



Declaration of Intent by the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD) on Food Systems Transformation

Context and Purpose

The United Nations Food Systems Summit (“the Summit”) is forging international commitment for the transformation needed in food systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Global donors have a critical role in leveraging change in food systems through the investments they make, the innovations they support and the international collaboration they enable. The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD) recognizes that optimizing the catalytic and leveraging potential of donor support will be key in responding to the outcomes of the Summit.

This declaration has been agreed by the Board of the GDPRD¹ and is open for endorsement by all members of the Platform. The declaration signals the intent of the GDPRD to encourage and support Platform members to proactively respond to the outcomes of the Summit in a coordinated way. The GDPRD has prepared a [Stocktaking Report](#) on “Donor Contributions to Food Systems”, which outlines past food systems-related investments and programming by the donor community. The GDPRD will build on the Stocktaking Report and this Declaration of Intent in a white paper. This will be developed following the Summit and will provide further detail on priorities and options for donor investments in response to the Summit outcomes.

The GDPRD recognizes that food systems transformation requires an integrated approach to how issues of poverty and inequality, health and nutrition, gender equality, environment, biodiversity loss, climate change and other challenges are tackled. It also emphasizes the important role that donors can play in supporting the commitments and actions that governments, civil society and the private sector make in response to the Summit and in line with the 2030 Agenda.

Donors have a particular responsibility to help ensure that a transformation of food systems is underpinned by attention for inclusion, non-discrimination and human rights, to ensure benefits for all those who live in poverty, suffer from hunger, are in vulnerable situations, or experience marginalization. Donors will need to orient their support for food systems transformation to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, calls for building back better and greener, the UN Climate Change and Biodiversity Conferences (UNFCCC COP 26 and CBD COP 15), and the Nutrition for Growth Summit, considering CFS guidelines and recommendations.

Directions for Food Systems Transformation

The GDPRD encourages donors to support transformations towards sustainable food systems which are:

- **Nutritious and healthy** – to overcome the ‘triple burden’ of undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies and achieve zero hunger, through holistic and integrated approaches to food security and nutrition.

¹ The declaration is the collective view of the Board Members of the GDPRD but does not necessarily reflect the specific positions or policies of individual donors.

- **Inclusive** – to ensure all people can afford and access a healthy diet and that those operating in food systems earn a decent income and are empowered, with particular attention for the issues and inequalities affecting women, youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and small-scale producers.
- **Environmentally sustainable** – so that food is produced and consumed in ways that are environmentally sustainable, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and tackle biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. This can be achieved, for example, through nature-based approaches such as agroecology, or through climate-smart agriculture, and food loss and waste reduction.
- **Resilient** – so that food systems can meet societies' needs for healthy diets in the face of natural, environmental or climate disasters, conflict, pest and disease outbreaks or market shocks. Particular attention is needed for groups experiencing poverty or in vulnerable situations, and to put in place strategies to anticipate, prevent and reduce the impacts of crisis/emergency situations.

Furthermore, integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation into all aspects of food systems transformation needs to be a core consideration for every donor.

The GDPRD recognizes that a food systems transformation cannot be realized through isolated sectoral oriented approaches, which have often characterized past approaches to development. A food systems approach requires the articulation and integration of relevant sector policies at different scales of action. It calls for donors to be **more holistic and integrated in their programming** and to focus on **systemic change** in the way they work with partners. It also requires donors to support better policy coherence across sectors in their partner countries. A food systems approach means more attention should be given to **consumer behavior** with incentives to encourage healthy diets and environmentally sustainable and socially responsible consumption.

Supporting Pathways for Action

To help achieve the above directions for food systems transformation, the GDPRD will work with the donor community and other key food systems actors **to facilitate coordination and investment across an integrated set of pathways for action at all levels**, considering the outcomes of the UN Food System Summit.

The GDPRD recognizes the profound need to move **from dialogue and ideas to action** in taking forward the outcomes of the Summit. **Support for coalitions and other initiatives that emerge from the Summit** process will be needed, with a focus on how these can accelerate and scale up **change at local and national levels**.

Pathways for change will need to be **nationally developed, cross-sectoral, inclusive and locally owned**. These national efforts will require support through strong and coordinated national, regional and global policy and funding initiatives, taking into account already existing international sectoral coordination and with the United Nations Rome-based agencies and UN resident coordinators playing a central role in coordination and support.

The challenges for food systems transformation are enormous and action is urgent, made more so by the linkages between food systems and climate change. This requires ambitious and holistic action which includes **supporting integrated solutions** such as climate-smart agriculture, the One Health approach that recognizes the **fundamental relationship between people, animals, and the environment**; and other initiatives.

The GDPRD will work with its members and other donors to deliver on their collective ambition to **drive rural development, sustainable agriculture and fisheries, and food security and nutrition, while tackling biodiversity loss and climate change, reflecting the scale and urgency of the**

challenges faced. The Ceres2030 report², commissioned and supported by some donors, has provided an analysis of the scale of funding needed to realize the Zero Hunger target set in SDG2.

Food systems transformation will be a key to tackling rural poverty and inequality. The GDPRD recognizes the need to **improve small-scale agriculture, support family farming, create decent employment and expand small and medium-sized enterprise opportunities in sustainable food value chains, while strengthening social protection mechanisms.**

The GDPRD also underscores that **equitable land tenure systems**³, which respect legitimate tenure rights, including informal ones, and their holders, are a prerequisite for productive agricultural systems, rural women's economic empowerment, decent incomes and tackling rural poverty.

Improving rural-urban linkages with attention for the dynamic of equitable flows of nutritious, safe and quality food, people, and services will be important for ensuring rural people benefit from a food systems transformation. This will require improved territorial governance to align, integrate, and coordinate local, regional and national actions.

To realize these benefits, investments will need to be linked across sectors including **education, health employment, agriculture environment, water, sanitation and hygiene, and humanitarian support**, with attention for the governance mechanisms that can support such cross-sector integration.

Empowerment and Engagement of Key Actors

The GDPRD recognizes the critical need for donors to support processes that ensure the interests and voices of all groups are **equitably heard, considered and responded to**, with particular attention for the concerns of women, youth, small-scale producers, family farmers, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, minorities, local communities and all those living in poverty.

The GDPRD acknowledges that **an inclusive transformation of food systems depends on women's and girls' empowerment** and increasing their role and influence in decision-making across food systems. At the same time, it will be critical to optimize the decent economic opportunities for rural youth in food systems, as well as vocational training, to help overcome youth un(der)employment and poverty.

Overcoming rural poverty while ensuring sustainable and resilient natural resources management and tackling climate change will also require particular attention.

Catalyzing Systemic Change

Food systems transformation will require donors to work with key actors to address the underlying structural constraints to more sustainable food systems. This will require greater societal understanding, strong coalitions for change and political commitment for action. Integrated solutions across institutional (socio-cultural and policy) and scientific/technical dimensions will be needed.

Donors will need to orient their programmes towards longer-term and sustained efforts underpinned by a holistic and systems approach. Progress will also require addressing power imbalances between different stakeholder groups and tackling the tradeoffs between vested interests which block change. In particular, donors are encouraged to:

² Laborde, D., Parent, M., and Smaller, C. 2020. *Ending Hunger, Increasing Incomes, and Protecting the Climate: What would it cost donors?* Ceres2030 (Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development; Washington, D.C.: IFPRI).

³ Committee on World Food Security (CFS). 2012. *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.*

1. **Strengthen coordination among donors and other actors at all levels** to improve alignment or complementarity of programmes and enable country-led and -owned development processes. This should include supporting policy and decision-making forums and coalitions at regional and global levels which strengthen North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.
2. **Mobilize responsible investment in food systems from the public and private sector** to put in place the infrastructure, institutions, research and development, innovation and other capacities needed for a sustainable food systems transformation. Donors have a particular role in helping to de-risk sustainable investment, including through supporting blended financing, and in promoting responsible investment by private financiers and public development banks in line with the CFS RAI principles⁴.
3. **Invest in research and data systems** needed to drive sustainable innovation, track changes in food system outcomes, assess future risks, monitor progress and ensure accountability. Donors can help to ensure research and data gathering, with due regard to data privacy, is gender oriented and sex- and age-disaggregated to improve the understanding of individual-level and demographic constraints and opportunities. Particular attention is needed for the capabilities and engagement of the CGIAR consortium and national agricultural research systems (NARS), along with regional and global research networks, and for integrating traditional and indigenous knowledge.
4. **Support policy innovation** at national and global levels to help foster an improved enabling environment and appropriate incentives for food systems transformation, underpinned by strong science-policy interfaces. Of particular relevance are policy measures which have the potential to incentivize progress towards desired food system outcomes. Donors can support analysis and intergovernmental learning for policy transitions.
5. **Strengthen the governance architecture** for food systems at all scales to enhance appropriate stakeholder consultation and decision-making processes, and civil society engagement, underpinned by equitable participation and human rights. Donors can support a focus on the important role of local governments, locally-led development and cooperation between territorial entities.
6. **Promote engagement of private sector actors and value chain innovation** to support the efforts of businesses, improve the co-design of policy mechanisms between businesses, government and other stakeholders, improve training and economic opportunities for small-scale producers, women and youth, and promote sustainable consumption and production. Donors can support initiatives which encourage sustainable, equitable and transparent practices being integrated along the whole value chain.
7. **Strengthen social protection mechanisms, disaster preparedness and emergency relief programmes** to ensure groups that are experiencing poverty and/or vulnerable situations have greater access to safe and nutritious foods, and are not being economically left-behind, with attention for the anticipatory actions needed for enhanced resilience of food systems. Donors can also support improved coordination between humanitarian, development and security-related interventions.

⁴ Committee for World Food Security (CFS) Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI).