

S.1 How many livelihoods do we have to make equitable in food systems?: UNFSS must ensure adequate levels of resources to ensure equitable livelihoods for a workforce of more than 1.5 billion persons

1. What, in brief, is the solution?

Making livelihoods more equitable for those working in the different food systems sub sectors as listed below will require EXTRA RESOURCES, and improved planning, targeting and allocation for the effective and sustainable use of these resources. We need to ensure EQUITABLE LIVELIHOODS for the following categories of persons (women and men alike) involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry, or fisheries:

- Farmers
- Waged Agricultural Workers including aquacultural workers
- Fishers
- Pastoralists
- Forestry workers
- Hunter-gatherers
- Food processing/manufacturing/aggregation workers
- Transport/distribution/delivery workers, food delivery riders
- Supermarket/shop/grocery/market workers, street vendors
- Food preparers/cooks/servers

Currently, however, global figures and data on workforce numbers and composition - in both urban and rural areas - are lacking, poorly disaggregated (including by gender), imprecise, and sometimes even contradictory. Many parts of the workforce are Invisible due to lack of statistics. This then risks that the levels and types of resources needed to make livelihoods equitable and ensure resilient food supply chains, will be underestimated by the Food Systems Summit and its constituents.

The ignorance about the key role of food system workers starts with statistics. While every single government in the world produces its statistics on yields and productivity in agriculture, only a few countries collect nationwide data on the workers that produce, process, and transform these yields.

So the solution being proposed is the development of a COOPERATION MECHANISM between international organisations and agencies involved in food systems for the regular collection, coordination and analysis of statistics/data on workforce numbers and composition in agriculture and other sub sectors of the food system.

This could also be linked to the Global Food Systems Data Consortium, Action Track 1 Game changer proposal.

International organisations and agencies which could play a lead role in this Cooperation Mechanism include inter alia: OECD, FAO, ILO, IFAD, and the World Bank. There would also need to be linked capacity building initiatives at the national level, e.g., development of, or refining of, national employment registration schemes in agriculture and other food system sub sectors.

Improving intelligence, statistics and data on exactly how many livelihoods we have to make equitable in food systems in order to accurately estimate the levels of resources needed will also require improved cooperation and coordination between governments, between international and UN organisations and agencies involved in food systems, as well as with businesses/companies, trade unions and civil society organisations.

The statistics and data collected can be refined and targeted to generate socio-economic information/data on categories such as on women, indigenous peoples, youth, migrant workers et al. Workforce numbers can be cross referenced with poverty data, etc.

Improved statistics and data provision can also provide much needed information on the rapid emergence and expansion in food systems of the platform or gig economy. This worldwide phenomenon may be resulting in an increase in the numbers of vulnerable workers in food systems, less equitable livelihoods, or increased denial of rights. Unless data capture and analysis are improved with equity and rights as established metrics, there is high risk of increased vulnerability and marginalisation.

Improved statistics and data provision can also provide much needed information the workforce in: Food processing/manufacturing workers; Transport/distribution/delivery workers, delivery riders; Supermarket/shop/grocery/market workers, street vendors; Food preparers/cooks/servers; and Hunter-gatherers.

Based on new figures from farmers, the FSS now knows it has to aim to promote equitable livelihoods for well over 1.5 billion people working in food systems worldwide. (whereas a previous 2018 UN estimate had put the figure for farmers and agricultural workers at 860 million persons - 640 million persons fewer)[1].

1.5 billion represents over 45% of all people currently working in the world (3.3 billion global workforce - all economic sectors). These are the “essential workers”, in the time of covid, whom we have all heard and read about who are ensuring that food - fresh, processed and packaged, and ready cooked - is available for all 6-7 billion of us on a daily basis.

And to this 1.5 billion we still must add the numbers of: Waged agricultural workers and workers in food processing, delivery, supermarkets, restaurants, cafes etc.

2. What was/were the source(s) from which this solution emerged?

A wide range of constituents in the FSS realise that more accurate information on the levels and types of resources needed to achieve FSS goals are required. There is recognition in discussions that improved data are needed on the numbers and categories of people experiencing inequity in food systems and whose livelihoods are at risk. If targets in the SDGs on the elimination of poverty and hunger and UNFSS goals are to be met, then more accurate data on the exclusion, discrimination, and rights denial that different livelihoods groups face are urgently required.

3. What problem is it trying to address within food systems?

The wide range of land ownership patterns and methods of production gives rise to numerous types of labour relations and various forms of labour-force participation and employment in the agriculture sector. Occupations can be difficult to define in a rural setting

Currently, at the global level, relevant figures and data on workforce numbers and composition are simply often lacking, e.g., the number of farmers worldwide, or imprecise, and sometimes even contradictory.

Based on new figures from farmers, the FSS now knows it must aim to promote equitable livelihoods for well over 1.5 billion people working in food systems worldwide. (whereas a previous 2018 UN estimate had put the figure for farmers and agricultural workers at 860 million persons - 640 million persons fewer)[2].

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And to this 1.5 billion we still must add the numbers of:

Waged Agricultural Workers (300-500 million according to current ILO estimates): These are the women and men - many of them migrant workers - who labour in the crop fields, orchards, glasshouses, livestock units, and primary processing facilities to produce the world's food and fibres. They are employed on everything from small- and medium-sized farms to large industrialised farms and plantations. They are waged workers because they do not own or rent the land on which they work nor the tools and equipment they use and so are a group distinct from farmers. They can be permanent, seasonal, casual, temporary, daily or piece rate workers.

Food processing/manufacturing/aggregation workers: They work in abattoirs, food factories, dairies etc., processing and packaging fresh meat, crop and dairy products into semi-processed and processed food products including beverages

Food transport/distribution/delivery workers/food delivery riders: Handling and delivering raw food products, semi-processed and processed food products including the rapidly growing numbers of food delivery riders in the platform/gig economy

Supermarket/shop/grocery/market workers, street vendors: Handling packaged, canned foods and fresh foods when filling shelves, and serving customers indoors or out on the street

Food preparers/cooks/servers including bar staff: In restaurants, cafes, hotels, conference centres, catering companies, canteens in schools & factories

Hunter gatherers - an estimated 10 million or so: So, these are the livelihoods that FSS has to help make equitable.

It is a real challenge but one the FSS must rise to.

4. Why is addressing that problem important for achieving the goal of your working group?

Improved and regular statistics/data on the number of people in the food system workforces whose livelihoods need to be made equitable is relevant to all Action Tracks and should underpin the work of the whole Summit.

5. How can this solution address that problem (theory of change)?

This solution will allow better planning and targeting of efforts and resources in making livelihoods more equitable, and food supply chains more resilient.

6. Why does this solution align to the definition and criteria for a ‘game changing solution’ developed by the Summit?

Improved data will automatically contribute to the realisation of game changing successes because policies will be developed with more accurate information. This meets the scale criterion as we know that knowledge is power in policy making and investment decisions. Where more data is available on inequities faced by different livelihoods groups, more pro-poor and pro-rights policies will emerge. This solution is also feasible and as management information systems, data banks and data expertise already exists. Resources are required to develop the metrics and ensure their applicability in these systems.

7. What do you think are the key actions required to address this solution? Please mention the implementation approach for 3 levels, if appropriate:

Development of a Cooperation Mechanism between international organisations and agencies involved in food systems for the regular collection, coordination and analysis of statistics/data on workforce numbers and composition in agriculture and other sub sectors of the food system.

The development of accurate metrics and categorization for this Cooperation Mechanism will be critical.

8. What is the current and/or likely political support for this idea?

There is a general recognition of the need for improved, systematic and regular workforce data collection and analysis in food systems at both national and international levels

9. Are there certain contexts for which this solution is particularly well suited, or, not well-suited.

The solution is relevant/applicable to all situations and in all food systems. Indeed, this solution is one that requires universal support and application if the UN, policy makers, governments and all development partners are serious about data for equity in food systems.

[1] Employment by sector - ILO modelled estimates. International Labour Organization, May 2018

[2] Employment by sector - ILO modelled estimates. International Labour Organization, May 2018