

EVENT SERIES

Governance of Food Systems Transformation

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Conclusions

We, a group of experts active in the agri-food sector including representatives of government, civil society, youth, farmer organizations, and the private sector from Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Kenya and Malawi (see annex) – countries with an extensive and long-lasting history of collaboration in the sector of agriculture, food, and nutrition security with Germany gathered in Berlin between the 17th and 20th of January 2023¹ to scrutinize governance of food systems transformation with the aim of formulating policy recommendations.

In this process, we agreed on a common understanding of the governance of food systems and their transformation², while jointly underlining the importance of nutrition as a key component for sustainable food systems. The discussions were enriched through a series of four country-specific case study presentations and two scientifically backed analyses. Subsequently, we presented recommendations for supporting stakeholders to development partners focusing on the governance of food systems transformation. Final results were presented via a public high-level expert panel at the *Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA)*.³

We thus affirm that the jointly developed recommendations will assist decision makers and other stakeholders to support those most affected by current dysfunctional food systems. Equally, we underline that the results of our discussions will provide guidance on how international development cooperation – specifically that from Germany and the European Union – can support effective governance for sustainable food systems.

1. Preamble

Recognizing that our current food systems both suffer from and are responsible for major challenges facing the world including climate change, where food systems account for around a third of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, and loss of global biodiversity, where primary agricultural production is the major driver for the degradation of ecosystems⁴;

¹ https://assets.ctfassets.net/rrir183ijfda/O69rtDmCXr7qZSA6wWHuw/8a9e5655a5598dbf0f6b25b85b04539a/Event_series_flyer_Online_version.pdf

² We agreed on the following definition based on Delaney et al. (2018) (10.1007/s12571-018-0770-y): "Governance of food systems refers to the ability of actors to steer the food systems to achieve food and nutrition security, enhance resilience, facilitate adaption, or to instigate transformation and involves not only actors and activities of the food system itself but also the actors and activities of related domains such as land use, conservation, energy and water resource management, poverty, and human development"

³ https://gffa-berlin.de/en/expert_panel/tmg/

⁴ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0639en>

Seeing that three billion people cannot afford a healthy and nutritious diet, and an estimated 828 million people are affected by hunger - if continued, these numbers are bound to rise given that the world population is increasing and will reach 10.4 billion in 2100⁵;

Underlining that still around 30% of global food production is lost or wasted, with inadequate post-harvest management being a major reason;

Expressing concerns on the fact that even though the necessity to urgently transform food systems is evident, ambitious and integrated approaches for the governance of sustainable food systems are widely absent;

Acknowledging that the realization of the right to food (§ 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)⁶ and access to land and water should be major aims of food systems transformation, along with the responsibility to use these resources judiciously;

Affirming that those responsible for the coordination of the transformation of food systems have the duty to engage all relevant stakeholders at eye level, especially those most impacted;

Highlighting that women and youth play a fundamental role in the transformation of food systems and must therefore be understood as key actors in the creation and implementation of respective governance frameworks;

Emphasizing on the fact that the United Nations Food Systems Summit saw more than 100 governments committing themselves to developing national pathways for food systems transformation; recognizing that delivering on this commitment will be a major challenge for many countries, both in planning and implementation terms; and stressing that the EU Commission's High-Level Expert Group Report on Food Systems Science⁷ recommended that future donor policies should use a food systems lens when deciding on planning and investment;

2. Enabling environment

We have concluded that:

- 1) The stakeholder groups we represent – in particular governments, research institutes, civil society organizations, youth, farmer organizations and the private sector – are essential for the transformation and functioning of effective food systems and are therefore indispensable for achieving food and nutrition security in our countries.
- 2) To fulfill this key role however, we depend on enabling environments. We found that these are characterized by the existence of specific components including especially:
 - Adaptability and resilience
 - Awareness raising and continuous dialogue
 - Coordination among actors
 - Empowerment
 - Inclusion
 - Integrated multisectoral approaches
 - Leadership

⁵ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results*. UN DESA/POP/2022/TR/NO. 3.

⁶ Ch_IV_03.p https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1976/01/19760103%2009-57%20PM/Ch_IV_03.pdf (un.org)

⁷ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Webb, P., Sonnino, R., *Everyone at the table : co-creating knowledge for food systems transformation*, Webb, P. (editor), Sonnino, R. (editor), Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/21968>

- Political prioritization
 - Transformative capacity
 - Transparency and accountability
- 3) Those enabling environments must be designed scale- and context specific to meet the demands and expectations of the people most affected by dysfunctional food systems. Thus, international donor communities must increasingly recognize and harmonize their dual role - on one hand as supporters of these enabling environments in the global South and, on the other, as voices in the design processes of framework conditions at international level. However, we underline that the specific design and functioning of respective environments remains a primary responsibility of our national governments.
- 4) For the donor community, these findings require a modification of development cooperation. A more political approach is necessary to improve or even implement the governance of food systems transformation. This approach includes interventions on local level “proof of concept”, but it also requires enhanced strategic strengthening of stakeholders’ capacity over a substantial period of time.

3. Key messages

1. Food systems transformation needs effective governance

- Food systems transformation should be the overall objective of long-term development initiatives, while these being simultaneously prepared for short-term emergency responses;
- Governance related capacity building should promote strong and participatory mechanisms which foster active engagement between non-state and state actors, especially across governmental departments and levels. Specific focus should be on problem-solving capacities for local institutions.

2. Governance does not mean government, it means a multi-stakeholder engagement

- Understand farmers and their organizations, civil society actors and the private sector as partners (rather than as beneficiaries);
- Enhance awareness raising on food systems transformation via multiple channels with a specific focus on youth and disadvantaged groups.

3. Those who are doing the job must be able to do the job

- National governments need a policy coherent approach to prioritize FST as one key focus of their development agenda including the allocation of the required financial resources;
- Acknowledge the empowerment of marginalized groups, especially women and youth, as key for successful governance of food systems transformation;
- Define local needs as foundation towards the strategic conception of development initiatives;
- Monitoring and evaluation need to take into account a systemic approach. This should be aligned with long-term sustainable goals.

4. This means a different, more political, multi/transdisciplinary systemic approach

- Appropriate investment in applied research and advisory services must focus on sustainable practices taking into consideration local and indigenous knowledge;
- Encourage governments to formulate coherent agricultural development visions based on transparent processes that hold relevant stakeholders, including governments accountable;
- Implement a general food systems lens on investments;
- Harmonize donors' support as to allow for broader, long-term donor-country partnership agendas and strengthen already existing development frameworks in partner countries.

The derived conclusions and (policy) recommendations are – even though grounded in thorough discussions – only a starting point of action. Their specification and realization will be defined by their implementation at the national level, prioritized by a holistic view on food systems.

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List of Participants

Participants – SEWOH Partner Countries

No.	Title	First name	Last name	Institution	Function	Country
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9		Shamika	Mone	Inter-continental Network of Organic Farmer Organisations	President	India
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Other Participants and Speakers

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14	Dr.	Jes	Weigelt	TMG Research	Moderation (GFFA Panel)
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