

HIGH-LEVEL FOOD SYSTEMS EVENT

**Leveraging Change:
The Role of Donors in Food Systems Transformation**
9 September 2021, 12:30-15:00 CEST | [Register](#) for the virtual event



To take forward the outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit will require concerted and coordinated efforts by all actors. Donors have a unique role in being able to support initiatives that can leverage change and provide the foundations for collaborative efforts across food systems. To optimize this potential requires donors to carefully consider the lessons from the Summit process and dialogues and to align their future programming with emerging opportunities to drive transformation.

This independent Food Systems event of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD), co-hosted by the European Commission, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is a contribution to ensure donors and their partners collaborate to realize the full leveraging potential of donor funding.

Background

In the last decades, tremendous progress has been made globally to produce enough food to meet the demands of the growing population. Yet, more than 800 million people still go hungry¹ and nearly half the world's population does not eat a healthy diet. Vast number of people are involved in producing the food we all eat; however, many are unable to earn a decent living; moreover, food production is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and environmental degradation. For

¹ According to the 2021 SOFI Report: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb4474en/cb4474en.pdf>.

these reasons, the coming decades will require a transformation in how food systems function - to align with needs and aspirations of the future.

The Food Systems Summit² (FSS) will pave the way for a profound transformation of food production and consumption, helping the world learn how to feed itself in a way that is less ineffective, less unequal, and less environmentally destructive. The process, according to Agnes Kalibata, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the FSS, is meant to build “stronger, healthier, more inclusive, nutritious, and resilient food systems” over the next decade.

The Summit is a critical opportunity, as it will provide a platform for engaging all stakeholders and achieving consensus on an action agenda for change. The global donor community, among the key stakeholder groups, have a critical role in leveraging change through the investments they make, the innovations they support and the international collaboration they enable. While donor investments in food systems are relatively small compared to the investments of farmers, food sector businesses and national governments, they can be crucial for enabling and incentivizing other actors to play their part. *Optimizing the catalytic and leveraging potential of donor support will be key in responding to the outcomes of the FSS.*

For example, the Ceres2030³ research published in October 2020 reveals how donor governments, through an additional investment of US\$14 billion a year, could leverage investment from low- and middle-income countries and the private sector to end hunger and double the incomes of 545 million small-scale farmers by 2030.

The global response capability to food systems issues is largely underpinned by ODA funds, through the support for international organizations, processes, platforms and research.

Coordination of donor funding and initiatives is therefore made even more critical today, and can take place across different levels:

1. Coordination of in-country investments, to ensure they align with country priorities and planning frameworks;
2. Alignment of approaches, concepts and intervention strategies;
3. Geographic and thematic distribution of interventions, to ensure a balanced spread of resources;
4. Joint initiatives to create a critical mass of investment and reduced transaction costs;
5. Common monitoring and reporting frameworks; and
6. Alignment on the types of global and regional initiatives that will be supported for what purposes.

Yet, coordinating and harmonizing interventions remains highly challenging and can be hampered by a trend of donors moving toward more bilateral initiatives at the expense of multilateral cooperation.

The role of the donor community

The GDPRD⁴ is a network/partnership platform of 40 bilateral and multilateral development agencies, international financial institutions and foundations with a common vision of the important role that agriculture, food systems and rural development play in combating hunger and poverty and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was established in 2003 to lobby for increased public and private investments in agriculture and rural development.

In the lead-up to the FSS and in the follow-up years, the convening power of the GDPRD can be crucial in fostering donor support for FSS processes, connecting donors with the emerging thinking and experiences of other actors, and enabling those in the donor community to harmonize their efforts.

² <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>.

³ https://ceres2030.org/shorthand_story/donors-must-double-aid-to-end-hunger-and-spend-it-wisely/.

⁴ <https://www.donorplatform.org>.

Some of the key issues identified by the GDPRD members during the 2020 Annual General Assembly⁵, under the theme “Pathways to Food Systems Transformation”, to spur coordination and harmonize action among donors include:

1. **COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT OF ACTORS:** A top priority for initiating transformative action and the basis for all the areas discussed, such as supporting policy, brokering value chain innovation, and coordinating crisis response.
2. **CATALYSING AND DE-RISKING FINANCING:** Recognizing that financing systems are highly dynamic and complex – and carry risks for each actor along the value chain – donors can deliver financing that mitigates risk and benefits all actors.
3. **SUPPORTING POLICY INNOVATION:** By engaging to forge a deep understanding of each stakeholder’s needs, the donor community can work together to create an enabling policy environment, ensuring that the benefits of investments in food systems reach smallholders.
4. **BROKERING INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS:** Conventional approaches have thus far not brought systemic change. The donor community needs to support value chain innovation that maximizes opportunities for small-scale farmers and incentivizes private investment.
5. **BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE AND CAPACITY:** Strengthening smallholders’ capacity for value chain integration is critical, but governments, private-sector actors and other stakeholders – including donors – require knowledge in order to support food systems that leave no one behind.
6. **COORDINATED CRISIS RESPONSE:** Conflict, climate and now COVID-19 are hindering food systems transformation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has also spurred innovation around crisis response. This experience can be built upon to tackle longer-term crisis risks and build resilient food systems.
7. **FOSTERING AN ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE AND IT:** Beyond just bringing produce to market, targeted infrastructural investments bring digital technologies the last mile to smallholders, and ensure that they benefit through greater connectivity to value chains and use of data.

GDPRD’s stocktaking report for the Food Systems Summit

To support donors’ engagement in preparation for and follow up from the FSS, the GDPRD has produced a stocktaking report on “**Donor contributions to food systems**”. This provides an overview of the scale of food systems related funding and actions currently supported by donors, contributing to one of the core objectives of the Donor Platform’s engagement in the Summit, which is to help optimize donor coordination and alignment.

The report assesses the degree to which donors are adopting a food systems framing to guide their future investments, identifies key “flagship” programmes which contribute to food systems and maps out overall patterns of investment. It also looks at how donor programmes and investment align with the FSS Action Tracks. The report provides a basis for donors and other stakeholders to better understand the current contribution of donors to food systems across areas such as bilateral programme support, governance, research and development, civil society and private sector engagement, financing and support for multilateral organizations.

Among the key conclusions, the report found that to be effective, donor funding must focus on **catalysing systemic change**. This entails that:

⁵ <https://www.donorplatform.org/aqa-2020.html>.

- ⇒ **Limited donor funding** needs to be used to help address underlying structural constraints to a more equitable, nutritious and sustainable food system.
- ⇒ **Donor investments are unique** in their contribution in setting global and national agendas, to influence policy and deliver global public goods including research.
- ⇒ **Donors need to be focused** on mobilizing additional investments from national governments and the private sector.
- ⇒ **Donor investments and programmes** need to be designed and managed with an understanding of how complex adaptive systems behave.
- ⇒ **Food systems transformation** will require societal wide understanding and willingness for change and for donors to focus on the processes of change and how this can be catalysed and supported.

The stocktaking report will be followed up with a GDPRD white paper which will outline options for donors to respond to the outcomes of the Food Systems Summit.

The event

Date and venue

The virtual high-level food systems event on “*Leveraging Change: The Role of Donors in Food Systems Transformation*” will take place on **9 September 2021, from 12:30 to 15:00 p.m. (CET)**, ahead of the Summit. The event will have the following objectives:

- (1) Develop the elements of a donor perspective on the food and nutrition agenda in response to the Summit;
- (2) Discuss and seek agreement on key priorities for future donor focus;
- (3) Identify the most effective modalities for donor operations, both globally and at the country level; and
- (4) Ensure the donor community plays a key role in taking the outcomes of the FSS forward to achieve specific outcomes.

Participants/audience

The virtual event will encourage participation from all geographic regions, with representation from governments, international organizations, agribusiness companies, academic and research organizations, think tanks, NGOs, civil society, farmers’ organizations and others.

Special attention will be given to the participation of representatives of farmer and rural youth organizations.

Event organizers and core partners

The GDPRD Secretariat will organize the event jointly with the European Commission, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the leadership of the Platform Board, which has contributed to the event’s design and organization, including by: mobilizing participants and speakers; reviewing background documents to facilitate dialogue at the event; identifying authoritative individuals as possible speakers and panellists, or making other forms of contributions.

Programme

The 2h30’ event will feature:

- (i) A high-level keynote statement/speech, by a prominent development leader;
- (ii) A high-level moderated panel, with speakers from bilateral and multilateral agencies, IFIs and other institutions, who will open a conversation on some of the core issues identified in the GDPRD stocktaking report, on the catalytic role of the donor community, the need for increased coordination and investment;
- (iii) A session with the official launching of the stocktaking report, with representatives from the membership of the GDPRD.

Draft agenda

Time	Description	Speakers
12:30-12:40	Opening	GDPRD Co-Chairs
12:40-13:00	Keynote	Jemimah Njuki , Director for Africa, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
13:00-14:30	<p>HIGH-LEVEL MODERATED PANEL</p> <p>Moderator: Henry Bonsu, International Broadcaster and Media Consultant</p>	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gerda Verburg, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, and Coordinator, SUN Movement - Giorgio Marrapodi, Director-General for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy - Jim Barnhart, Assistant to the Administrator, USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security - Alvaro Lario, Officer in Charge, Associate Vice-President for External Relations and Governance, and Associate Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer, IFAD - Carla Montesi, Director, Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission - Martin Bwalya, Ag Director, Knowledge Management and Programme Evaluation, Africa Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) - Andrew Campbell, CEO, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)
14:30-15:00	<p>LAUNCHING OF GDPRD STOCKTAKING REPORT</p> <p>Moderator: Henry Bonsu, International Broadcaster and Media Consultant</p>	<p>Presentation by Jim Woodhill, Director of AgriFoodNexus Consulting and Honorary Research Associate</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tristan Armstrong, Senior Sector Specialist, Agricultural Development and Food Security, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) - Co-chair of the GDPRD - Conrad Rein, Policy Officer, DG INTPA, European Commission - Co-chair of the GDPRD