



United
Nations

Commission on Population and Development

Fifty-fourth session
New York, 19-23 April 2021

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON THE
ROAD TOWARDS THE 2021
FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT
(virtual meeting)

Tuesday, 20 April 2021
10:00-11:30 am EDT

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

The Commission on Population and Development, at its fifty-fourth session, will consider the special theme of “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development”.¹

The high-level panel will discuss linkages between population trends and policies, food systems, nutrition and sustainable development. Panel members will include stakeholders from Member States, United Nations entities, academia, civil society and the private sector. The panel will inform the deliberations under item 3 of the draft agenda (General debate).²

Background

The Commission on Population and Development monitors, reviews and assesses the implementation of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The Programme of Action highlights the interlinkages between that population, poverty, patterns of production and consumption and the environment. The Commission also contributes to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2021 Food Systems Summit, convened by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, aims to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food by developing healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food systems. Five “Action Tracks” offer stakeholders a space to develop new actions and partnerships and amplify existing initiatives: (1) ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all; (2) shift to sustainable consumption patterns; (3) boost nature-positive production; (4) advance equitable livelihoods, and (5) build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.

Food and agricultural systems are affected by the continued growth of the human population and personal income, and by the associated expansion of food production and consumption – trends that may jeopardize the future sustainability of such systems. In addition, the shift towards more capital-intensive forms of agriculture is driving a transformation of rural economies and societies, contributing to the growth of cities and intensifying migration pressures. Manufacturing and the service sector that have, in the past, absorbed excess labour are not developing at a sufficient speed to generate sufficient employment, particularly for young generations in countries with high levels of population growth.

¹ For further information on the annual session, including the reports of the Secretary-General, please refer to <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/events/CPD54>.

² <https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.9/2021/1>

Challenges to food security include climate change, armed conflict and economic downturns. In some countries, COVID-19 has significantly contributed to food insecurity. Each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relies on healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food systems. In particular, ending hunger, achieving sustainable food systems and improving nutrition (SDG 2) and ensuring healthy lives for all (SDG3) will require transformative action and involve trade-offs.

Format

Following opening remarks by the moderator, panelists will be invited to address the guiding questions (see below). Following these interventions, Member States, observers and civil society are encouraged to ask questions or raise issues in response to the interventions made. Reading from prepared statements is discouraged. The panelists will respond to the questions and issues raised by the audience, after which the moderator will make brief closing remarks.

Indicative guiding questions for the panelists

- What are the interrelationships between climate change, food security and sustainable production and consumption?
- How will population growth, population ageing, urbanization and migration affect food security and food systems?
- What are some of the trade-offs between food security/nutrition objectives and environmental sustainability, also in light of the projected population growth?
- What interventions are required to achieve a major shift towards the consumption of healthy and sustainable diets and to significantly reduce food waste?
- What are some of the good practices to protect, manage and restore nature, while meeting the fundamental human right to healthy and nutritious food for all?
- What actions can be taken to address discriminatory social norms, practices and roles with a view to advancing equitable livelihoods in food systems?
- How can we ensure that newborns, girls and boys have access to the best nutrition?
- What actions can be taken to make food systems affected by conflict, shocks and stresses, more resilient, also in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What messages on population and sustainable development are most urgent to send to the Food Systems Summit?

Outcome

The discussion will be summarized in the report of the Commission on its fifty-third session, which will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council shortly after the session. It will also inform the Commission's contribution to the 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

