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Food Systems Summit

Delegations will find in ANNEX the Council conclusions on the EU's priorities for the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, as adopted by the Council on 26 May 2021.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**on the EU's priorities for the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING:

- the Council Conclusions of 17 June 2019 on 'EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism' (10341/19);
- the Council Conclusions of 8 July 2019 on 'Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals across the world' (10997/19);
- the Council Conclusions of 10 December 2019 on 'Building a sustainable Europe by 2030 – Progress thus far and next steps' (14835/19);
- the Council Conclusions of 19 October 2020 on the 'Farm to Fork Strategy' (12099/20);
- the Council Conclusions of 23 October 2020 on 'Biodiversity - the need for urgent action' (12210/20);
- the Council Conclusions of 17 December 2020 on 'Making the Recovery Circular and Green' (14167/20);
- the Council Conclusions of 29 November 2019 on the 'Updated Bioeconomy Strategy' (14594/19);
- the Council conclusions of 25 November 2019 on 'the fourth Progress Report on the Action Plan on Nutrition' (14457/19);
- the Council Conclusions of 26 November 2018 on 'Strengthening global food and nutrition security' (14554/18);
- the Council Conclusions of 18 June 2018 on the EU and its Member States' medium-term priorities for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (10227/18);

1. REITERATES its full commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and REAFFIRMS its unwavering support for the Decade of Action to reinvigorate the momentum to deliver the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. We will continue to work closely with the UN to promote and strengthen rules-based multilateral action to end poverty, hunger and malnutrition, to protect the planet and to ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity, based on full respect for human rights and human dignity.
2. WELCOMES the UN Secretary-General's initiative to convene, in the context of the Decade of Action, a Food Systems Summit to launch bold actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, so as to ensure our lasting capacity to provide sufficient, safe and affordable food and healthy diets for all within our planetary boundaries. Building sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition patterns is essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda.
3. APPRECIATES the people-centred and solution-oriented nature of the Summit. This is a landmark opportunity for the world community to jointly address the systemic and interlinked challenges which current food systems are facing. The Summit is also of key importance for building back better and greener from the COVID-19 crisis and its disruptive socio-economic impact, which is exacerbating inequalities and aggravating food insecurity and malnutrition.
4. IS FULLY COMMITTED TO working with countries from all regions of the world and with all relevant stakeholders to achieve an ambitious outcome at the Summit and effective follow-up actions, driven by the overarching human rights principles and the right to food approach. We are ready to engage in this joint endeavour, guided by the 2030 Agenda and the vision of a sustainable, climate-neutral and resource-efficient future set out in the European Green Deal ¹ and its associated strategies and action plans, in particular the 'Farm to Fork Strategy' ² and the 'EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030' ³, as well as the EU's forest-related policies and the EU's Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies.

¹ [15051/19](#) + [ADD 1](#), [EUCO 9/19](#), [EUCO 29/19](#), [EUCO 22/20](#).

² [8280/20](#) and [12099/20](#).

³ [8219/20](#) and [12210/20](#).

5. REITERATES its commitment to consolidate and reinforce its cooperation with all UN bodies and agencies engaged in the Food Systems Summit and its follow-up, and encourages them to work closely together in the spirit of ‘One UN’.
6. HIGHLIGHTS the following general principles and key priorities for the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit:

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS

7. Food systems have a critical impact on people’s life, health and well-being. They also have a fundamental bearing on the planet's natural resources and ecosystems. Current food systems often present structural **weaknesses and unsustainable trends** which, together with the existing **inequalities** in access to healthy diets ⁴, require **accelerating concerted action**.
8. In accordance with the overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda ‘to leave no one behind’, the transition of global food systems must be **equitable and inclusive**, and based on a **human rights approach**. Special attention should be paid to the poorest and the most vulnerable, and to the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples.
9. Increased efforts are needed to address the **root causes and main drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition** worldwide, in particular poverty, inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss, forced migration and conflicts. In this regard, careful consideration must be given to ensuring food security and nutrition in fragile and humanitarian contexts, which need to be approached from an **integrated humanitarian, development and peace perspective** at all levels. Similarly, continued efforts are needed to address the cyclical impact of food insecurity and to improve **humanitarian food assistance** to support vulnerable people and communities in conflict contexts.
10. Women make an essential, though undervalued, contribution to ensuring food security and nutrition worldwide. **Achieving gender equality** and removing socio-economic and other barriers remains critical for **empowering women and girls** to play their full role in the transformation of food systems.

⁴ Healthy diets are described in the [CFS Voluntary Guidelines for Food Systems and Nutrition](#) as safe, diverse, balanced and based on nutritious foods.

11. The challenges associated with the transformation of food systems are closely interlinked with the **wider sustainability, biodiversity and climate challenges** the world is facing. Global efforts should aim to both encourage the **active involvement** and address the **responsibilities of all actors at all stages of the food system**: production, processing, storage, distribution, consumption and disposal.
12. Change towards achieving sustainable and resilient food systems must be based on a **holistic and systemic approach** and underpinned by **research and innovation**. This requires making better use of and improving **science- and evidence-based methodologies** for assessing the economic, environmental and social externalities of food, including its hidden costs in particular for the environment and health, and a better common understanding of the synergies and potential trade-offs within and between the different dimensions of food systems. Special attention is needed on supporting **research collaboration** and improving the **interface between science and policy**, with due regard to traditional and indigenous knowledge.
13. A strong and integrated **multi-stakeholder approach**, based on dialogue and partnerships between public and private actors at all levels, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and policy makers, is central to redesigning patterns of food production and consumption. It is vitally important to ensure the **active involvement of all stakeholders** on equitable terms, including through an **enabling policy environment** and appropriate economic and financial incentives.
14. **Adequate responsible investment**, by both private and public actors at all levels, is key to ensuring well-functioning food systems and to strengthening regional and local markets. In this context, firm action is needed to encourage the uptake and application of **international instruments to promote responsible investment** aimed at food security and nutrition which respects human rights ⁵, ensures fairness and transparency in the governance of land tenure ⁶, and is aligned with climate and environmental objectives.

⁵ In particular the [CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems](#).

⁶ In particular the [CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security](#).

15. The transformation of food systems should take due account of the **rural-urban nexus**, as well as of the diversity of territories and their specific strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, a **territorial and bottom-up approach** taking into account local challenges and tapping into local assets can make an important contribution.

KEY PRIORITIES TO BE ADVANCED BY THE FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

16. Under the overarching principles of human rights, with special reference to the right to food, the EU ⁷ is committed to working with its partners in pursuit of the objectives of the Food Systems Summit for supporting the achievement of the SDGs.
17. The EU highlights the following crosscutting priorities for the Summit, which should be addressed in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

Strengthening sustainability and resilience

18. Agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture need to ensure food security and nutrition for a growing world population in a sustainable manner. This will require a shift away from unsustainable production methods and practices, and a scaling up of **nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches**, such as agro-ecological practices, organic farming and agroforestry, and increased capacity for integrated land use planning and management. Particular attention is needed on **reducing soil degradation** and **enhancing soil health**. Moreover, the increased use of freshwater resources combined with more frequent and intense droughts require bold action to promote **sustainable and integrated water resources management**, efficient water use and the prevention of freshwater and soil pollution.
19. Strong **agricultural and food policies** and effective global frameworks for promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, including genetic resources, are key to supporting the transition towards sustainable and resilient food systems.

⁷ Throughout this document the use of 'EU' does not prejudice whether the competence lies with the EU, the EU and its Member States, or exclusively with the Member States of the EU.

Along with territorial approaches, **fair and transparent production and environmental certification and quality schemes** are important tools that can be used for that purpose. Similarly, measures to enhance the **responsible and sustainable use of fertilisers, pesticides and antimicrobials** should be strengthened, including through reduction targets.

20. The preservation of the oceans and freshwaters and the protection of marine ecosystems is essential for the production of food for sustainable and healthy diets. Recognising the crucial contribution of **fisheries and aquaculture**, more efforts are needed to develop sustainable ways to manage global seafood resources. Work in this area needs to focus on **conserving and sustainably using fish stocks**, on eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing according to a zero-tolerance approach, and on combating overfishing and preventing negative environmental impacts. The Summit should encourage **cooperation** on concrete measures to ensure **effective management of fisheries** and the **sustainable development of aquaculture** and their value chains to support sustainable and resilient food systems.
21. **Biodiversity and food systems** are strongly interdependent. Biodiversity loss and unsound management of chemical inputs and waste constitute a serious threat to long-term food production capacity and the resilience of food systems. Urgent action is needed to address the direct and indirect drivers of **biodiversity loss** in the context of food production and consumption. In this regard, it is critical to reduce dependence on **pesticides and excess use of nutrients**, to protect and sustainably use **agro-biodiversity**, including through agro-ecological practices and organic farming, and to address the root causes of the **decline of pollinators**, which are vital for healthy ecosystems and food security. In this context, the EU stresses the importance of reaching agreement at the CBD COP 15 ⁸ on a transformative and ambitious **post-2020 global biodiversity framework**.

⁸ 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

22. **Forests and agroforestry systems** contribute in many ways, both directly and indirectly, to food security and nutrition. Enhanced joint efforts are needed to implement the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, in order to halt **global deforestation and forest degradation**, including **illegal logging**, and manage forests sustainably, with due regard to the conservation of primary and old-growth forests. Acknowledging that agricultural expansion is one of the main drivers of global deforestation, it is of key importance to ensure **transparent and sustainable supply chains**, including by minimising the risk of products associated with deforestation and forest degradation being placed on the market. To that end, the Summit should strengthen **bilateral and multilateral cooperation** on policies and actions to encourage countries to implement and enforce ambitious, fair and results-based policies aimed at combating deforestation and forest degradation.
23. **Food systems** are both strongly impacted by, and an important driver of **climate change**. Responsible investment, innovation and digital technology offer great potential for addressing **climate change adaptation and mitigation** across the food systems. The Summit should trigger **solutions, innovations and best practices** that can be scaled up and have a lasting impact to achieve zero hunger and comprehensively address climate and sustainability goals throughout food systems. In this regard, special attention is needed to ensure that innovations are available and accessible to the poorest and most vulnerable countries and communities.
24. A **fair transition to a circular economy** can make a significant contribution to sustainable and resilient food systems. Enhanced efforts are needed to reduce the use of non-renewable natural resources and to strengthen the **bio-based sectors**, including by unlocking responsible investment and markets, as well as fostering sustainable biomass production and processing. In addition, **further developing the potential of sustainable protein sources** has an important role to play in global food supply.

25. Significantly **reducing the current levels of food losses and food waste** is critical in moving towards sustainable food systems. In order to reach the 2030 global target of halving food waste at the retail and consumer levels, and reducing food losses along production and supply chains (including post-harvest losses), special attention is needed for promoting inter-sectoral and public-private cooperation; supporting education and awareness-raising measures; promoting resource-efficient and circular design of food packaging; safe use of by-products and recycling of food waste; responsibly improving the shelf-life of products, and enhancing monitoring and reporting on food losses and food waste throughout the food supply chain.
26. It is crucial to ensure a **decent livelihood and standard of living** for primary producers and all those working along the entire food chain, including through social protection measures. Special attention should be paid to the important role of **smallholders, family farmers, and small-scale producers in fisheries and aquaculture and forestry**. To enable them to fully use their potential for driving the transition to sustainable food systems forward, it is essential to allow them better access to markets, productive assets and inputs, finance and insurance; to offer them better governance of tenure of land, water and fishing areas, fair working conditions and decent hygiene facilities; to strengthen their access to research, knowledge, technology and innovation; and to recognise the role of local and short supply chains.
27. An inclusive transition process requires due recognition of the key role played by **indigenous peoples and local communities in food systems**, through enhancing their empowerment and protecting their rights. It is also essential to improve the prospects and living standards of **women and young people** in rural areas. The Summit should underline the need for sustained and accelerated action to that end.
28. Continued efforts are needed to address food insecurity and malnutrition in emergency and protracted crisis situations. In this regard, **humanitarian food assistance** represents a key element of food resilience, by protecting lives and livelihoods and permitting a faster recovery.

More needs to be done to promote **more efficient food assistance mechanisms**, including anticipatory action, cash transfers and local procurement of food items, which can also help reduce the environmental impact of humanitarian interventions and support local food systems.

Promoting healthy diets through sustainable food systems

29. Current **food consumption patterns** need to become more sustainable. Consumers have a critical role to play in this regard. Supporting and promoting sustainable, safe, healthy and diverse dietary patterns, including plant-based foods, through **improved food environments, education, awareness-raising** and **access to information**, should be an integral part of global efforts to transform food systems. In this regard, special attention must be paid to promoting clear communication to consumers, in particular through transparent **labelling systems** and nutrition education.
30. Along with continued joint efforts to end hunger and combat food insecurity, particular attention is needed to address the growing burden of **malnutrition** in all its forms, including the coexistence of undernutrition with **overweight, obesity** and other **diet-related non-communicable diseases**. Special attention should be paid to the diets that **children and adolescents** need in order to grow and develop to their full potential, including through school nutrition programmes. International guidance on policies to promote healthy diets is essential, especially for the poorest and the elderly, and women and children living in fragile contexts. The EU supports the extended use of indicators on minimum dietary diversity to monitor the consumption of varied diets among population groups.
31. Responsible **marketing practices** and targeted **pricing policies** can play an important role in helping people to make good food choices, while contributing to **enhanced market transparency** and fairer compensation for producers. Similarly, special attention is needed for promoting the enhanced use of **sustainable public and private procurement policies** and the integration of voluntary sustainability standards in such policies.

32. The Summit should encourage effective measures to increase the **accessibility and affordability of healthy diets through sustainable food systems**, including for vulnerable groups.

Strengthening food safety and public health

33. Ensuring the safety of food provided to consumers is of utmost importance. This requires the ability to adequately **trace food throughout the food chain** and **minimise risks**, including in the food processing and retail stages, and to effectively **combat food fraud**. In this regard, the EU reaffirms its full support for the important work of **international standardisation bodies**, in particular the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The development of science- and evidence-based international standards by these organisations should take duly into account the sustainability of food systems.
34. A central requirement for the successful transformation of food systems is the full implementation of the **One Health approach**, since the health of humans, animals, plants and of their shared environments are inextricably intertwined. In this regard, the **tripartite collaboration** between the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) should be further reinforced and **extended** to include on equal terms the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**. In this context, the EU welcomes the newly created **One Health High-Level Expert Panel** involving FAO, OIE, WHO and UNEP.
35. **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** is a fundamental threat to human and animal health and to the production of safe and sustainable food. The EU will continue to strongly advocate for the **responsible, prudent and sustainable use of antimicrobials** and reiterates its call for their use as growth promoters to be phased out. The Summit should highlight the urgent need to step up global efforts to implement the **2015 Global Action Plan on AMR** through the One Health approach.

36. Prevention of, and preparedness for **zoonotic diseases**, is of vital importance. The EU stresses the need to strengthen control and response mechanisms and to develop and better implement international guidelines on stricter safety and hygiene measures, in particular in the context of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). In this respect, full consideration should be given to the risks of the **emergence and transmission of new zoonoses**, associated with animal production as well as human interference with ecosystems and wildlife species. Increased efforts are needed to mitigate those risks, including through strengthened measures to combat illegal wildlife trade.

Contributing to the sustainability and resilience of food systems through trade

37. Open, transparent and rules-based international trade, consistent with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, and sanitary and phytosanitary standards, have an important role to play in ensuring access for all to sufficient, safe and healthy diets. **Multilateral and bilateral trade agreements can be an important tool for** achieving ambitious **sustainability objectives in relation to food systems**, in particular in key areas such as the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity; the sustainable management of water, land and forests; the fight against deforestation and illegally harvested timber; combating and preventing the further spread of AMR; promoting sustainable and prudent use of pesticides; the improvement of animal welfare; and the protection of decent working conditions. The EU will continue to engage with and support its trade partners, particularly developing countries, to accompany the transition towards sustainable food systems. The EU also reiterates its support for the efforts to **reform the WTO** with a view to enhancing the WTO's contribution to sustainable development.

38. Alongside international trade, due recognition should be given to the contribution which **regional and local trade** can make to sustainable and resilient food systems, including through **short supply chains**. Building, strengthening and improving **access to regional and local markets** is vital for ensuring complementarity between local, regional and global food systems, thereby enhancing both the sustainability and the resilience of food systems.

New finance solutions and business models

39. New **finance solutions and business models** for stakeholders, including support, where appropriate, through blended finance, risk-sharing mechanisms and insurance schemes, are needed to foster sustainable food systems. These should, in particular, promote **access to finance for sustainable and responsible investment in food systems**, with an emphasis on small-scale and family farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises. **Accountability mechanisms** and safeguards to prevent potential conflicts of interest are key in this regard.
40. Incentives that are harmful to the environment, biodiversity and the climate should be phased out. In this regard, the EU welcomes the adoption of the **UN System of Environmental Economic Accounts**, and calls for further work to promote the use of **Natural Capital Accounting** by decision makers throughout the food system.

Improving scientific knowledge and ensuring a strong science-policy interface

41. In order to better understand the challenges and opportunities associated with the transformation of food systems and define priorities for action, further **science- and evidence-based assessments** of food systems should be undertaken at the global, regional and country levels.
42. Similarly, to make well-informed decisions about the future of food systems, governments, the private sector, research institutions, civil society organisations and consumers need access to the **best technical and socio-economic insights**, with due recognition for traditional and indigenous knowledge. The EU is committed to intensifying **knowledge, innovation and technology transfer** in this regard.
43. The Summit should contribute to **strengthening the governance of food systems** at different levels, including through multi-stakeholder and intergovernmental mechanisms, and ensure a **strong science-policy interface** to enable fully informed policy decisions.

44. In this respect, the EU acknowledges the central role of the **Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** and its **High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE)**. The Summit should encourage countries and all stakeholders to strengthen the uptake and implementation of CFS policy instruments. In this regard, the EU stresses in particular the importance of the **recently adopted CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition** and calls for their wide implementation.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE SUMMIT

45. The EU is committed to reaching an **ambitious outcome** from the Food Systems Summit that will **catalyse the transformation of food systems**, with a right to food approach, through a common vision reflected in a **clear actionable agenda**, aligned with the SDG monitoring and reporting arrangements.
46. An effective follow-up to the Summit will require **strong UN cooperation and reinforcement of ongoing UN initiatives** to deliver on the SDGs, while avoiding duplication or overlaps of work streams. The EU highlights the importance of making best use of **existing intergovernmental and institutional mechanisms** to ensure that the Summit's outcomes will drive new actions and stimulate progress, as well as to measure and analyse the Summit's impact in the broader context of the 2030 Agenda. To that end, **close collaboration and coordination** is needed between the **relevant UN agencies and fora**, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).

47. Special attention is needed to ensure that the **outcomes of the Summit** are duly taken into account in **multilateral initiatives and upcoming events** such as the Nutrition for Growth Summit (Tokyo, December 2021), the Global Aquaculture Conference (Shanghai, September 2021), the COP 26 Climate Change Conference (Glasgow, November 2021), the UNCBD COP 15 (Kunming, October 2021), the UNCCD COP 15 (September 2021), the UN Ocean Conference (Lisbon 2022), the Stockholm 50+ (Stockholm 2022), and the 2023 UN Water Conference (New York, 22-24 March 2023).

Actions and initiatives at EU level

48. The EU aims to lead by example in taking forward the post-Summit transformation process, together with its partners and all relevant stakeholders, and stands ready to foster **alliances and partnerships** to that effect.
49. As part of its broader policy actions to achieve food security and nutrition, and to deliver on the 2030 Agenda in the EU and beyond, the EU aims in relations with its trade partners to enhance the focus on sustainable food systems with a view to jointly achieving a successful transition at the global level. Accordingly, the EU intends to include a **specific chapter on the sustainability of food systems in EU trade agreements** that are currently under negotiation and to strengthen the cooperation in this area with countries that have already concluded trade agreements with the EU.
50. The EU is also committed to continuing its ongoing efforts to develop a **sustainable and resilient EU food system** and stands ready to share its knowledge, expertise and experience with its partners. The **main short- and medium-term actions and initiatives** which the EU intends to undertake to that effect, in particular in the context of its ‘**European Green Deal**’ and ‘**Farm to Fork Strategy**’, include:
- the development of an EU legislative framework for sustainable food systems;
 - the preparation, together with all relevant stakeholders, of a Code of Conduct for responsible business and marketing practice;

- the development of binding targets to reduce food waste, based on the new methodology for measuring food waste;
- the development of ‘Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture’, to ensure sustainable production of food from sustainably managed aquaculture;
- the preparation of legislation to avoid or minimise the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market, as well as further initiatives to halt deforestation and promote sustainable forest management;
- the development of measures to increase the EU’s agricultural land under organic farming, to increase organic aquaculture and to increase consumption of organic products;
- the development of measures to achieve quantitative reduction targets for pesticides, antimicrobials and nutrient losses;
- the launching of initiatives in the context of ‘Horizon Europe’ to support ambitious international and transdisciplinary research and innovation projects for sustainable food systems (including through a partnership entitled ‘Safe and Sustainable Food Systems for People, Planet & Climate’);
- the preparation of an ‘EU carbon farming initiative’ for certifying carbon removals based on robust and transparent monitoring and verification;
- the development of a proposal seeking to provide a harmonised science-based front-of-pack nutrition labelling scheme and a sustainable labelling framework;
- the launching of initiatives to stimulate reformulation of processed food, including where applicable the setting of maximum levels for certain nutrients, and to restrict the promotion of food with high salt, sugar and/or certain fat content;
- the review of the EU promotion programme for agricultural and food products and the EU school scheme, as well as the EU support for food procurement to enhance the production, availability and adoption of healthy and sustainable diets;

- the improvement of preparedness for food crises, the enhancement of anticipatory action in addressing food crises and the further operationalisation of the Global Network against Food Crises along the humanitarian-development-peace axis.
-