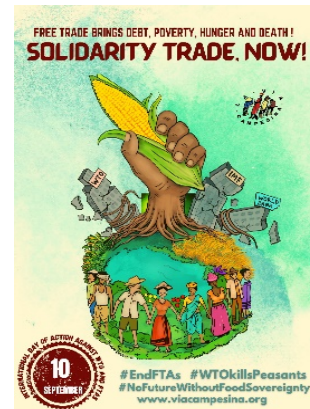


# Digital Activism Could Have Been Used More Strategically by Civil Society & Scholar Activists



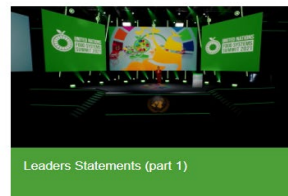
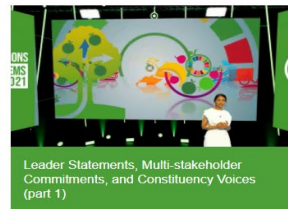
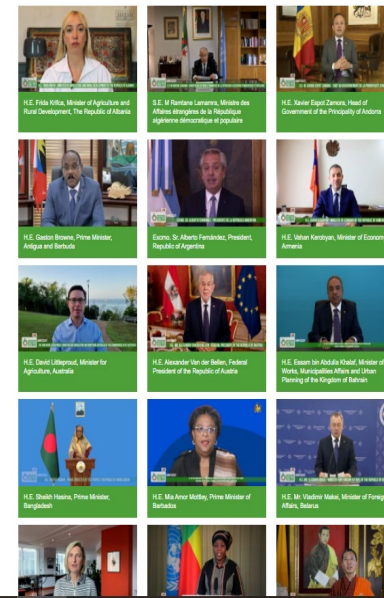
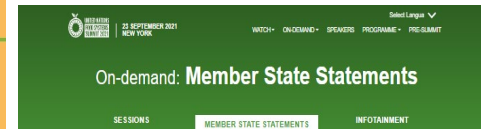
NEWS / 03 AUG 2021

Thousands mobilize to call for food systems that empower people, not companies





**2020-2021:** 50 “game changing” solution clusters  
**Sept 2021:** ~22,000 people from 180 countries participated in the UNFSS to “Transform Food Systems”

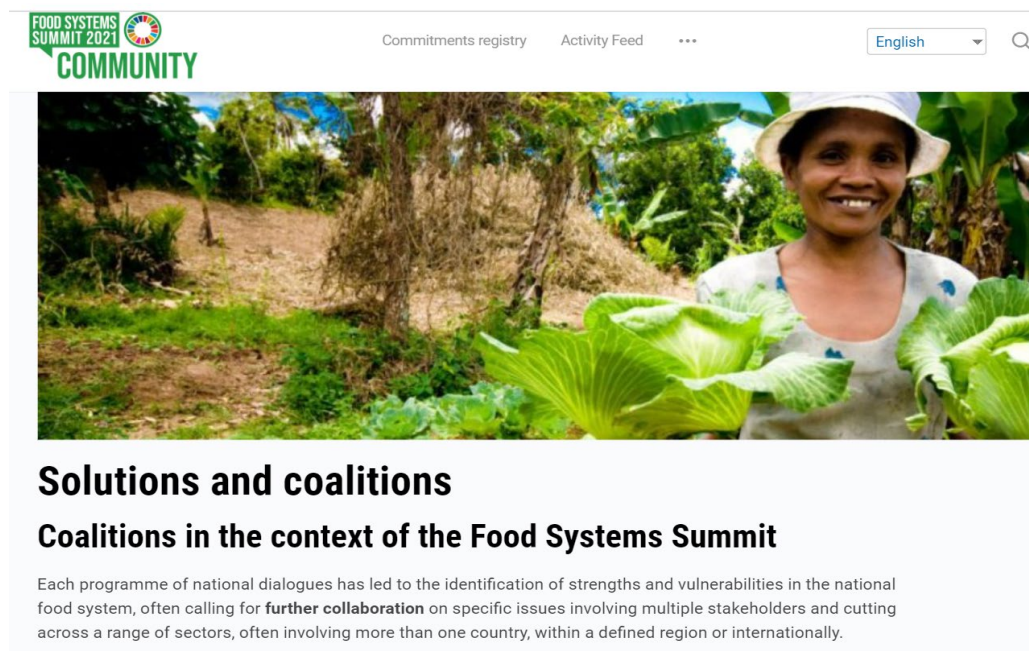


United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021. 23 September 2021, New York. <https://www.un.org/foodsystemssummit>.



# 1. UNFSS Outcomes: Evaluate Commitments

> **230 voluntary pledges and commitments** were made by governments, businesses, foundations, civil society organizations and UN agencies to implement actions across **5 Action Tracks (streamlined into 4 Action Areas)**



**Sources:** United Nations Food Systems Summit. 2021. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/food-systems-summit-2021/> and <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/action-tracks> and <https://foodsystems.community/game-changing-propositions-solution-clusters/>

# UNFSS Outcomes: 4 Action Areas



- **Action Area 1: Nourish All People:** the Food is Never Waste Coalition (Brazil, US, Italy, FAO, UNEP, and others), the School Meals Coalition: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child (Argentina, Finland, Burkina Faso, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and others), and the Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children and all Coalition (Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, FAO, UNEP, UNICEF, WHO, **and others**).



- **Action Area 2: Boost Nature-based Solutions of Production:** the Agroecology Coalition (Costa Rica, Philippines, Switzerland, CGIAR, FAO, UNEP, WFP, and others), and The Coalition for Aquatic/Blue Foods (Bangladesh, Fiji, FAO, WorldFish, **and others**).



- **Action Area 3: Advance Equitable Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Empowered Communities:** Decent Work and Living Incomes and Wages Coalition (Dominican Republic, IFAD, ILO, CARE **and others**).



- **Action Area 4: Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks, and Stresses:** Social Protection for Food Systems Transformation Coalition (Chile, Ethiopia, FAO, ILO, UNICEF, WFP **and others**).

# Reflections

1. **Convening UNFSS important post-COVID but was one of several UN Summits in 2021**
  - **Oct 2021:** COP 26 in Glasgow to address climate change commitments
  - **Dec 2021:** Nutrition for Growth Summit in Tokyo for undernutrition
2. **UN Secretary General & UNSSS planners**
  - **Politically pragmatic or complicit** by not addressing corporate power and control of food systems at UNFSS?
  - Underutilized existing UN (WFS, FAO & WHO) technical reports
  - Inadequate private-sector engagement guidelines
  - UNFSS had tight control over social media/digital narrative
3. **Global governance: multi-lateral to multi-stakeholder shift**
  - What strategies and tools can civil society and scholar activists use hold govts and private-sector actors **accountable** for policies and practices?
4. **Reconcile conflicting future food system visions**
  - Sustainability, vision for food systems transition and transformation

# Evaluate Accountability Actions for Actors in UNFSS Global Coalitions

## The Accountability Pact Webinar Programme

01 September 2021

13:00 CEST, 07:00 EDT, 21:00 AEST

This 2-hour webinar will launch **An International Pact on Monitoring for Accountability for Action on Food Systems: 'The Accountability Pact'**, linking people from around the world involved in food systems monitoring and bringing them up to date with international activities and actions on monitoring for accountability ahead of the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in late September 2021.

There will be presenters from the current major food monitoring systems giving an update of the future directions for their work and how you can become engaged. See the programme below.



IDENTIFY the value of robust, independent monitoring of food systems as a catalyst within the Accountability Cycle (*roles for monitoring systems shown in italics*)

- 1) **Setting the account:** defining the objectives and targets for action (*converting high-level commitments to measurable indicators*);
- 2) **Taking the account:** measuring progress towards targets (*monitoring food policies, actions, environments, systems, and consumption*);
- 3) **Sharing the account:** communicating the results to decision-makers (*translating the research into accessible evidence*);
- 4) **Holding to account:** providing incentives and disincentives for those in power to act (*supporting the voices of other actors, eg civil society groups and investors*);
- 5) **Responding to the account:** taking action to improve food systems (*supporting action with evidence and expertise*).

**Source:** Swinburn B. *The Accountability Pact*. 2021. <https://www.accountabilitypact.org/>.



# Food Systems Dashboard

Identifies 5 food system types x 146 countries

*“describe, diagnose, decide how to improve diets”*



RURAL AND  
TRADITIONAL



INFORMAL AND  
EXPANDING



EMERGING AND  
DIVERSIFYING



MODERNIZING  
AND FORMALIZING



INDUSTRIALIZED  
AND  
CONSOLIDATED



**We need clearer descriptions of future food system typologies....**

1. Develop roadmap to achieve healthy, equitable, resilient and sustainable (i.e., economic, social, environment) food system typologies 6 and 7 and 8.
2. Decide how govt policies to incentivize and regulate technologies & conveniences of modern food systems (i.e., digital technology and commerce, biometric info & privacy) to avoid consequences for people and the planet.

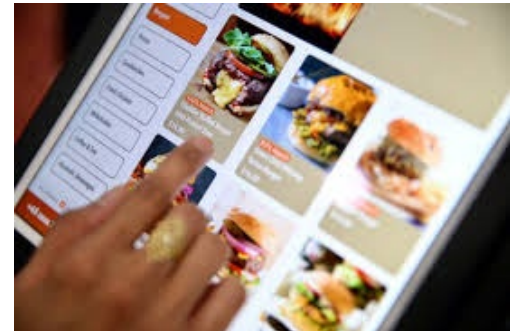
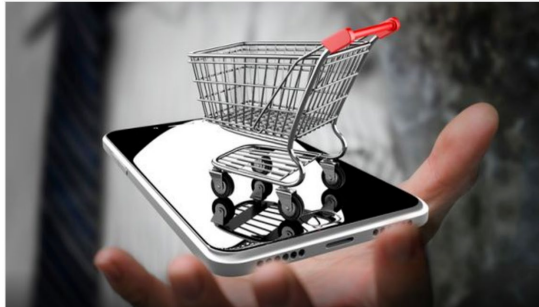
**Sources:** Fanzo J et al. The Food Systems Dashboard is a new tool to inform better food policy. *Nat Food*. 2020;1:243–246.  
Johns Hopkins University. *Food Systems Dashboard*. June 2020. <http://www.foodsystemsdashboard.org/about-food-system>

# Future Food Systems Transition & Transformation

## Reconcile competing paradigms, visions, narratives

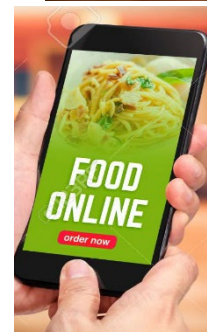
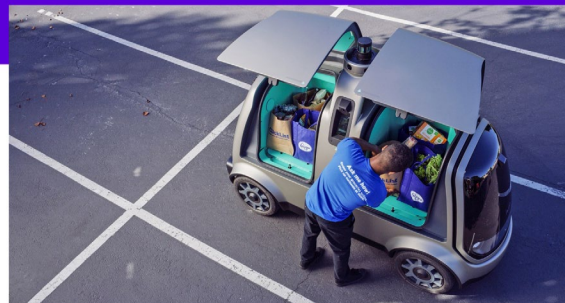
From 'algorithmic nudging' to virtual cross-selling: Is ecommerce changing the rules in grocery?

By Elaine Watson       POST A COMMENT  
17-Jul-2018 - Last updated on 17-Jul-2018 at 04:19 GMT



**This self-driving car could deliver groceries to your doorstep**

Kroger is launching a pilot program later this year to test the autonomous vehicles.





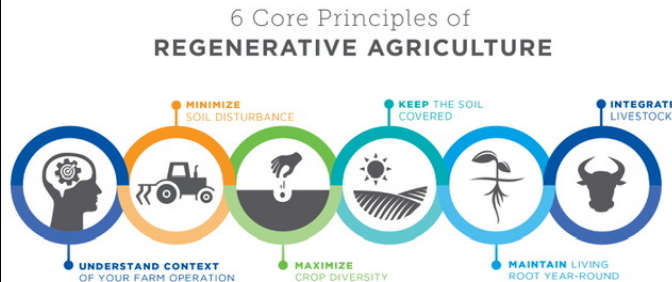
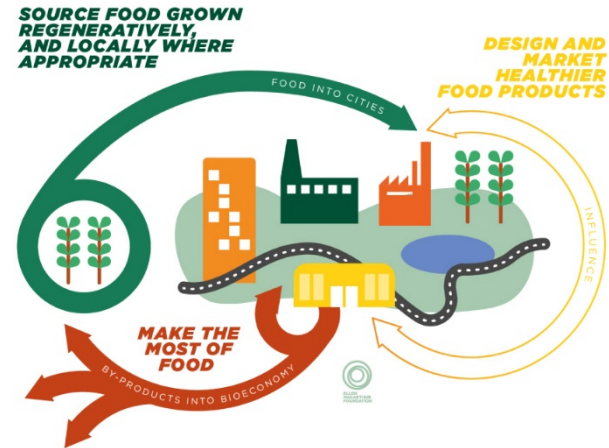
# Future Food Systems Transition & Transformation

## Reconcile competing paradigms, visions, narratives

These steps are necessary in “bending the curve” on the negative impacts of the food system:

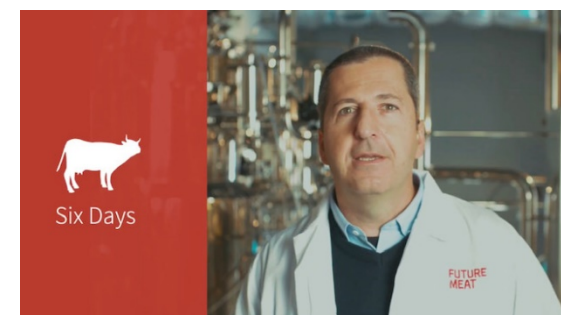
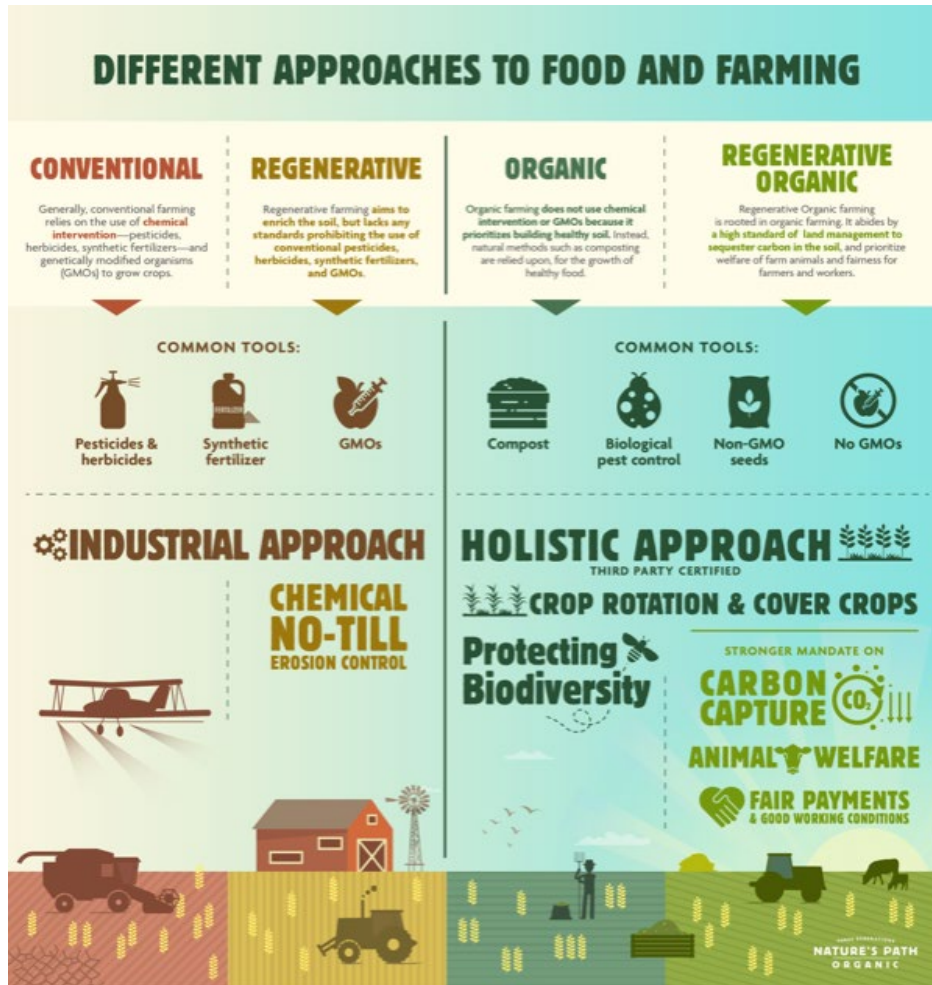


Graphic: WWF US ©



# 4. Future Food Systems Transition & Transformation

Reconcile competing paradigms, visions, narratives





# Further Reading

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