Action Track 5 – Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks and Stresses

Reviewed version 2 December 2020

1. What do we want to achieve?

Action Track 5 will propose solutions to ensure that food systems - which are affected by conflict, and environmental, health and economic shocks and stresses - can maintain functionality, recover from adverse effects, and improve to a better-off state. These actions include a focus on "productive disruption"– such as biodiversity loss and climate change. Furthermore, it is important to note that the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic requires additional solutions to build greater resilience within the current food system from production to consumption.

The ambition behind Action Track 5 is to ensure that food systems are regenerative and circular and thus more resilient to future shocks. That all individuals and institutions engaged in the functioning and governance of food systems are empowered to prepare for, withstand, and recover from instability, and participate in a food system that, despite shocks and stressors, delivers food and nutrition security and equitable livelihoods for all whist ensuring the healthy soil and water ecosystems for continued food system resilience.

The resilience of food systems needs to be strengthened in such a way that the economic, social and environmental foundations to produce sufficient nutritious food and maintain healthy ecosystems for current and future generations are not compromised. It demands a comprehensive approach that integrates responses to climate, biodiversity loss, conflict, pandemics, economic crises, food insecurity, malnutrition and considering poverty, inequalities and poor land use and distribution as structural root causes of increased hunger.

Achieving this will require a three-pronged fully integrated focus on food systems:

- Being equitable and inclusive (economic resilience);
- Producing broad-based benefits for all people (social resilience); and
- Generating positive and regenerative impacts on the natural environment(environmental resilience).

2. What are the key trade-offs and win-wins?

Over the next decade, food systems will face complex challenges to deliver sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all in the context of crisis management and sustainable development. This entails providing equitable livelihoods to all actors along food value chains while at the same time ensuring access to healthy food, optimising distribution and productivity for those most in need, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and food waste, protecting landscapes through regeneration and preserving ecosystems and biodiversity. This track understands that the issues with food systems are not simple and will look into it from a holistic approach taking into consideration full life cycle impacts, including social and cultural understanding and provide win-win solutions rather than compromising trade-offs between people-planet-prosperity.

In order to manage the complex trade-offs across the economic, political, social and environmental dimensions of food systems, a balance needs to be achieved between: immediate and sustainable long-term gains; rural and urban demands; diversifying production and specializing functions; local and global needs; nutritious versus caloric intake; and intensified versus sustainable and regenerative use of natural resources.

Positive synergies and win-win scenarios can be found by: strengthening coordination of international, national, and local actors; targeting investments by the public and private sector towards food system and eco system resilience; developing policies to direct incentives at all governance levels including through humanitarian aid; and implementing sustainable technologies and production choices that reduce the negative impact of food production, processing, storage and transport on natural resources.

Special importance will be given to strengthening sustainable local food systems as the COVID- 19 pandemic has shown that these systems can ensure access to food when the global system fails. This entails a concept of resilience building that enables land to both bounce back better, serve as carbon sinks and guarantee food production for future generations.

Local food resilience is also about ensuring that indigenous people, whom are the most marginalized and affected by poverty and conflict, and often the stewards of the land, are part of the design of resilient food systems which mitigate food insecurity.

3. What needs to be done?

Solutions need to be defined around cross cutting levers of joined-up policy reform, coordinated investment, accessible financing, innovation, traditional knowledge, governance, data and evidence, and empowerment of the most vulnerable. Efficiently enhancing resilience requires the following:

- **A systemic and nexus approach (multi-system, multi sectoral, multilevel, and multi-stakeholder)**
  The resilience of people and community results from a combination of interlinked factors that are influenced by multiple systems, a variety of sectors and stakeholders, at different levels, and by a wide range of stakeholders. Consequently, this requires a holistic and intersectional approach to address the concurrent and multiple shocks as there is no single sector or system response option.

- **A twin-track approach linking emergency response to sustainable development** Enhancing resilience in a comprehensive way requires addressing the immediate and acute needs in crisis and emergency situations alongside investing in long-term response to tackle the root causes of socio, political and ecosystem vulnerabilities. This includes addressing and responding to risks instead of disasters and designing integrated food systems, which help to anticipate, resist, recover and regenerate. In this respect the special needs and conditions of vulnerable war-torn and disaster-prone countries must be taken into account.

- **Strong local, country, and regional ownership and political leadership**
  Political leadership is a prerequisite for successful complex programs requiring integrated system, multisectoral, multilevel, and multi-stakeholder approaches that enable resource access and proper distribution. Strong political leadership at the local, regional and national levels enables a

favourable and ambitious policy environment and facilitates integration of resilience-building programs across sectors and ministries (agriculture, health, trade, environment, climate, economic).

- **A context-specific approach.**
  Initiatives begin with an in-depth understanding of the cultural, environmental and socio-political context of each locality. Actions and decisions aiming to increase the resilience of food systems will have different impacts in various geographical and development contexts depending on their agroecological and climatic setting, cultural aspects, government policies, private sector engagement, community participation and institutional capacities. There are wide differences in the determinants of resisting and recovering to the impact of shocks and stresses, reinforcing the fact that solutions cannot be "one size fits all". Different contexts must be considered: countries across the humanitarian- development nexus, including fragile and transitioning settings; food systems at various phases of development from traditional to modern; vulnerabilities to climate, socio- economic, human-social, cultural, environmental factors and biodiversity loss.

  This includes systems' weakness, people's needs and vulnerabilities, populations' and individuals' existing coping mechanisms, as well as environmental/ ecosystem specificity and social synergies, as key starting points to contextualize the intervention. Regional considerations should be addressed, and in particular on how different regions and food systems manage shocks and stresses, and introduce relevant tools that facilitate action. Examples include National Adaptation Plans (NAP) that can help countries identify key risks and actions to increase the resilience of food systems. It also requires understanding long-term and structural causes (unfair and unequal distribution of resources or unsustainable agricultural practices) as compared to sudden shocks (earthquakes, droughts).

- **Strong and robust local food systems**
  The impact of shocks like the ongoing pandemic is not limited to the direct threat on people's health. It also extends to their food security through disruptions on local and national food systems and economies, and for this reason, it is important to recognize that the most sensible solution to food and nutrition insecurity are addressing structural issues (access to infrastructures, road networks, markets, services) and strengthening of local food supply chains through engagement with citizen-driven initiatives and micro, medium and small enterprises (MSMEs) given their inclusive and equitable position in food systems. By addressing these solutions, we can ensure that physical and economic disruptions that follow with conflict, stresses and shocks like food shortage, food losses and price volatility can be overcome.

- **Transformative innovation**
  Innovation should serve as a means to reach shared goals on eliminating poverty and hunger through participatory approaches. Game-changing solutions that include transformative aspects like promoting structural and systemic changes to create sustainable livelihoods to build back better in situation of shocks is needed. These include safety mechanisms within the food systems like shock-responsive social protection systems, food assistance mechanisms and safety nets, along with emergency response mechanisms against natural disasters, epidemics and pandemic for minimizing adverse impacts.

  Innovation should not be only confined to producing more and getting higher yields and productivity. They should also focus on real problems and offer real solutions to current

challenges. Hence, technological solutions and digital efforts like AI, precision agriculture, drones, satellites and smart phones should be optimized to strengthen food chains, manage water resources, fight pests and diseases, increase preparedness of farmers, unlock the untapped potential of foods from the oceans through restorative aquaculture (algae, selective breeding, etc.)

Translating the above solutions into collaborative actions to support food systems resilience should center around:

i. Enhancing investment in holistic food systems approaches that address people-planet-prosperity;

ii. Addressing inequalities – structural, social, gender - in access and utilization of resources, knowledge, assets, technology, and markets/value chains;

iii. Strengthening capacities and resources of farmers, indigenous groups, women, youth and micro-small, medium enterprises (MSMEs) to effectively engage along the entire food system from production to consumption, Provide them with the necessary tools, technologies and advisory services that can strengthen their engagement with the private sector;

iv. Managing risk and security at all levels – individual, community, government and systems;

v. Coordinating policies, programmes and investments (including aid) amongstall stakeholders, with Governments in the lead;

vi. Exploring blended finance facilities and public-private partnerships (PPP) for mobilizing finance for under-resourced initiatives to drive positive change in the food systems;

vii. Enabling orderly trading systems to mitigate instabilities, shocks and stressors;

viii. Developing M&E systems to monitor, measure and evaluate interventions;

ix. Identifying harmful agricultural practices such as the use of excessive fertilizers, pesticides, excessive irrigation that contribute to land degradation, soil alkalization, erosion and threatens sustainable food systems.

4. New Radical Partnerships

Food system transformation requires coordinated, multi-sector interventions that can only be achieved through strong partnerships with shared outcomes. Transformation will require both traditional and non-traditional partnerships to remove the barriers and initiate food systems transformation that enhances people's lives and livelihoods while guaranteeing healthy land- water-air. Innovations are needed in enhanced regenerative food system development, data availability for decision-making and community engagement, as well as for the technical aspects of food systems strengthening.

5. Global Frameworks of Relevance:

It is important to note that this Action track synergizes with other global initiatives and frameworks below:

- **One Health approach:** tackles threats like the ongoing pandemic as it links the health of humans, animals, plants and their shared environment, which act as key levers to controlling and preventing zoonoses, ultimately strengthening health protection and food security.
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 2, which focuses on rebuilding food systems to make them more sustainable, productive and resilient for solving long-term hunger challenges and managing acute shocks like disease outbreaks and climate extremes.
- **Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) Action Track on Food Security and Rural livelihoods:** GCA's efforts to increase investment in agricultural research, expanding access to crucial farmer advisory services and information, as well as access to improved risk management and financial services for farmers are key ingredients to ensure food systems resiliency.
- **Paris Agreement:** A paradigm shift towards more sustainable and productive agricultural food systems is necessary to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. In the face of climate change, agriculture can help drive solutions by promotingtechniques with co-benefits**.**