

Food Producers' Declaration*

For the United Nations 2021 Food Systems Summit

Introduction

Reshaping food systems is recognized as an absolute priority on the global agenda, because achieving poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security, equitable and inclusive societies greatly depends upon achieving sustainable food systems. Indeed, food systems lie at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, placing our constituency of farmers, fishers, forest users and dwellers, aquaculturists, herders, pastoralists and all food producers at the center of the food systems, positioning them as key actors in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Food Producers are the backbone of our society because everywhere at the beginning there was a fisher or farming family on a field, or forest, or bodies of waters, cultivating crops, breeding or herding livestock or fishing. Despite providing critical nutrition and livelihoods to billions of people, Food Producers, particularly in developing countries, are amongst the world's poorest, hungriest and most marginalized sectors of society. This is why we, the Food Producers, fully support and are invested into the current [Decade of Action to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), to 2019-2028 being the [United Nations Decade on Family Farmers](#)¹, and to 2022 being the [International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture](#) and to 2026 as the International Year of Rangeland and Pastoralists.

In response to these challenges we, Food Producers from different corners of the world, have come together to present our solutions as one collective voice. These solutions are the result of a series of Food Systems Summit Independent Dialogues conducted by organizations representing Food Producers across every continent, in the context of the preparation of the United Nations Food Systems Summit.

We call for urgent and concrete actions to facilitate the transition to more resilient, healthy, nutritious, sustainable, just, inclusive, economically viable, empowering food systems. It is unimaginable to engage in any conversation or build coalitions around food systems without the active involvement of Food Producers as equal partners.

The Food Producers' commitments

- We are ready to do more with less to feed and nourish 2 billion more people by 2050, by making efficient use of resources while using responsible agriculture, fishing, forestry, pastoralist methods, innovation, gears and machineries to continue producing safe and nutritious food for all. This will require a transition to improve the sustainability of production methods by integrating new techniques and concepts such as agroecology, regenerative agriculture, circularity, integration, precision farming, diversity, or organic production, into farms and forests systems, among others, while fishers' transition away from excessively damaging fishing gears and methods. This must be coupled with ensuring more equitable and just management of fisheries, land tenure and food trade systems, ensuring access and control of food producers to their natural resource bases.
- Considering the latest IPCC Report on Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis, we are already taking actions to mitigate climate change as well as adapt to it. We have no other choice while we need secure and resilient future nutrition and livelihoods. Through our daily activities we are placing greater emphasis upon protecting biodiversity and preserving habitats, which are the foundation of our global nutrition and food trade systems.

¹ Family farming is a means of organizing agriculture, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labor, both womens' and mens'. The family and the farm are linked, co evolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions".

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- We will continue to promote sustainable livelihoods for food producers, while we seek to increase the genuine pursuit of achieving all SDG targets throughout food trade systems. We fully recognise that aquatic food harvesting and production is not only relevant to SDG 14 “life below water”, but across many other SDGs.
- We will continue to apply the most sustainable practices possible on land, waters, forests, range- and pasturelands, and throughout onward food supply chains to minimise the ecosystem impacts of our activities. Negative impacts we will minimise include habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, bycatch, soil erosion, ghost fishing, and pollution. As such we will pursue the most responsible production of natural resource outputs that maximise nutritional and socio-economic benefits without compromising the potential for current and future generations to glean equal or greater benefits from the shared global public goods that are our natural resources.
- We are both the repositories of traditional and indigenous knowledge, and the bearers of innovative evidence-based solutions, both of which can drive transition to a more inclusive and sustainable global food system. We will continue to cultivate and promote local, indigenous, neglected, or underutilized crops, farming and fishing methods, especially when they can minimise our negative environmental impacts.
- We will continue to create a barrier to uncontrolled urbanization and prevent land abandonment, playing an important social role as rural community anchors through our work.
- We will reduce food waste by integrating innovation into our production and harvesting practices while interfacing with other actors and stages of the food value chain to avoid loss and waste along it.
- We will pursue a common and shared goal, although widely diverse: to promote healthy and nutritious food, sustainably, equitably and responsibly produced or harvested foods, while also duly recognising that natural resources are global public goods that must be managed in the interests of current and future generations.
- We commit to preserving rural landscapes, while performing environmental and social services.
- We also commit to continue feeding the world while also minimising the broader impacts of our activities upon natural ecosystems, which we recognise as the critical foundation upon which our global aquatic food system is based.
- We commit to maximising the employment opportunities available from farming, fishing and trading of food resources, while empowering women and retaining and attracting youth to become sustainable Food Producers.
- We are proud of our role as advocates, while we commit to organize ourselves and federate into larger apex structures that build solidarity, strengthen our collective voice and bargaining power and deliver effective services to our members. Through our organizations and cooperatives, we will continue to engage with policy makers to shape the management and trade policies for food while implementing Food Producer tailored measures and programs.
- We defend our diversity and are united in committing to work together on a common agenda that respects our identity as well as our central role as agents of positive change towards more sustainable, economically viable, equitable and, labour rich, resilient and overall empowering global food systems.

What Food Producers would like to see others commit to

- Consideration as equal partners rather than as beneficiaries or targets of policies and programmes.
- Acknowledgement of and reward for our efforts in feeding the world while respecting planetary boundaries, and in managing ecosystems.
- Greater valuing and respect of our knowledge and experience, as experts in our own fields, gaining our rightful place at the decision table.

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- Increased protections of the high seas and many internationally shared, migratory, pelagic marine resources that traverse between the high seas and national waters. Current seafood harvests by industrial fisheries operating on the high seas are imposing many negative impacts upon smaller scale fishers and the communities that critically depend upon such shared resources. This is especially true when industrial fleets are using excessively damaging fishing gears at the cost of broader aquatic biodiversity. Likewise, protect small scale artisanal fisherfolks from encroachment of bigger fleets in coastal areas.
- Ensure rights, access and control of family farmers, forest-users, pastoralists to their lands, forests and waters resources.
- Access to sufficient financial support or resources to make the necessary investment to allow food producers to produce more sustainably.
- Easy access to safe, efficient and affordable alternatives and to wide range of safe cutting-edge technologies and practices. It is thus essential to invest more in research that is close to producers' realities, to make the results of this research available, applicable and affordable for producers. Furthermore, it is fundamental to set up the appropriate legislative framework to enable and implement them.
- Acceptance of differences existing at local and regional levels, with the adoption of a more flexible approach to current global needs.
- All types of sustainable agricultural practices should be supported and promoted, including agroecology, precision farming, integrated pest management, sustainable fisheries and forestry and pastoralism, amongst others. The connection between farmers and consumers also needs to be developed so each of them can better understand the other and thus answer their respective needs.
- Recognition of power imbalances by factoring in the voice, rights and needs of all types of Food Producers, especially small scale family farmers and fishers, to ensure their health, livelihoods and wellbeing.
- Rules to strengthen the place of producers in the food systems value chain.
- A thorough understanding and promotion of our work, particularly of certain sectors implementing more sustainable production and fishing methods such as agroecology, precision farming, integrated pest management, nature positive production, sustainable forestry, sustainable fisheries, including one-by-one fishing gears and methods. This includes, among others, the revision and strengthening of the global accounting tools (e.g., monitoring, calculating, modelling, reporting and verification systems) for the utilization of public goods as shared planetary resources.

What Food Producers expect from the UN FSS

1. Enhancing resilience

Food Producers are frequently exposed to extreme weather events and climate change effects. The productivity and availability of resources between locations is also expected to be increasingly variable from year to year, due to unusual temperatures, changing ocean current, coral bleaching and other factors such as the spread of pests and diseases. In response to this threat, we hope the UNFSS will promote and provide further support to better adapt to climate change and to several risk-coping strategies that we need to implement to make global food systems more resilient.

Drawing on our knowledge and experience, we are minimising the impacts of our activities upon terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, restoring degraded ecosystems, protecting biodiversity, replacing fossil fuels with alternative energy sources obtained from agricultural waste, storing carbon in the soils and transitioning away from excessively damaging fishing gears. Food Producers represent a key part of the solution, and we reject being considered only as part of the problem. We expect massive scaling up and scaling out of opportunities and solutions that promote equity and sustainable harvests. As far as fisheries are concerned, this must include more technical, financial, resource management and global trade systems

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support for responsible fishing gears and methods, such as one-by-one tuna fishing techniques, especially when they are implemented with small scale Food Producer organizations engaging women and youth.

Enhancing the resilience of producers should be the business everyone in the systems, and not of producers alone. The basis for this being that producers act in response to the demand generated by other actors in the value chain. Thus other actors are culpable for the negative consequences that their demand generates on nature, and equally they should contribute towards the costs of addressing the problem.

2. Rebalancing power in food value chains

Excessive concentration of power in the hands of few economic actors and inequality afflict us. Family Farmers are the biggest food producers, through whose efforts the world is fed. Small scale Food Producers are the most critical suppliers of many foods, while filling an invaluable role in feeding the world. Nevertheless, current resource management and food trade structures continue to systemically marginalise small scale fishers and farmers when allocating fishing or tenure opportunities. We ask for a redistribution of risks and benefits throughout the value chain, and for a de-concentration of power along the food chain from producers to consumers, to promote equity to keep food systems genuinely sustainable. We also urge the promotion and strengthening of local, domestic, national and regional markets, as most food producers are unable to significantly play a role in these markets. It is of utmost importance to recognize Food Producers activities as a business and to ensure a fair return for the vital role we play.

There is also a need for greater integration and inclusion of women and young people in agricultural and fisheries and forestry and pastoralist sectors. It is therefore essential to support the whole Food Producers family through developing and achieving solutions that narrow the gender gap and more effectively include young people in the Food Producers' sector, improve social protection coverage and increase their income.

Equitable access to markets at fair prices, considering the true cost borne by us, is crucial not only to achieve food security but also to achieve the holistic environmental and social sustainability objectives set out by the SDGs. Our ability to thrive is a pre- requirement for a systemic and holistic transition to more sustainable and responsible food systems. We expect massive support to Food Producers' associations and cooperatives, through proper incentives, and support in capacity building in areas such as initial processing, labelling, packaging of community produced foods.

3. Food Producers' access to Finance

Improving Food Producers' access to finance is central to a financial transformation agenda. Without this, there is no chance of achieving food systems' transformation. Public capital must be used to de-risk investments into Food Producers' agroecological and regenerative business models, tackle challenges like hunger and poverty while building technical capacities. Investments should focus on globally enabling the broader implementation of more responsible practices, including nature positive production and one-by-one fishing techniques, that reduce, at best eliminate, habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, ghost fishing, erosion, chemical pollution by insecticides, marine pollution by abandoned lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and provide the greatest opportunities for sustainable employment, nutrition and food trade into the future.

Given the diversity that characterises our groups worldwide, financial interventions need to be properly customized. We demand the access to tailored credit mechanisms, based on a thorough knowledge of the sector, at affordable rates, rather than traditional banking schemes. Usually, access to funding mechanisms is difficult, especially for young or women small scale Food Producers who, in many cases, are often excluded from the right to the land, fishing quotas of shared resources and other collaterals.

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There is a need to work with Governments, International Financial Institutions and insurance bodies to innovate financing mechanisms, empowering and better protecting us from potential adverse events. Opportunities to mitigate these challenges and unlock sustainable investments include mandatory risk disclosure, blended finance and other tools to reduce the risk for private investments, and the establishment of a Food Producers' resiliency trust funds and empowerment funds.

It is critical that we repurpose subsidies as one of the solutions to cover the costs of transition and enhancement of sustainable production systems, to reduce food loss or waste and to ensure the more effective, equitable and just management of natural resources. This could include using currently harmful fishing subsidies to support and de-risk conversions away from excessively damaging fishing gears and methods, while also improving the capacity of fisheries management organisations to globally achieve sustainable, legal, responsible and equitable fishing. There is also a need to repurpose commercial financing that still enables nature negative value chain practices, as well as nutrition negative habits.

Improving Food Producers' access to finance would also support a transition to innovating production and harvest methods that would allow the sector to increase sustainability levels and their resilience to future shocks. This would enhance responsible food production that reduces food loss, bycatch, habitat damage, pollution, ghost fishing, inequity, and waste.

4. Empowerment of Food Producer' Organizations

It is vital to promote organizations, associations and cooperatives of Food Producers' as a fundamental way to make our voice heard in the food systems. This is especially important for small scale Food Producers and other groups who are frequently marginalised from current resource allocation and globalised food trade systems. Involving Food Producers' organizations in any policy-making process, which has an impact on sectors involved in food production and harvest, is key to enhancing Food Producers' constituencies worldwide. Indeed, Food Producers' organizations and cooperatives provide economic services at affordable terms to their members; help them to improve their livelihoods; offer easier access to markets, help defend their rights and needs during resource allocation negotiations, distribute key information, technology, training and extension services; build partnerships with other stakeholders, operate as intermediary to represent the Food Producers' interests and raise awareness on the key role of Food Producers in the policy-making processes at all levels, worldwide.

We want more options and accessibility to technological innovations that can improve the livelihoods and positive influence of Food Producers' and other stakeholders throughout food systems value chains. These and all other innovations should align with global ambitions such as the [FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication](#), the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Lands, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, the Guidelines for Responsible Agricultural Investments, and have the potential to address both environmental and socio-economic concerns of Food Producers and other stakeholders reliant on their activities. Digital tools together with improved data capture and management should help inform innovations, while technologies should enable responsible efficiencies and improvements throughout food systems, particularly when they reduce waste, habitat damage or promote market accessibility for small scale Food Producers and other frequently marginalised stakeholder groups. Such innovations should be co-designed together with the Food Producers, as a means of ensuring that operational and political contexts are fully understood by all parties and effectively integrated or addressed at the design phase. Those technologies and innovation should also be made easily accessible and affordable for producers and the data gathered should be owned by producers.

We expect the timely development and implementation of national and regional action plans for the effective implementation of the UN Decade of Action for the SDGs, the UN Decade of Family Farming, the Year of Artisanal Fishing and Aquaculture, and the Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, using a multi stakeholder approach, led by government, but with strong involvement of Food Producer organizations

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as equal partners. Global food production, harvest and trade systems need to better pursue and achieve targets of the SDGs for the sake of current and future generations. Food Producers are key drivers of positive change who can enable urgently needed transitions to less damaging food production methods that will protect biodiversity and promote global food system resilience into the future.

We need support and empowerment so that we can deploy our full potential to provide safe, healthy, nutritious, sufficient and responsibly harvested food for all while contributing to a healthier and more resilient planet.

5. We need to create a strong independent voice for primary producers at UN level

Various international and regional platforms of Food Producer organizations already exist. These can be mobilized and maximized to enable the Food Producers agency and to help steer UN policy and program on food systems. Based on the experience of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Food Producers request the formal establishment of a political mechanism that allows Food Producers' close engagement in UN processes and policy-making processes related to food systems.

Partnerships

The time has come to dare. To achieve the goal of more sustainable food systems, it will be necessary to pool the strengths, knowledge and expertise of all stakeholders and build solid, lasting, bold partnerships. We are in this together and only together we will succeed.

- **Governments** should commit to promote an enabling policy environment that is rights and evidence based while also being tailored to Food Producers' needs, and to the diversity of local communities. It is essential to maintain policy coherence and enhance integration of key complementary sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, finance, health, education and the environment. Governments should align the country's policies with the right to food and those of Food Producers', starting from our rights to natural resources, i.e. lands, fishing quotas, waters and coastal areas, forests and seeds. Governments should prioritize development of agriculture and fisheries in rural areas through providing rural infrastructures and facilities as well as support to all responsible Food Producers, by ensuring price stability, access to production inputs and least damaging fishing gears, advisory services, finance, technology, markets and information. Governments should support Food Producer organisations and cooperatives through easy accreditation processes and incentives for organized groups to participate in design, implementation and monitoring of agricultural, pastoral, and fisheries policies and programs as well as ensuring Food Producers' representation in key policy-making institutions. Governments have an essential role to play in ensuring that appropriate innovation and information systems are available and affordable to Food Producers through adequate funding mechanisms and investments. Therefore, there is a need for more public investment in agriculture and fisheries reaching directly to us to drive the transition to more holistically responsible and resilient future food systems.
- **Consumers** should become more aware of the challenges we face especially regarding the overall cost of food production. Mutual producers-consumers' beneficial solutions are needed to ensure fair prices and food affordability and the promotion of fishers using least damaging fishing gears and methods. We want to build an alliance with consumers that is based on trust. For this to happen, greater awareness is needed, starting with the food education received in schools, supported by a global food trade system that takes a more holistic and responsible approach to natural resource extraction and ending with more genuinely informed purchase choices.
- **Private sector** is expected to work with us based on a true partnership approach, based on, among others, principles of mutual trust, fairness, openness and equity, including in sharing value and risks while moving away from the currently obsolete supply chain approach which imposes inequitable standards and prices to systematically marginalise food producers. We require

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innovative and virtuous contractual relationships that recognize socio-economic right and needs, protect biodiversity from excessively damaging fishing gears or farming methods and provides a fair financial return for our efforts.

- **Research & Innovation** must overcome the gap between research and Food Producers. The essential prerequisite to achieve this ambitious goal is to base research upon our needs, expectations, and fundamental challenges, including issues of fairness, equity and deficiencies in backbone socio-economic infrastructure. Research and innovation should therefore be easily accessible, pragmatic, and scalable to ensure a fast and effective adoption to a wide number of individuals and to boost Food Producer-driven solutions, and acknowledge that producers are innovators in their own right. Only by involving us, from project genesis to its successful implementation will it be possible to create win-win strategies for us and the ecosystem itself.
- **Donors and Development Partners** can support Food Producer organizations to fulfil our commitments by directly investing in our organizations and cooperatives and incentivizing long-term projects and programs that work with Food Producer organizations as equal partners, and address fundamental challenges faced by producers.

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