





ANNEX

EVENT REPORT ON
THE HIGH-LEVEL
DIALOGUE “**DONOR
COORDINATION
FOR FOOD SYSTEMS
TRANSFORMATION:
A FORWARD AGENDA**”

27 June 2023
Rome, Italy

AGENDA

The dialogue was moderated by **Mandakini D. Surie**, Senior Consultant for the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD).

Time	Item	Presenters
10.00–10.05	Welcome	<p>Conrad Rein, Policy Officer, Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries, European Commission (Co-Chair of the GDPRD)</p> <p>Tristan Armstrong, Senior Sector Specialist, Agricultural Development and Food Security, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia (Co-Chair of the GDPRD)</p>
10.05–10.15	Interactive session	Jim Woodhill , Senior Advisor to the GDPRD
10.15–10.30	Keynote address	Afshan Khan , United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, and Coordinator, Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
10.30–10.45	Insights from background research and key informant interviews	Jim Woodhill , Senior Advisor to the GDPRD
10.45–12.00	High-level panel	<p>His Excellency Hussein Mohamed Bashe, Minister for Agriculture, United Republic of Tanzania</p> <p>Titta Maja-Luoto, Director-General, Department for Development Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland</p> <p>Sara Sekkenes, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Lao People's Democratic Republic</p> <p>James Catto, Director of the Office of International Development Policy, Department of the Treasury, United States</p> <p>Leonard Mizzi, Head of Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries, European Commission</p>
12.00–12.45	Q&A session	All
12.45–14.00	Lunch	

Time	Item	Presenters
14.00–15.15	<p>Plenary presentations on challenges relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Data – Finance – Crisis response – Long-term resilience – Policy 	<p>Data: Carin Smaller, Executive Director, Shamba Centre for Food & Climate</p> <p>Finance: Nadine Gbossa, Director, Food Systems Coordination, IFAD, and Chief, Means of Implementation, United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub</p> <p>Crisis response: David Nabarro, Strategic Director, 4SD, and Co-Lead of the Food Workstream, United Nations Secretary General’s United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance</p> <p>Long-term resilience: Susan Chomba, Director of Vital Landscapes for Africa, World Resources Institute</p> <p>Policy: Johan Swinnen, Managing Director of Systems Transformation, CGIAR, and Director-General, International Food Policy Research Institute</p>
15.15–17.45	<p>Town hall dialogue: interactive audience participation</p> <p>High-level discussion for direction-setting and a forward agenda</p> <p>Coffee break mid-session</p>	<p>Juan Echanove, Associate Vice-President, Food and Water Systems, CARE</p> <p>Jyotsna Puri, Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department, IFAD</p> <p>Máximo Torero, Chief Economist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</p> <p>Iris Krebber, Head of Agriculture, Food Security and Land, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office</p> <p>Christine Umotoni, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Liberia</p>
17.45–18.00	Closing reflections and wrap-up	Conrad Rein , Policy Officer, Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries, European Commission (Co-Chair of the GDPRD)
18.00	End	

Background

Globally, countries are grappling with rising food, fertilizer and fuel prices, and increasing food insecurity, brought about by the escalating impacts of climate change, conflict and COVID-19. The disruption of ecosystems, agrifood production systems and value chains is causing an unprecedented rise in global hunger, malnutrition, poverty and distress migration. The impacts of these crises are particularly acute and significant for low-income countries and low-income households.

“The disruption of ecosystems, agri-food production systems and value chains due to the policy crisis are causing an unprecedented rise in global hunger, malnutrition, poverty and distress migration. These ills are, as always, affecting the most vulnerable member[s] of our societies, especially women and children.

In the future, extreme weather, geopolitical instability, and pest and disease outbreaks are likely to increase, exacerbating the risk of food crises. In this context, there has never been a greater need for coordinated donor investments and collaboration that align with partner country needs and priorities. However, emerging crises, pressure on resources and weakening multilateral cooperation combine to increase the challenges for effective donor coordination, particularly at the country level. The coming years are likely to see a critical need to balance short-term crisis response with longer-term development to create food systems for the future that can ensure security and be resilient to the impacts of climate change, growing food demands and market disruptions. The catalytic potential of increasingly scarce donor resources will need to be optimized through improved policy coherence and coordination between development partners and partner countries.

To help drive a future agenda for donor and development partner coordination, the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD), the European Commission and IFAD convened a one-day hybrid (online and in-person) high-level dialogue “Donor Coordination for Food Systems Transformation: A Forward Agenda” on 27 June 2023 in Rome, Italy. The event was attended by 70 people¹⁹ and included high-level participation from a minister and senior representatives of donors, development partners and international organizations.

The dialogue was held under the Chatham House rule, and panellists and participants engaged in a frank and candid discussion on:

- The challenges that partner countries and donors face in supporting food systems transformation at the country level;
- The ways in which donors and other development partners can better coordinate their aid to support food systems transformation at the country level;
- Examples of viable practices and approaches for coordination at the country level; and
- How enhanced coordination at the global and regional levels can help to address the twin challenges of responding to food crises and building long-term resilience.

¹⁹ 20 in person and 50 online.





The discussion also focused on country-level coordination mechanisms, the role of jointly funded programmes and integrated global responses to crises, the opportunities for collaborative and joint programming in key areas, and the importance of coordination in the areas of data-gathering, finance, crisis response, policy and long-term resilience.

The dialogue was the culminating event of the GDPRD’s workstream on country-level donor coordination for food systems transformation, initiated in July 2022, with the objective of supporting donors and development partners with practical guidance on how to improve coordination and alignment, particularly at the country level. The discussions from the event, together with a series of key informant interviews with experts and practitioners, a literature review and an analysis of existing donor coordination efforts and practices, informed the report to which this summary is annexed, which provides donors and development partners with practical guidance on how to improve coordination for food systems transformation and rural development.

Conrad Rein

Policy Officer, Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries, European Commission (Co-Chair of the GDPRD)

Jim Woodhill

Senior Advisor to the GDPRD

Tristan Armstrong

Senior Sector Specialist, Agricultural Development and Food Security, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia (Co-Chair of the GDPRD)

Key messages

1 Current crises create challenges but also opportunities for improved coordination on food systems. The development community has been grappling with the issue of aid effectiveness and donor coordination for decades. However, there is broad agreement that the current environment is fundamentally different from a few decades ago. In the face of cascading and overlapping crises, donor coordination is becoming increasingly more challenging due to geopolitical tensions, pressure on resources and national budgets, and the increasing politicization of development assistance. Yet the current crises also present an opportunity to do

“ The urgency that we see is how severe all these crises really are. These urgencies provide us an opportunity to also think [about] how to do things in innovative ways in terms of collaboration and coordination that can enhance impact.

things differently. The food systems transformation agenda is opening up new avenues for taking an integrated and coordinated approach to tackling a broad range of issues, including the environment, food security, agriculture, health, nutrition and social protection. This is creating a space for donors, development partners and governments to think differently and develop innovative approaches, in areas such as planning, programming and financing, to improve the effectiveness of coordination and collaboration, and ultimately increase their impact at the country, regional and global levels.

“ Globally, our systems are under severe strain. Solutions can only be found if all of us work together, including across sectors and stakeholder groups.

“ Food systems transformation is a highly political agenda. Trying to be non-political or neutral will not automatically trigger any systemic change, only marginal progress. It is essential to recognize and address the profoundly political dimension of the food systems transformation agenda.



2 Dialogue and negotiation are key to supporting food systems transformation at the country level.

Transforming food systems is a complex process that requires structural and normative shifts in the way governments, donors, development partners and other stakeholders think about policies, reforms and institutions. In trying to work collaboratively, donors and governments must acknowledge that there will be areas where they will have different priorities and where negotiation will be needed. It is equally important

Mandakini D. Surie

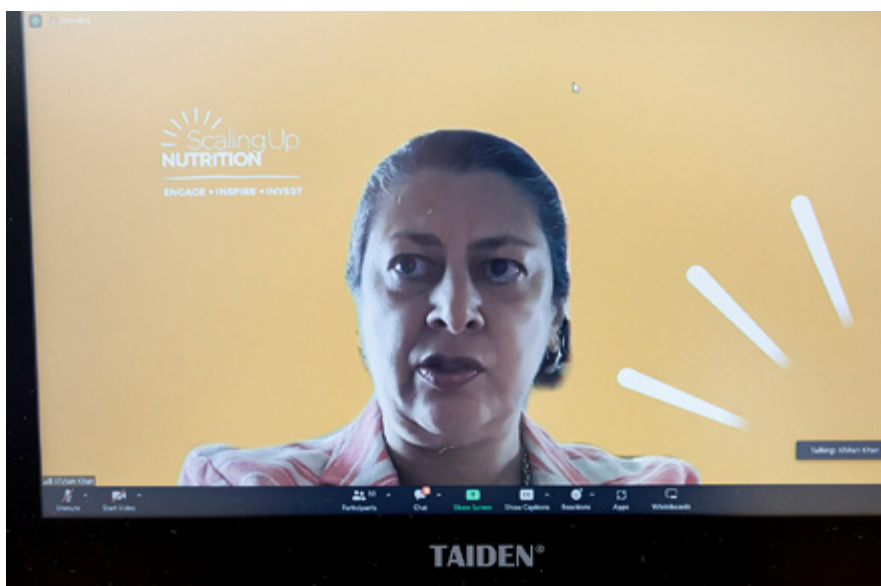
Senior Consultant for the
GDPRD

to acknowledge that the transformation of food systems is not simply a technical issue but also a highly political one. The production, distribution and consumption of food is intricately tied to allocation of resources (land, water and labour), which in turn is influenced by political and economic interests and social priorities related to food security, health, equity, the environment and other concerns. Consequently, food systems transformation involves complex negotiations and trade-offs between different stakeholders, constituencies and interests. Ultimately, coordination can only improve once there is an understanding by all actors (donors, development partners and partner countries) of the dynamics of the political economy around food systems and the interests and incentives of different stakeholders, and once dialogue spaces and mechanisms to resolve differences and find common ground are created. Therefore, a clear and well-articulated multi-stakeholder negotiation and dialogue process is critical in bringing donors, development partners, governments and other stakeholders together. Furthermore, any negotiation and dialogue process must engage with the communities and groups – such as smallholder farmers, women, youth and vulnerable groups – that these initiatives ultimately seek to impact.

3 Coordinated investments and collaborative programming are needed in key areas, including data, finance, policy, crisis response, long-term resilience, and monitoring results and impact. The key areas where investment and collaborative programming and planning are required to support food systems transformation include data, finance, policy innovation, crisis response and long-term resilience. While these are often seen as “soft” areas of investment, they are critical building blocks for

“ There are some issues here that cannot be easily resolved. They require constant negotiation, partly because they’re political, and partly because of the bilateral nature of the relationship between donors and national and local authorities.

“ It’s desirable to put on the table clearly that there will be incompatibilities between donor priorities and national priorities when it comes to food systems working. And to say that’s normal. And then to say we need enough space and time to negotiate after all.



Afshan Khan
United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, and Coordinator, Scaling Up Nutrition Movement



**His Excellency
Hussein Mohamed Bashe**

Minister for Agriculture,
United Republic of Tanzania

“ We need to recognize that our current food systems are a product of historical ad hoc, piecemeal, top-down interventions that do not take a whole food system approach, from how we produce food, [to] how we store it, transport it, process it, package it, retail, prepare and even consume it. And if we don’t look at food systems as ecosystems, then we try to target different areas and therefore don’t get the results that we want.

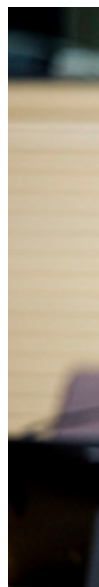
improving coordination and achieving longer-term impact. More effective coordination in these areas can also help to avoid duplication and achieve sufficient scales of funding.

Data: Data that support evidence-based decision-making and planning are critical for ensuring effective coordination. A lack of usable data makes it much harder for partner governments, donors and development partners to determine where they are best placed to make investments (in terms of geographic location and sector), or where these are likely to have the most impact. While there are a growing number of data-driven initiatives in

the area of food systems, donors need to focus on where evidence and data are needed to support the food systems agenda. Equally, in working to better align donor and partner government priorities, it is important to put data and evidence at the heart of the process of prioritization.

Finance: Donor coordination is needed not only in developing policies, programmes and initiatives, but also in financing. Global economic uncertainty, recessionary trends, and rising inflation and debt burdens in some countries and regions have meant that governments around the world are increasingly less able to invest in building resilience and to respond to crises and shocks in a long-term and sustainable manner. Focusing on the collective actions and responses to addressing the underlying drivers preventing progress on strengthening food systems and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is critical.

Policy: In the context of the current food crises, policy shifts are needed in several areas, including, for example, agriculture subsidies, agricultural practices and policies, investment, trade and value chain policies, and policies for social inclusion and protection. At the country level, as governments look to adopt a food systems approach, there is a need for advice on how to transform legislation and policies over time and deal with the trade-offs and synergies across different areas. While often a neglected area of support, donors and development partners must consider funding for policy transition agendas at the country level. More specifically, there is a need to support partner countries

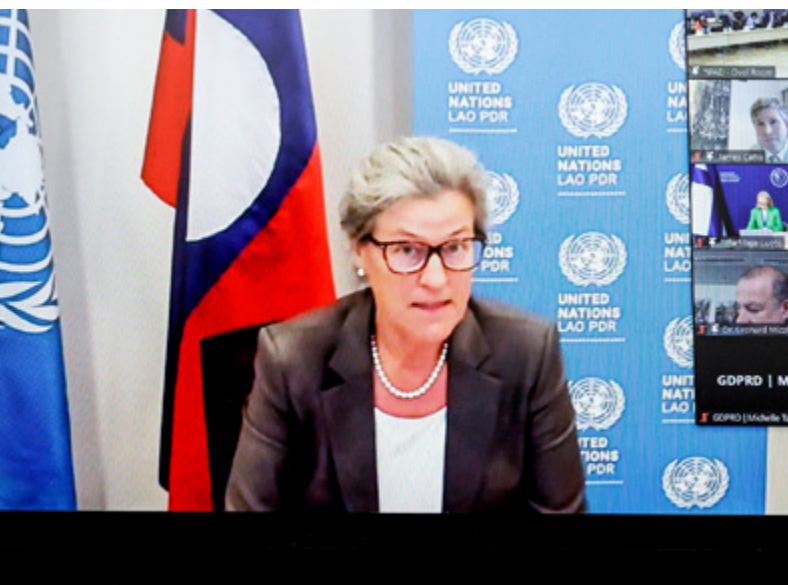


in developing a regulatory and policy framework that can support an integrated food systems approach. Donors and development partners can also support policy innovation at the country level to address systemic barriers to food systems transformation (for example, in areas such as agriculture sector support, removing market barriers, and developing incentives for producers and consumers).

Crisis response: The current global crises present a clear challenge to coordination, given the multiple perspectives on the crises and how to tackle them. This can make it difficult to find a common narrative for coordination. Equally, the crises also present an opportunity to think about new and innovative approaches to coordination and collaboration. As donors and governments navigate emerging crises, it is critical to ensure that donor resources and funding being channelled into a crisis are well coordinated and that there is sufficient knowledge and understanding of where funds, support and resources are most needed.

“ Impact on the ground must guide our actions. At the end of the day, we are talking about lives.

“ The question is whose results agenda and whose results are they? The results must be of the countries that we are working in. It is important that donors are bringing in their incentives, but it is truly important that countries are [achieving the] overarching impacts that they are keen to see when we are negotiating with them.



Nadine Gbossa

Director, Food Systems Coordination, IFAD, and Chief, Means of Implementation, United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub

Sara Sekkenes

United Nations Resident Coordinator, Lao People's Democratic Republic

Long-term resilience: There is growing recognition of the tension between, on the one hand, responding to a crisis and investing in a short-term response and, on the other, investing in the longer-term policies and reforms needed to build resilience and avoid constant cycles of crisis. This requires investing in food systems transformation processes that will address the root causes of failures. Building on the national pathways for transformation, donors and development partners have an opportunity to co-invest in long-term resilience strategies that support partner governments to make the kinds of structural changes that are required at the institutional and normative levels.

4 There are an increasing number of good examples and practices that need to be documented, shared and amplified. These include joint financing and programming initiatives, such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). In addition, existing coordination mechanisms, such as the Committee on World Food Security, the G7 Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS) and the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub, need to be leveraged more effectively to drive dialogue between and among donors, development partners and other stakeholders. There are also examples of collaborative initiatives in specific thematic areas, such as data with Ceres2030, the 50x2030 Initiative and Hesat2030, which has developed a global roadmap to end hunger. In the area of crisis response, the Global Alliance for Food Security is a platform for coordination that seeks to catalyse an agile and immediate coordinated response to the global food security crisis. The International Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission (FARM) is another umbrella initiative focused on short- and medium-term food security and nutrition, and longer-term sustainable and resilient food systems.

5 More effective monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives and programmes is key. In the current global environment, better monitoring and evaluation of donor coordination efforts and their impact, particularly at the country level, is key to making a more compelling case for why sustained investments are needed in food systems transformation. While acknowledging that tracking systemic change is challenging, donors, development partners, partner governments and other stakeholders must consider how they can more effectively use existing data, indicators and other metrics to track and measure food systems transformation and the results and impact of joint efforts and initiatives. Donors and other development partners must collectively support efforts to document and share lessons learned and best practices from ongoing coordination efforts at the country level on food systems and in other allied areas, such as health, water and sanitation.



Next steps

The emergence of the food systems agenda, combined with current global crises increasing the demand for donor resources, creates an ever-greater need for coordination. The dialogue concluded with broad agreement on the need for donors and development partners to remain engaged and in dialogue with each other in their ongoing efforts to enhance coordination, especially in the lead-up to the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment.

The dialogue reinforced the key messages and recommendations set out in the report to which this summary is annexed. The insights from the dialogue have been integrated into the report.

Given that the dialogue endorsed the need for enhanced country-level coordination, through its members the GDPRD will explore options for a programme of work and set of pilot initiatives to strengthen country-level coordination processes and apply known good practices.

Iris Krebber

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