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Food and Agriculture Organization Background Guide 2022

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2022 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This year's staff are: Directors Paul Gussmann (Conference A) and Emma Bott (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Catherine Tomczyk (Conference A) and Connor Vargo (Conference B). Paul currently is currently completing his Masters Degree in International Economics and Economic Policy at the University of Frankfurt and works part-time at the German Development Bank. Emma holds a Bachelor of Management from Concordia University of Edmonton and J.D. from Thompson Rivers University. Emma works at a small law firm in Alberta, Canada. Catherine is a junior at the University of New Haven studying International Affairs with a minor in Criminal Justice. Connor holds a BA in Political Science from the University of New Haven and currently works as a Legislative Assistant in the United States House of Representatives in Washington, DC.

The topics under discussion for the Food and Agriculture Organization are:

1. Sustainable Aquaculture for Healthier Societies and Environments
2. Transforming Food Systems for Sustainable Healthy Diets

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is the primary specialized agency coordinating the efforts towards the eradication of hunger and food insecurity. FAO works closely with Member States and related UN organizations to collect and analyze nutrition data, provide technical assistance to Member States, and organize programmes and missions. FAO's primary work is through setting policy, determining the strategic objectives of the FAO, and making recommendations on issues pertaining to FAO's mission. In order to propose solutions aimed at eradicating hunger and malnutrition, address international crises, and to accurately simulate the committee, it is imperative for delegates to understand FAO's mandate to improve world-wide nutrition.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2022 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the Development Department, Vincent Carrier (Conference A) and Martin Schunk (Conference B), at usg.dev@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sincerely,

Conference A

Paul Gußmann, *Director*

Catherine Tomczyk, *Assistant Director*

Conference B

Emma A. Bott, *Director*

Connor Vargo, *Assistant Director*

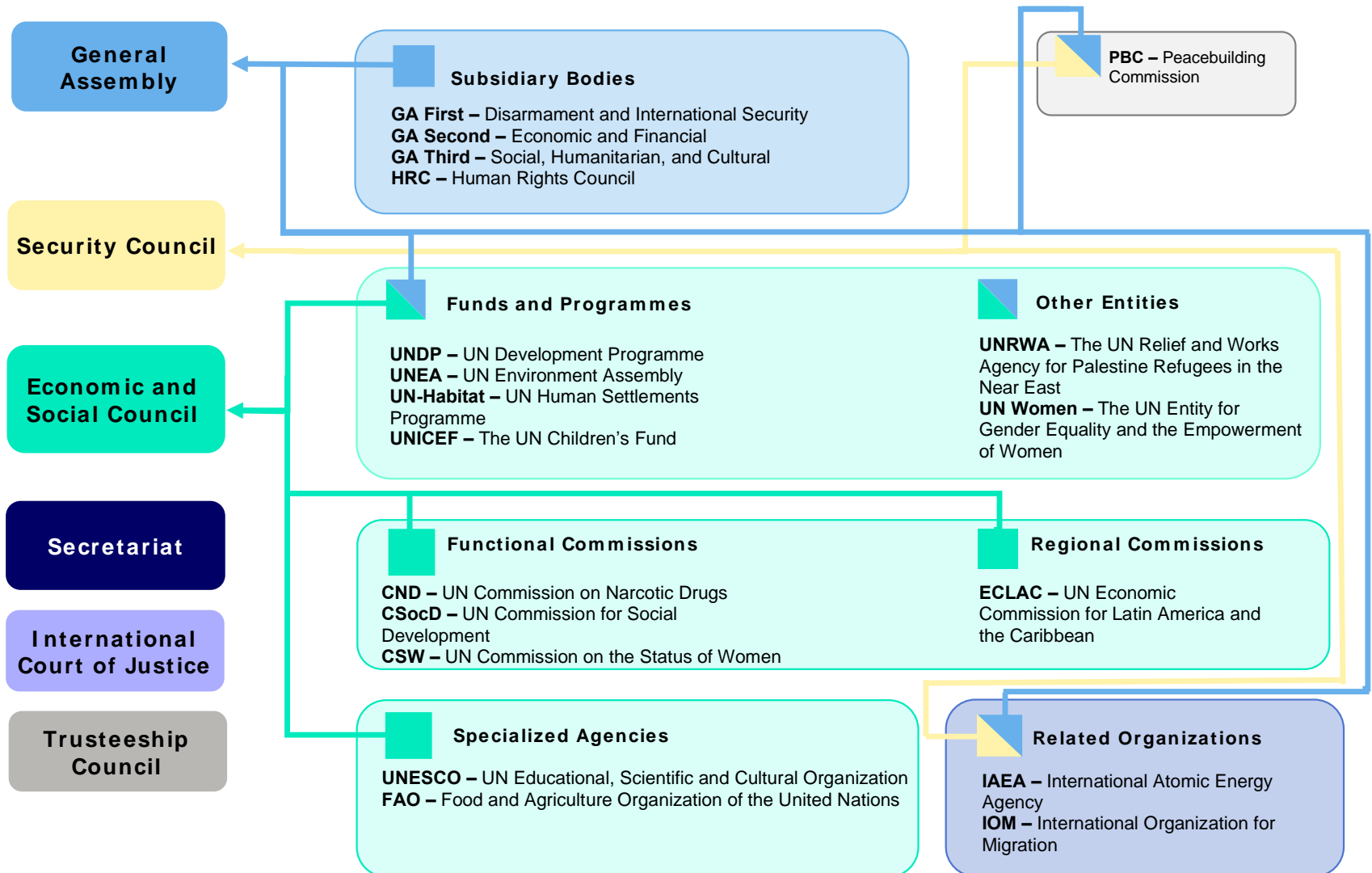


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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



Committee Overview

Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), founded in 1945, is the leading intergovernmental organization coordinating efforts towards the eradication of hunger and food insecurity.¹ FAO facilitates partnerships between the United Nations (UN), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Member States, the private sector, and other stakeholders.² Through the variety of functions that FAO performs, it works to reduce hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity; increase the sustainability and productiveness of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries; reduce rural poverty; enable inclusive and efficient agriculture and food systems; and improve the resilience of livelihoods to disasters.³

The International Institute of Agriculture (IIA) was founded in 1905 in Rome to study the state of agriculture and disseminate the information gathered.⁴ In 1943, the Interim Commission on Food and Agriculture was established in order to create a permanent agricultural organization, which eventually led to FAO.⁵ Shortly after the end of the Second World War, the constitution of FAO was signed at the First Session of the Conference of FAO and entered into force on 16 October 1945.⁶ FAO inherited the statistical functions of the IIA, and while FAO has a much broader mandate and reach, the core mission between the IIA and FAO remained largely the same: addressing the needs of farmers, agriculture, and economic development.⁷

In its first two decades, FAO oversaw the establishment of important international agricultural agreements and institutions, including the World Food Programme (WFP) in 1961.⁸ In 1974, amid famine and global food crises, the first World Food Conference convened in Rome, Italy.⁹ Member States adopted the *Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition* (1974) proclaiming that, “every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop fully and maintain their physical and mental faculties.”¹⁰ In commemoration of the founding of FAO, the FAO Conference adopted in 1979 Resolution 1/79, establishing World Food Day, which shall be observed on 16 October.¹¹ At the World Food Summit in 1996 the *Rome Declaration on World Food Security* and the *World Food Summit Plan of Action* were adopted.¹² Both recognize seven broad commitments such as, the eradication of poverty, implementation of policies to improve physical and economic access of nutritionally adequate and safe food, and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and rural development practices.¹³

Governance, Structure, and Membership

FAO is a specialized agency of the UN and reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹⁴ FAO currently consists of 194 members, two associate members (The Faroe Islands and Tokelau), and

¹ FAO, *About FAO*, 2017.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ FAO, *FAO - its origins, formation and evolution 1945-1981*, 1981, pp. 3-5.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷ FAO, *About FAO*, 2017; FAO, *FAO - its origins, formation and evolution 1945-1981*, 1981.

⁸ FAO, *FAO - its origins, formation and evolution 1945-1981*, 1981.

⁹ FAO, *World Food Summit. Report of the World Food Summit*, 1996.

¹⁰ FAO, *World Food Summit. Report of the World Food Summit*, 1996; World Food Conference, *Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition*, 1974.

¹¹ FAO, *Major Trends and policies in food and agriculture*.

¹² FAO, *World Food Summit. Report of the World Food Summit*, 1996.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2021-22*, 2021, p. 9.

one-member organization (European Union).¹⁵ The primary body of FAO is the Conference of Member Nations established by Article III of FAO *Constitution* (1945), which meets every two years in regular session. The Conference can vote to meet the following year in a special session.¹⁶ Each Member State and Associate Member is represented by one delegate carrying one vote and other international organizations may attend by invitation but do not have the right to vote.¹⁷ The purpose of the Conference is to determine the policy and approve the budget of FAO.¹⁸ The Conference may make recommendations to Member States and Associate Members, by a two-thirds majority, related to food and agriculture for consideration with the objective to implement these recommendations by national action.¹⁹ In addition, the Conference may make recommendations to any international organization regarding issues pertaining to FAO and may review any decision made by the council or subsidiary body and may establish Regional Conferences.²⁰ There are Regional Conferences for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Near East and North Africa.²¹ Regional conferences occur biennially and are hosted on a rotating basis by Member States of the region.²² These are the highest governing bodies of FAO at the regional level and their purpose is to be a forum for Member States from the same geographic region to meet and discuss regional priorities, challenges, and to formulate coherent and aligned positions on global policy.²³

The Council of FAO is the executive body of the organization and meets between the biennial FAO Conference years.²⁴ The council acts on current food and agricultural activities and situations, and activities of the organization of the whole, including the development of the Programme of Work.²⁵ The Council's powers are delegated by the Conference and various subcommittees, for example, the Programme Committee and the Finance Committee which assist its work.²⁶ A body of 49 Member Nations is elected to serve three-year terms on the Governing Council.²⁷

The Director-General leads FAO and is appointed by the Conference for an initial four-year term that can be renewed once, for a total tenure of eight years.²⁸ The current Director-General of FAO is QU Dongyu.²⁹ Director-General QU Dongyu reformed the organizational structure of the FAO in 2020³⁰. The reformed structure is composed of thirteen cross-cutting offices, three centers of collaboration with other agencies, and three workstreams with fifteen divisions.³¹ The three workstreams are the Partnership and Outreach stream, the Natural Resources and Sustainable Production stream, and Economic and Social Development stream.³² FAO structure is supplemented by a Corporate Logistics and Operational Support stream and five decentralized Regional offices with six liaison offices.³³ The current Independent Chairperson of the Council is Ambassador Hans Hoogeveen from the Netherlands.³⁴ The Chairperson is appointed by the Council for two years with the option to renew for another two years and works to

¹⁵ FAO, *Legal Services for Development: Membership of FAO*.

¹⁶ FAO, *Basic Texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Volumes I and II*, 2013.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ FAO, *FAO Regional Conferences*.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ FAO, *Governing and Statutory Bodies: Council*.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ FAO, *Basic Texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Volumes I and II*, 2013.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ FAO, *Director-General QU Dongyu*, 2021.

³⁰ FAO, *Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-2021 (CL 164/3)*, 2020, p. 6.

³¹ Ibid., p. 19.

³² Ibid., p. 19.

³³ FAO, *Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-2021 (CL 164/3)*, 2020, p. 20.

³⁴ FAO, *FAO Conference endorses new Strategic Framework to drive agri-food systems transformation*, 2021.

facilitate communication between Member States, the Director-General and other senior FAO officials to create policy consensus moving forward.³⁵

Funding for FAO is derived from various sources, with the majority of the funding coming from obligatory, assessed contributions by Member States, as well as voluntary contributions by Member States.³⁶ The current 2022-2023 FAO planned budget is \$3.25 billion US dollars, 31% of its current funding comes from assessed contributions, and 69% comes from voluntary contributions from Member States and other partners.³⁷ The amounts Member States are assessed are determined at FAO Conference.³⁸ Further funding is provided specifically for programs and includes contributions from Member States, international financial institutions, and the private sector, with funding often directed towards specific programs.³⁹

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

FAO's primary responsibilities are outlined in the *Basic Texts* of FAO that include FAO's *Constitution* (1945) and the applicable *Rules of Procedure*.⁴⁰ The mandate of FAO, as outlined in the preamble of the constitution, is to address the following: "raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples; improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products; bettering the condition of rural populations; and contributing towards an expanding world economy and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger."⁴¹ FAO works closely with WFP and other agencies to facilitate the provision of food, particularly in times of emergency.⁴²

The core functions of FAO, outlined in its constitution, are to collect and analyze information related to nutrition, food, and agriculture and to make this collection and analysis of data available.⁴³ In addition, FAO provides technical assistance to Member States, organizes programs and missions, cooperates with Member States, and takes necessary and appropriate actions to implement the mandate of the organization as set forth in the preamble.⁴⁴

In addition to its core functions, FAO also provides assistance in emergencies.⁴⁵ FAO is involved in disaster risk reduction activities to increase the resilience of communities to disasters.⁴⁶ Due to the relation between food insecurity and disasters, and the further relation to decreased levels of nutrition, FAO has implemented programs in multiple regions to reduce the risk of food insecurity through a multi-sector approach with four broad thematic pillars: "Enabling the Environment; Watch to Safeguard; Apply Risk and Vulnerability Reduction Measures; and Prepare and Respond."⁴⁷ FAO also co-leads the "Food Security Cluster" with WFP.⁴⁸ The cluster works to ensure that adequate nutrition and food are provided in humanitarian emergencies through the coordination of multiple partner agencies, including WFP, FAO, the International Federations of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and other international NGOs.⁴⁹ Outside of UN entities, FAO partners with private sector entities, agricultural research institutions, such as those within the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

³⁵ FAO, *An Introduction to the FAO Council*, 2013, p. 4.

³⁶ FAO, *Technical Cooperation Department*.

³⁷ FAO, *Office of Strategy, Programme and Budget (OSP) Planning: FAO's Budget, 2021*.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ FAO, *Technical Cooperation Department*; FAO, *Office of Strategy, Programme and Budget (OSP) Planning*.

⁴⁰ FAO, *Basic Texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Volumes I and II*, 2013, p. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² FAO, *FAO Attributes, Core Functions, and Comparative Advantages*.

⁴³ FAO, *Basic Texts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Volumes I and II*, 2013, p. 3.

⁴⁴ FAO, *FAO Attributes, Core Functions, and Comparative Advantages*.

⁴⁵ FAO, *FAO in Emergencies*.

⁴⁶ FAO, *FAO in Emergencies: Resilience*.

⁴⁷ FAO, *A Field Guide to Disaster Risk Reduction in Southern Africa*, 2014; FAO, *Resilient Livelihoods: Disaster Risk Reduction for Food and Nutrition Security*, 2013.

⁴⁸ Humanitarian Response, *Humanitarian Response: About*.

⁴⁹ FSC, *About Food Security Cluster*.

system, and various civil society organizations (CSOs).⁵⁰ FAO assists CSOs with technical and institutional support and helps advocate for public policy changes on the local, national and regional level.⁵¹

Recent Sessions and Current Priorities

In recent years, FAO has focused on the eradication of malnutrition and hunger.⁵² FAO is working to improve agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and other food production systems to increase productivity, sustainability, inclusiveness, efficiency, and resilience.⁵³ Likewise, FAO has recognized that rural poverty is a concern and is working to reduce it.⁵⁴ Also, FAO is working on combating climate change through the promotion of sustainable agricultural processes.⁵⁵

The 42nd FAO Conference was held 14-18 June 2021 in Rome, Italy.⁵⁶ FAO Members endorsed the *2022-2031 Strategic Framework*, which focuses on progressing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and sustainable agriculture to improve nutrition and standards of living.⁵⁷ The Framework focuses on the four betters: better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life.⁵⁸ FAO focused on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (no hunger) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities).⁵⁹ Other documents endorsed during the 42nd Conference were the *Programme of Work and Budget 2022-23* and the *Medium-Term Plan 2022-25*.⁶⁰ The 42nd Conference considered the reports of the Regional Conferences, the governing committees and the Committee on World Food Insecurity.⁶¹ Directly following the 42nd Conference was the Council 167 that focused on the election of the Chair people and members of the governing committees and matters arising out of the 42nd Conference.⁶²

FAO hosted the Pre-Summit of the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 in Rome from 26-28 July, 2021.⁶³ The Pre-Summit set the state for the UN Food Systems Summit to take place on 23 September 2021 in New York.⁶⁴ The Pre-Summit is focused on creating National Pathways to implement the SDGs and creating a Coalition of Action to provide support and assistance to Member States.⁶⁵ Together with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and WFP, FAO discussed taking on the follow-up process after the Summit within the context of Rome-based Agencies (RBA) collaboration.⁶⁶ On 21 July, 2021 the High Political Forum Sustainable Development (HLPF) presented the *2021 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report* that provides insights in the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition trends.⁶⁷ The report provides updated estimates on the cost of healthy diet along with data on the affordability.⁶⁸ The COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme focuses on creating

⁵⁰ FAO, *Partnerships 2021*.

⁵¹ FAO, *Civil Society*, 2021.

⁵² FAO, *The Director-General's Medium-Term Plan 2018-21 and Programme of Work and Budget 2018-19*, 2017.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ FAO, *FAO Conference endorses new Strategic Framework to drive agri-food systems transformation*, 2021.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ FAO, *FAO's Strategic Framework*, 2021.

⁵⁹ FAO, *FAO Conference endorses new Strategic Framework to drive agri-food systems transformation*, 2021.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ FAO, *FAO Conference List Documents of Documents*, 2021.

⁶² FAO, *Council: Order of the Day*, 2021.

⁶³ UN DGC, *About the Pre-Summit*, 2021; FAO, *A statement by FAO Director-General QU Dongyu*, 2021.

⁶⁴ UN DGC, *About the Pre-Summit*, 2021.

⁶⁵ Kalibata, *Eager for Ambition – All Stakeholders Encouraged to Continue Stepping Forward through the Food Systems Summit with Leadership and Bold Action*, 2021.

⁶⁶ FAO, *A statement by FAO Director-General QU Dongyu*, 2021.

⁶⁷ FAO, *UN report: Pandemic year marked by spike in world hunger*, 2021.

⁶⁸ FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Latest Issue SOFI 2021*, 2021.

jobs for women and youth in agriculture and utilizing technology to connect small-scaled farmers with market access.⁶⁹ The program is working to increase the resilience of the food supply chain.⁷⁰

Conclusion

FAO will play a crucial role in meeting the targets of the 2030 Agenda as its strategic objectives and programmatic work will intersect with nearly every SDG in some capacity.⁷¹ FAO, along with its partner organizations, is in a position to further reduce the burden of hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity on future generations and has aligned its strategic objective towards achieving these goals.⁷² Through organization-wide activities FAO will further enhance its position to appropriately respond to pressing situations, such as famine and food insecurity, while still meeting the outlined goals to eradicate hunger, malnutrition, and combat poverty.⁷³ The COVID-19 pandemic has created increased global food insecurity that the FAO is working to address through the Response and Recovery Programme.⁷⁴

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The Basic Texts of FAO include its mandate and constitution, and an overview of its governing bodies. Delegates should use these documents as a base for further research and ensure that recommended actions fit within the mandate of the organization. In order to propose policy that is within the scope and mandate of FAO, delegates need to have a keen understanding of FAO's powers, authority, and ability to implement policy and programmatic activities.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2020). *Further Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-2021 (CL 164/3)*. Retrieved 27 September 2021 from <http://www.fao.org/3/nc436en/nc436en.pdf>

This document focuses on the program adjustments to its work and budgets. In 2020, the FAO underwent significant restructuring which is laid out in this document. It is important to understand how the FAO restructured and how this will impact the work of FAO moving forward. Delegates should use this a foundational document in becoming familiar with the Committee and its work.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2021, June 18). *FAO Conference endorses new Strategic Framework to drive agri-food systems transformation*. Retrieved 31 July 2021 from: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1412520/icode/>

This press statement provides delegates with a summary of the recent FAO Conference and the new Strategic Framework before they start reading the documents produced by the Conference. This will provide delegates an introduction and assist in understand the documents produced by the Conference. This document should be used in the initial stages of research to provide a basic understanding.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2021). *FAO's Strategic Framework*. Retrieved 18 August 2021 from: <http://www.fao.org/strategic-framework/en>

The Four Betters outlined in FAO's Strategic Framework are crucial to the work of FAO now and in the future. The Four Betters are in support of the 2030 Agenda for

⁶⁹ FAO, *FAO Council ends successfully and paves the way for the first virtual Conference in history*, 2021.

⁷⁰ FAO, *FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme*, 2021.

⁷¹ FAO, *UN report: Pandemic year marked by spike in world hunger*, 2021.

⁷² FAO, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ FAO, *UN report: Pandemic year marked by spike in world hunger*, 2021.

Sustainable Development. The Strategic Framework is current as it was developed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework is a long-term document running until 2031. This document will provide delegates with an idea of what FAO believes to be its current challenges and goals.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. (2021). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*. Retrieved 18 September 2021 from: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb4474en/cb4474en.pdf>
This report was written by FAO, IFA, UNICEF, WFP and WHO and is recent to this year. The document provides delegates with statistics and indicators of the current food security situation. The document provides delegates with policy recommendations to combat the global food insecurity issues. Delegates should use this source to understand what FAO can do and for researching issues to discuss during the conference.

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1. Sustainable Aquaculture for Healthier Societies and Environments

Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines aquaculture as the farming of aquatic life, such as fish, shellfish, and aquatic plants, with the use of technology.⁷⁵ The 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development by the General Assembly defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.⁷⁶ More specifically, sustainable aquaculture describes any aquacultural action that includes the recognition of equal benefits for all involved stakeholders and just wages for farmers.⁷⁷ Furthermore, it foresees to minimize changes to and harm towards the environment.⁷⁸ Aquacultural actions and practices include, but are not limited to, pond culture, seaweed culture, ocean ranching, fish cages, and hanging lines.⁷⁹

Aquaculture production is ever changing, with increased technology and production projected to reach 109 million tons by 2030.⁸⁰ Sustainable aquaculture has many benefits. It can help diversify farming systems and become an important source of revenue.⁸¹ Inland fisheries, which are commonly used in freshwater and in developing countries to help boost the economy, are one of the drivers for the enlargement of aquaculture production, besides maritime fisheries, where fish are bred in saltwater.⁸² In recent years, the aquaculture industry has felt the harsh effects of climate change, marine pollution, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU), which works against the goal of sustainability and harms aquaculture.⁸³ Nevertheless, the aquaculture industry faces many environmental problems such as the overexploitation of fish stocks, marine pollution, and environmental degradation.⁸⁴ As the world begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and moves towards sustainable aquaculture, it must bear in mind the environmental impacts of aquaculture and must continue to protect aquatic ecosystems to ensure future use.⁸⁵

Stressing the importance of protecting the environment, ensuring global food security, and achieving sustainable development are necessary factors in sustainable aquaculture.⁸⁶ Sustainable aquaculture strategies need to ensure that benefits and costs are shared equitably, promote job creation, ensure food is accessible to all, and manage the environment for future generations.⁸⁷ Moving towards sustainable aquaculture does not mean that it will be less profitable, but instead that it will be more socially and environmentally friendly, while meeting the growing demand for seafood.⁸⁸ Aquaculture is important for providing food and economic opportunities to people around the world.⁸⁹ Therefore, the FAO works extensively on protecting and furthering this industry, while ensuring its sustainability.⁹⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic caused numerous economic recessions in Member States and contributed to an increase in world hunger.⁹¹ Therefore, as the world begins to recover from the harsh effects of the pandemic,

⁷⁵ FAO, *Aquaculture*, 2021.

⁷⁶ UN General Assembly, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (A/42/427)*, 1987.

⁷⁷ FAO, *Aquaculture*, 2021.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ FAO, *Aquaculture Methods and Practices: A Selected Review*, 2021.

⁸⁰ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020: Sustainability in Action*, 2020.

⁸¹ FAO, *Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries: Fact Sheet*, 2001.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ FAO, *Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries: Aquaculture Development Suppl. 4. Ecosystem approach to aquaculture*, 2010.

⁸⁴ FAO, *Aquaculture and Inland Fisheries: Fact Sheet*, 2001.

⁸⁵ FAO, *Ecosystems*, 2021.

⁸⁶ FAO, *Report of the Tenth Session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture*, 2021.

⁸⁷ FAO, *Aquaculture*, 2021.

⁸⁸ The Nature Conservancy, *The Aquaculture Opportunity*, 2017.

⁸⁹ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020: Sustainability in Action*, 2020.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ FAO, *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, 2021.

Member States must also build resilience of food systems for future unknown crises, including through aquacultural practices.⁹²

International and Regional Framework

In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which outlines the basic human rights that are given to each and every person.⁹³ Article 25 of this declaration guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living which includes clothing, housing, and, most importantly, food.⁹⁴ In 1992, the Rio Earth Summit helped create the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, which works towards preventing further environmental harm from climate change, especially on marine ecosystems.⁹⁵ In 1992, the International Conference on Nutrition adopted the *World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition*, which highlights the importance of bettering nutrition for all people, especially through the use of sustainable aquaculture.⁹⁶

The international community promotes sustainable aquaculture, especially with the General Assembly resolution 72/72, which made 2022 the International Year for Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture.⁹⁷ The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted at the 70th session of the General Assembly, gave birth to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that each cover a different topic that is necessary for sustainable development.⁹⁸ The *2030 Agenda* set the stage for how the international community should go about reaching sustainable development and why it is urgent to do so.⁹⁹ SDG 2 (zero hunger) targets ending hunger and achieving food security for which sustainable aquaculture is important.¹⁰⁰ SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) aims at achieving sustainable economic growth, e.g. through sustainable aquaculture.¹⁰¹ The General Assembly adopted resolution 71/312 in 2017 which reiterated the call for sustainable development through sustainable use of maritime resources, including through aquaculture.¹⁰² This resolution is aligned with SDG 14 (life below water) target 4, which states that the international community should effectively regulate harvesting and overfishing, IUU, and destructive fishing practices to help repair and preserve marine environments.¹⁰³ This is relevant for achieving sustainable aquaculture in the context of ensuring sustainable production of fish-based food for aquatic fishes.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, sustainable aquaculture contributes greatly to SDG 14 (life below water) by contributing to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources.¹⁰⁵ SDG 14.7 states that by 2030, economic benefits of developing states should be increased through sustainable use of marine resources, including through aquaculture.¹⁰⁶

⁹² FAO, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Fisheries and aquaculture food systems, possible responses: Information paper*, 2020.

⁹³ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217/A)*, 1948.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ UNFCCC, *What is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change?*.

⁹⁶ FAO, *World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition*, 1992.

⁹⁷ UN General Assembly, *Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments*, 2017.

⁹⁸ UN DESA, *The 17 Goals*, 2021.

⁹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ UN DESA, *Goal 2*, 2021.

¹⁰¹ UN DESA, *Goal 8*, 2021.

¹⁰² UN General Assembly, *Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments (A/RES/72/72)*, 2018.

¹⁰³ UN General Assembly, *Our ocean, our future: call for action (A/RES/71/312)*, 2017.

¹⁰⁴ FAO, *Fish Feeds and Feeding*.

¹⁰⁵ UN DESA, *Goal 14*, 2021.

¹⁰⁶ UN DESA, *Goal 14*, 2021.

Role of the International System

In 1965, the FAO created the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) to allow Member States to discuss pressing issues in fisheries and the aquaculture industry. It remains to be the only global inter-governmental forum for discussing these topics.¹⁰⁷ COFI has two main sub-committees, the sub-committee on fish and trade and the sub-committee on aquaculture.¹⁰⁸

COFI will be having its 11th session in November of 2021 to discuss recent global trends in sustainable aquaculture development.¹⁰⁹ During the 3rd session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture in 2011, the Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification were adopted which is a basic guide to achieve sustainable aquaculture.¹¹⁰ The guidelines are based on scientific evidence and research done by the sub-committee on effective aquaculture methods and policies.¹¹¹ Along with these guidelines, there have been additional supplements that have been added, e.g. *Suppl. 9 Development of Aquatic Genetic Resources: a Framework of Essential Criteria*.¹¹² In 2020, COFI published a report titled *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*, which highlights the importance of switching to more sustainable aquaculture practices in order to help protect marine ecosystems through the use of well managed and maintained fisheries.¹¹³ COFI is extremely committed to working towards sustainable development especially with the adoption of *2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture* which incorporates data on fisheries from the past 25 years and uses that to outline key factors for creating and maintaining sustainability in aquaculture and fisheries.¹¹⁴

In 1995, the FAO adopted the *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* which provides Member States with guidelines for fisheries in order to advance the implementation of sustainable fishing methods to promote healthier marine environments.¹¹⁵ Every two years a questionnaire is sent out to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and regional fishery bodies (RFBs) to improve the Code and ensure its implementation.¹¹⁶ The most recent questionnaire data from 2020 found that strengthening regulations for fishing vessels will also help combat IUU fishing, which is also relevant for aquaculture, as IUU fishing practices are also implemented for producing fish meal to feed aquatic fishes.¹¹⁷ In 2019, the FAO published the Report of the *Regional Consultation on the Development of Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA)*, which was created to help Member States at a more regional level, to better implement sustainable aquaculture techniques and policies to work towards sustainable development.¹¹⁸ The report highlights that working towards sustainable aquaculture implies providing proper infrastructure, funding and management for creating effective policies for fisheries, ensuring food security and addressing IUU.¹¹⁹ Along with all of the work that has been done by different bodies of the UN, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Oceana have also made great strides when it comes to working towards sustainable aquaculture.¹²⁰ Oceana works with Member States to help integrate effective

¹⁰⁷ FAO, *Committee on Fisheries Thirty-Fourth Session*, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ FAO, *COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture Eleventh Session*, 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ FAO, *Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification*, 2011.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² FAO, *Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries Aquaculture Development Suppl.9 Development of aquatic genetic resources: A framework of essential criteria*, 2018.

¹¹³ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020: Sustainability in Action*, 2020.

¹¹⁴ FAO, *2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture*, 2021.

¹¹⁵ FAO, *Background and Overview: Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*, 2021.

¹¹⁶ FAO, *Progress in the Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries Related Instruments (COFI/2020/Inf.7)*, 2020.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ FAO, *Report of the Regional Consultation on the Development of Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA) (FIAP/R1319)*, 2020.

¹¹⁹ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹²⁰ Oceana, *About us*, 2021.

technology into aquatic fisheries and fish farms to help protect marine ecosystems as well as achieving sustainable aquaculture.¹²¹

Lessons of the COVID-19 Pandemic for Increasing the Resilience of Sustainable Aquaculture to Economic Crises

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of human life, including aquaculture. Due to the pandemic, the trading value of fish, which was once valued at \$164 billion, has dropped significantly.¹²² 10% of the world population relies on income from the aquaculture industry, but worldwide shutdowns and extreme economic recessions due to the COVID-19 pandemic has put people and the industry at risk.⁴⁸ According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a decrease in the demand for fresh fish products and an increase in demand for canned, frozen, and processed fish due to stockpiling that was common in the beginning of the pandemic.¹²³ In April of 2020, the FAO published a brief report on how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting fisheries and aquaculture food systems, and outlines what measures should be taken to protect each level of aquaculture production against external shocks.¹²⁴ Therefore, to help improve the working environment and ensure a social safety net for employees, and self-employed and small-scale fish farmers, the FAO report recommends that Member States provide payroll and unemployment assistance, invest in stimulus packages, and allow for loan forgiveness for low-interest loans in order to refinance existing debt.¹²⁵ The measures outlined in this report will help the aquaculture industry to recover economically to ensure the implementation of sustainable aquaculture practices.¹²⁶

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that about 31% of global fish stocks are below sustainable biological levels.¹²⁷ A change in fish populations and stocks in turn has a massive impact on fish production by causing a change in supply, demand, and the price of fish, which will not aid in economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²⁸ The aquaculture industry can help mitigate shortfalls in fish production¹²⁹. While no one could have prepared for the economic losses of the COVID-19 pandemic on any level, promoting sustainable aquaculture helps to build resilient strategies for protecting food systems, ensuring essential services for all, and promoting community cohesion.¹³⁰

Impact of Aquaculture on the Environment

Aquaculture practices may have negative effects on the environment.¹³¹ To ensure the availability of fish meal to feed aquatic fishes, fishers capture wild fishes through unsustainable methods such as bottom trawling, cyanide fishing, and ghost fishing¹³². These practices have a lasting effect on the marine environment, fish populations, and coastal landscapes.¹³³ Bottom trawling and ghost fishing both use nets which can cause marine species, besides the intended fish species to be captured, to become trapped in the nets and ultimately die.¹³⁴

¹²¹ Oceana, *Infographics: Fish Farming*, 2021.

¹²² FAO, *Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, 2020.

¹²³ OECD, *Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19), Fisheries, aquaculture, and COVID-19: Issues and policy responses*, 2020.

¹²⁴ FAO, *How is COVID-19 Affecting the fisheries and aquaculture food systems, A Sector at Risk, yet Fish is Safe to eat*, 2020.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ UNCTAD, *COVID-19 Offers Opportunities to make fishing industries more sustainable*, 2020.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ FAO, *Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper 519/1: Understanding and applying risk analysis in aquaculture*, 2009.

¹³⁰ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development: Goal 8*, 2021.

¹³¹ Global Aquaculture Alliance, *What is the Environmental Impact of Aquaculture?*, 2019.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Global Aquaculture Alliance, *What is the Environmental Impact of Aquaculture?*, 2019.

Different aquaculture operations may destroy natural mangrove habitats by changing the natural chemical balance that mangroves thrive on by releasing harmful chemicals into the water.¹³⁵ In 1992, the FAO published the *Guidelines for the Promotion of Environmental Management of Coastal Aquaculture Development*, which outline the environmental impacts of aquaculture on coastal ecosystems and possible solutions to protect these ecosystems from said impacts.¹³⁶ The report highlights implementing sustainable uses of marine resources as means for protecting the environment and moving towards sustainable aquaculture methods.¹³⁷ This report also recommends increased monitoring of aquacultural practices by Member States to ensure that they follow these guidelines and are sustainable.¹³⁸ This report was the baseline for future frameworks and guidelines to protect marine environments from the harmful effects of aquaculture. In 2009, the FAO published *Technical Paper 527 on Environmental Impact Assessments and Monitoring in Aquaculture*, which not only assesses the global impact of aquaculture but also provides regional assessments.¹³⁹ This paper outlines how different countries should monitor their coastal environment and what procedures should be put in place to protect their environment from further damage.¹⁴⁰ Along with describing monitoring guidelines for Member States, this paper also provides Member States with guidelines for creating environmental policies regarding aquaculture. Additionally, the environmental benefits of sustainable aquaculture practices include increased nutrients in the water, control of marine pollution, and rehabilitation of degraded land.¹⁴¹ Moving towards more sustainable aquaculture practices will not only benefit people, but it will also help create a healthier environment in the future.¹⁴²

Conclusion

International bodies are working together to protect marine environments and increase the safety of aquaculture workers for achieving sustainable aquaculture for all.¹⁴³ The international importance of aquaculture for sustainable development becomes also visible when turning to the SDGs, as it is relevant for achieving SDGs 2 (zero hunger), 8 (decent work and economic growth), and 14 (life below water) by 2030.¹⁴⁴ While achieving sustainability in the aquaculture industry is of utmost importance, the world must work towards increasing the resilience against global crises, as seen in the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴⁵ A major part of sustainability is protecting the environment and preserving it for future generations.¹⁴⁶ As part thereof, sustainable aquaculture methods contribute to protecting marine environments.¹⁴⁷

Further Research

Delegates should consider the following in their research: What is the FAO currently doing to work towards sustainable aquaculture and what other measures can be taken to implement it? What will Member States agree on or expand upon at the upcoming COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture meeting in November 2021? With whom can the FAO potentially collaborate for sustainable aquaculture? What

¹³⁵ FAO, *Fisheries Technical Paper 328*, 1992.

¹³⁶ FAO, *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper 527: Environmental Impact assessment and monitoring in aquaculture*, 2009.

¹³⁷ FAO, *Fisheries Technical Paper 328*, 1992.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ FAO, *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper 527: Environmental Impact assessment and monitoring in aquaculture*, 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Global Aquaculture Alliance, *What is the Environmental Impact of Aquaculture?*, 2019.

¹⁴² FAO, *Aquaculture*, 2021.

¹⁴³ UN DESA, *Sustainable Development: Goal 8*, 2021.

¹⁴⁴ UN DESA, *About: Division for Sustainable Development Goals*, 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Brugrere & De Young, *Addressing Fisheries and Aquaculture in National Adaptation Plans*, 2020.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

can the FAO do to support the economic recovery of the aquaculture industry from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure its resilience against shocks in the future?

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This code of conduct lays the foundation for future frameworks about sustainable aquaculture and fisheries. Many of the techniques and principles are used as guides for current work done to ensure sustainable aquaculture and fisheries. To ensure that this code is still being followed, a survey is sent out every two years to evaluate how this code is being implemented. Delegates can use this document to have an understanding of how these guidelines have changed from when this document was adopted in 1995 to now.

Food and Agriculture Organization. (2020). Report of the Regional Consultation on the Development of Guidelines for Sustainable Aquaculture (GSA). Retrieved 10 June 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0280en>

This report is a highly effective tool for implementing sustainable aquaculture methods in developing states to help them develop aquaculture more sustainably. While this report may be more geared towards the situation in developing states and Africa, the same techniques used in this report could also be used in other states where the current aquaculture industry is not well-managed and highly unsustainable. Delegates can use this report when researching their own country and gain a better understanding of what is being done in their region to achieve sustainable aquaculture.

Food and Agriculture Organization. (2020). *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020: Sustainability in Action*. Retrieved 10 June 2021 from: <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9229en>

This report works to give Member States evidence-based resources and guidance in regard to sustainable fisheries management. It is also relatively recent and bears in mind the importance of keeping global citizens and marine environments safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report uses data from before and during the pandemic to highlight effective responses to the dire need for sustainable aquaculture. Delegates can use this document to understand what the FAO is doing for sustainable aquaculture despite setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2021). *2021 COFI Declaration for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture*. February 2021. Retrieved 13 July from: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb3767en>

This is the most recent framework from the FAO regarding sustainable aquaculture and fisheries. This declaration sets the stage for the future of aquaculture after the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to how recent this framework is, it uses updated data and techniques to guide Member States on further developing sustainable aquaculture and fisheries. This can help delegates understand what is currently being done by the FAO and Member States to achieve sustainable aquaculture.

Food and Agriculture Organization Committee on Fisheries (2020). *Progress in the Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and Related Instruments (COFI/2020/Inf.7)*. Retrieved 12 September 2021 from: <https://www.fao.org/3/ne627en/ne627en.pdf>

This report clearly outlines how Member States are implementing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. It helps Member States to understand what guidelines are functioning and where there can be improvement. Delegates can use this to help guide their solutions and see what Member States are currently doing to work towards sustainable aquaculture.

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2. Transforming Food Systems for Sustainable Healthy Diets

“Just as food brings us together as cultures and communities, it can also bring us together around solutions.”¹⁴⁸

Introduction

Prior to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the General Assembly in 2015, food insecurity and hunger were increasing globally.¹⁴⁹ However, even with a newfound focus on eradicating hunger, rates of hunger and food insecurity have gradually increased.¹⁵⁰ The COVID-19 pandemic caused major setbacks to eradicating hunger and ensuring access to safe and nutritious foods and exposed vulnerabilities of food systems around the globe.¹⁵¹ In 2020, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021* (SOFI) report, authored by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO), projected that up to 811 million people faced hunger, a potential increase of 161 million compared to 2019, an increase largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵²

Consuming a healthy diet however, helps prevent malnutrition in all its forms.¹⁵³ Evidence indicates that there is a strong correlation between the unaffordability of healthy diets, and moderate and severe food insecurity.¹⁵⁴ Yet, as of 2019, an estimated 3 billion people did not have access to a healthy diet due to their high costs and global income inequality.¹⁵⁵ FAO defines healthy diets as consisting of “the foods needed for individuals to have a healthy life: adequate, safe, diverse and balanced in terms of both quantity and quality.”¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, according to the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), healthy diets must be safe and accessible while satisfying energy needs.¹⁵⁷ Food systems, also referred to as agri-food systems, are the most significant tool to achieve healthy diets given their influence on people’s diets, health and nutritional outcomes, and overall well-being.¹⁵⁸

Food systems encompass all actors and processes for the production, transportation, consumption, and disposal of food and food waste.¹⁵⁹ Globally, there is enough food being produced to meet nutritional needs.¹⁶⁰ While food systems facilitate availability in markets, there are physical, social, and economic barriers keeping people from having sustainable healthy diets.¹⁶¹ In addition to those barriers, physical barriers and external factors such as poor infrastructure or the inability of food to reach marketplaces present challenges to attaining sustainable healthy diets.¹⁶²

However, to fight malnutrition in all its forms, diets and food systems must be changed.¹⁶³ Changing food systems for healthy diets must also be done with sustainability in mind as doing so can significantly

¹⁴⁸ UN Deputy Secretary-General, *UN Deputy Secretary-General's remarks at the Closing Plenary of the Pre-Summit for the Food Systems Summit*, 2021.

¹⁴⁹ UN DESA, *SDG 2 Progress and Info*, 2021.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 1.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁵³ WHO, *Healthy Diets Fact Sheet*, 2021.

¹⁵⁴ FAO, et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 82.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁶ FAO, *Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition (PC 130/5 Rev.1)*, 2021, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, *Nutrition and Food Systems*, 2017, p. 32.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁹ FAO, *Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition (PC 130/5 Rev.1)*, 2021, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ FAO, et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 69.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁶³ FAO and WHO, *Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles*, 2019, p. 8.

reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, improve health outcomes and effect economic stability of nations.¹⁶⁴ FAO defines sustainable diets as “those with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations.¹⁶⁵ Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources.”¹⁶⁶

International and Regional Framework

Attaining sustainable healthy diets not only ensures food security and nutrition for all, but also helps realize the right to food.¹⁶⁷ Though not legally binding then, the right to food was first recognized as a fundamental human right in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) (UDHR).¹⁶⁸ The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) (ICESCR) built upon the UDHR, recognizing the right to adequate food in Article 11.¹⁶⁹ Unlike the UDHR, the ICESCR is legally binding and entered into force in 1976.¹⁷⁰ In 1999, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provided a further interpretation of the right to food in its *General Comment No. 12* on “The Right to Adequate Food” which posits that adequate foods must meet the dietary needs of individuals.¹⁷¹ The right to food is explicitly recognized in several other international frameworks that are focused on specific groups such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979) (CEDAW) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007).¹⁷² Regional frameworks such as the *Protocol of San Salvador* (1988) and the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (2003) recognize the right to food as well.¹⁷³

In 2014, FAO and WHO convened the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2).¹⁷⁴ The follow-up to the first International Conference on Nutrition in 1992 produced two comprehensive documents aimed at modernizing the approach to addressing current nutrition challenges.¹⁷⁵ *The Rome Declaration on Nutrition* (2014) reaffirmed FAO’s commitment to ensuring all have access to adequate food, enhancing sustainable food systems, and developing policies to ensure healthy diets for all.¹⁷⁶ ICN2 also produced the *Framework for Action* (2014), which includes policy recommendations to promote healthy diets and more sustainable food systems.¹⁷⁷

In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* with its 17 SDGs, focusing on sustainability and fighting malnutrition in all its forms.¹⁷⁸ In particular, SDG 2 on “Zero Hunger” not only encompasses eliminating hunger, but also recognizes that food systems must become more sustainable to ensure food can be provided to all individuals without harming the environment.¹⁷⁹

¹⁶⁴ FAO and WHO, *Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles*, 2019, p. 8; HLPE on Food Security and Nutrition, *Nutrition and Food Systems*, 2017, p. 17.

¹⁶⁵ High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, *Nutrition and Food Systems*, 2017, p. 34.

¹⁶⁶ FAO, *Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity*, 2010, p. 7.

¹⁶⁷ FAO, et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

¹⁶⁹ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XI))*, 1966.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ CESCR, *General Comment No. 12: The Right to Adequate Food (Art. 11) (E/C.12/1999/5)*, 1999, p. 3.

¹⁷² OHCHR, *The Right to Adequate Food, Fact Sheet 34*, p. 7.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁴ FAO, *Second International Conference on Nutrition*, 2021.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ FAO & WHO, *Conference Outcome Document: Rome Declaration on Nutrition*, 2014, p. 1.

¹⁷⁷ FAO & WHO, *Framework for Action*, 2014.

¹⁷⁸ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, *Goal 2: Zero Hunger*, 2021.

SDGs 3, 12, 13, 14, and 15 can all be realized through transforming food systems to sustainably provide affordable, healthy diets.¹⁸⁰

Role of the International System

To guide food systems transformation for sustainable and healthy diets, FAO works together with two other UN agencies in Rome, IFAD and WFP, collectively known as the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs).¹⁸¹ This collaboration allows RBAs to maximize their effectiveness in promoting coordinated nutrition efforts globally and adapting to country specific needs through the expertise of each agency.¹⁸²

One avenue for RBA collaboration is UN Nutrition, which constitutes of FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement.¹⁸³ UN Nutrition functions as a coordination mechanism and has several pivotal functions, including promoting greater policy coherence on nutrition and identifying and coordinating responses to specific nutritional issues globally or with specific countries.¹⁸⁴ UN Nutrition is also responsible for disseminating information and guidance developed by UN agencies to stakeholders at country level.¹⁸⁵

Another avenue for RBA collaboration is the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).¹⁸⁶ CFS is the primary intergovernmental and multistakeholder platform focusing on ensuring global food security and nutrition for all.¹⁸⁷ Working with the private sector and civil society, CFS develops and endorses policy recommendations on food security and nutrition.¹⁸⁸ Through CFS, FAO works with stakeholders at every level to establish policy recommendations and guidelines on nutrition.¹⁸⁹ In 2021, CFS endorsed the *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN)*, which aim to address malnutrition in all its forms through a food systems perspective.¹⁹⁰ The VGFSyN include several focus areas such as improving policy coherence amongst involved actors, building sustainable food supply chains, achieving equal and equitable access to healthy diets through the use of sustainable food systems and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in food systems.¹⁹¹

On 23 September 2021, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened the Food Systems Summit to bring together stakeholders from all sectors to take action on achieving healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems.¹⁹² The Summit gave rise to 148 commitments for food systems transformation across five action areas, out of which action areas 1 and 2 aim to “nourish all people” and “boost nature-based solutions of production.”¹⁹³ In the *Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit*, he underlined the need for food systems to provide healthy diets for people while preventing the loss of biodiversity and critical ecosystems.¹⁹⁴ Guterres also announced a follow-up meeting every two years to assess the progress and

¹⁸⁰ UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

¹⁸¹ WFP, *Rome-based Agencies*, 2021.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ UN Nutrition, *About UN Nutrition*, 2020.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ WFP, *Rome-based Agencies*, 2021.

¹⁸⁷ CFS, *About CFS*, 2021.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹² FAO, *The 2021 Food Systems Summit*, 2021.

¹⁹³ Food Systems Summit 2021 Community, *Commitments registry: Commitments to action*, 2021.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations Secretary-General, *Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit*, 2021.

implementation of the commitments made at the Summit.¹⁹⁵ While the Summit claims to have been the most inclusive process to date within the UN system for including the private sector and civil society, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to Food Michael Fakhri together with many civil society organizations criticized the Summit for marginalizing CFS and the strong influence of private businesses had in the preparation of the Summit.¹⁹⁶

Ensuring Equal and Equitable Access to Healthy Diets

The most significant challenge to achieving better nutrition is the inadequacy of current diets around the world.¹⁹⁷ However, as of 2019, the high costs associated with healthy diets left healthy foods unobtainable for roughly three billion people.¹⁹⁸ Additionally, poverty negatively impacts the quality of diets and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities driving poverty.¹⁹⁹ The cost of a healthy diet can be defined “as the minimum cost of foods, using the least expensive available items in each country, that meet a set of dietary recommendations based on ten national Food Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs).”²⁰⁰ These critical guidelines are specific to each Member State and take into consideration a number of factors, including culture, consumption patterns, dietary needs, while also keeping sustainability in mind.²⁰¹ FBDGs focus on creating and improving existing policies that aim to achieve healthy diets for all.²⁰²

According to the SOFI 2021 report, healthy diets cost 60% more than diets that only have essential nutrients.²⁰³ They also cost almost five times as much as diets that only meet dietary energy needs.²⁰⁴ However, there is consistent evidence across countries of all income levels that foods high in fat, sugar, and salt are linked to weight gain, and the prices of these foods was found to be positively associated with excess body weight in adults.²⁰⁵ Increased accessibility and promotion of highly processed foods has increased the consumption of unhealthy diets across the world and across all age groups.²⁰⁶ As of 2017, healthy diets were unaffordable for the poor in every region of the world.²⁰⁷ There are various factors driving the high cost of nutritious foods, such as food production, supply chains and environments, as well as consumer demand and the political economy of food.²⁰⁸ These factors make evident that food system transformation is needed to achieve healthy diets for all.²⁰⁹

While cost is a significant factor in prohibiting healthy diets, culture, education, consumption patterns, and food preferences all play a role in determining an individual’s access to a healthy diet.²¹⁰ The *Dietary Guidelines* are one example of FAO collaborating with Member States to institute policies promoting healthy diets while considering culture and consumption patterns.²¹¹ However, food availability alone does not guarantee food security or access to a healthy diet.²¹² Individuals must have physical access to

¹⁹⁵ United Nations Secretary-General, *Secretary-General’s Chair Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit*, 2021.

¹⁹⁶ Fakhri, *The UN summit on food systems took two years to plan. It’s offered nothing to help feed families*, 2021.

¹⁹⁷ FAO, *Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition*, 2021 (PC 130/5 Rev.1), p. 4.

¹⁹⁸ FAO, et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 8.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁰¹ FAO, *Food Based Dietary Guidelines*, 2021.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ FAO, et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 26.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²¹¹ FAO, *Food Based Dietary Guidelines*, 2021.

²¹² High-Level of Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, *Nutrition and Food Systems*, 2017, p. 29.

nutritious food as well.²¹³ The HLPE pointed out that studies have continuously shown that the more accessible nutritious food is, the more likely it is to be consumed.²¹⁴ FAO also assists countries in developing programs and policies to increase public awareness about the importance of eating a healthy diet.²¹⁵ A lack of adequate and coherent infrastructure and disaster-risk reduction policies, along with inequitable income distribution contribute to inequitable access to healthy diets as well.²¹⁶

For example, in Quito, Ecuador the poorest citizens did not have adequate availability to fresh and nutritious foods needed to sustain a healthy diet.²¹⁷ This was in part due to Quito's food system facing a long food supply chain, its vulnerabilities to natural and manmade hazards, as well as limited supply routes.²¹⁸ To address these challenges, the city engaged with stakeholders to establish the Quito Agri-Food Pact.²¹⁹ This project aimed to promote urban agriculture and led to the creation of more than 4,400 urban gardens, many owned by women.²²⁰ The shorter food supply chain and ease of access reduced costs, making fresh and nutritious food available even during the COVID-19 pandemic.²²¹ The success of Quito's food system transformation for healthy diets represents an exemplary model and can be applied in similar contexts.²²²

Empowering Women as Actors in Food Systems

Gender equality and good nutrition are essential to achieve all SDGs.²²³ However, due to traditional gender norms and roles, women are more socially vulnerable, which affects the quality of their diets.²²⁴ Yet, empowering women has shown to improve their dietary diversity and lead to nutritional benefits for them and their children.²²⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long standing issues of women being disproportionately affected by food insecurity, exposing structural inequalities and reducing women's economic opportunities while increasing their workload.²²⁶ Therefore, gender inequality now poses an even greater threat to sustainable development and empowering women, and their roles as actors in food systems, is necessary for achieving sustainable healthy diets.²²⁷

Traditional obligations due to gender roles and norms can place significant demand on a woman's time and energy.²²⁸ Additionally, adolescent girls, in particular, often face increased nutritional demands due to pregnancy and lactation.²²⁹ Investments in agriculture and changes to make food systems more sustainable must be made with the goal of empowering women as these investments can give women more time to take care of themselves, family members, and their children.²³⁰ Overall, improving women's nutritional knowledge and dietary behaviors can reduce undernutrition and lead to the consumption of healthier diets.²³¹

²¹³ Ibid., p. 29.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

²¹⁵ FAO, *Food and Nutrition Education*, 2021.

²¹⁶ FAO, et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 100.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 100.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 100.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 100.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 100.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 100.

²²² Ibid., p. 100.

²²³ FAO, *Minimum dietary diversity for women*, 2021, p. 11.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

²²⁶ FAO, et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 103.

²²⁷ CARE, *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition*, 2020, p. 8.

²²⁸ Cordone, *Why women are key to better nutrition and global poverty eradication*, 2019.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

Nutrition sensitive agriculture programs (NSAPs) offer a potential solution that can improve food systems and access to healthy diets while empowering women.²³² NSAPs address underlying barriers to nutrition by specifically targeting issues such as lack of income, lack of access, lack of quantity and more.²³³ NSAPs can play a vital role in meeting global nutrition goals such as improving access to healthy diets and making food systems more sustainable and, when done intentionally, can close gender gaps and shift gender norms.²³⁴ Given the significant roles women play in food systems, especially in developing countries, these programs can ensure women retain control over their resources and have a voice when it comes to their food.²³⁵

Conclusion

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, targets established by the SDGs relating to ending malnutrition in all its forms were not on track to be met.²³⁶ However, the SOFI 2021 report states that the pandemic has worsened the situation and will lead to higher levels of food insecurity.²³⁷ Transforming food systems to be more sustainable and provide healthier diets for more people around the world will aid in the fight against food insecurity.²³⁸ While there are various solutions to transforming food systems, ensuring healthy diets are affordable must be a priority, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on rising poverty levels has put affordable healthy diets even further out reach.²³⁹ In addition to ensuring affordability, transforming food systems through various policies can also be a powerful tool to empower women while decreasing their disproportionate rates of food insecurity and working towards sustainable healthy diets for all and a more sustainable future.²⁴⁰ The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit will highlight some of the potential solutions for transforming food systems for sustainable healthy diets, which will be critical as all SDGs rely on healthier, more sustainable food systems.²⁴¹

Further Research

Given the complexity and depth of food systems and necessity of healthy diets, delegates should consider addressing questions including: What role does the FAO play in either creating policies or guiding the conversation on food systems? How can transforming food systems be as inclusive as possible? How can Member States build on existing frameworks such as the outcomes of ICN2? Does the private sector have a role in promoting healthy diets? What are some additional challenges prohibiting access to healthy diets? How can Member States and/or the international system coordinate policies regarding food systems to ensure they are working? Can sustainable food supply chains make healthy diets more accessible and less impactful on the environment? How has the state of food systems changed following the COVID-19 pandemic? What new challenges or barriers exist towards achieving sustainability because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

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²³² Malapit, How nutrition-sensitive agriculture programs can realize both nutrition and gender equality goals, *CIGAR Gender Platform*, 2021, p. 1.

²³³ Ruel, *New evidence on nutrition-sensitive agricultural programs. In Agriculture for improved nutrition: Seizing the momentum. Chapter 9*, 2019, p. 94.

²³⁴ Malapit, How nutrition-sensitive agriculture programs can realize both nutrition and gender equality goals, *CIGAR Gender Platform*, 2021, pp. 2-3.

²³⁵ Cordone, *Why women are key to better nutrition and global poverty eradication*, 2019.

²³⁶ FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, 2021, p. 38.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

²⁴¹ UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, *Summit Vision*, 2021.

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2021/Documents/CFS_VGs_Food_Systems_and_Nutrition_Strategy_EN.pdf

The Voluntary Guidelines were adopted by CFS during its plenary session in February 2021. The Guidelines represent an intergovernmental, multi-stakeholder approach to address hunger and malnutrition by utilizing sustainable food systems. The document will provide delegates with broad background information on food systems along with the rationale for reform from the perspective of CFS.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2021). *Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition*. Retrieved 20 June 2021 from: <http://www.fao.org/3/ne853en/ne853en.pdf>

This is the most recent document from FAO's meeting in March 2021. This source contains helpful background information on food systems, the current status of them, and why the FAO believes they need to be improved to achieve healthy and sustainable diets. Additionally, as the latest document from FAO, this source will give delegates an overview of where the committee stands currently and what they are focusing on addressing.

Food and Agriculture Organization et al. (2021) *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*. Retrieved 24 July 2021 from: <http://www.fao.org/3/cb4474en/cb4474en.pdf>

This report was drafted through the collaboration of several UN agencies to highlight the current state of food security and nutrition in the world. The report highlights the challenges the global community faces to achieving food security and eradicating hunger and also identifies what the future of the issues may look like while identifying potential solutions. This report also references the impact COVID-19 has had on diets and food systems. Delegates can use this source as a starting point to understand the state of food systems and learn the broad challenges the world is facing regarding food security.

High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition. (2017). *Nutrition and Food Systems*. Retrieved 25 July 2021 from: <http://www.fao.org/3/i7846e/i7846e.pdf>

This report was drafted by the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), the science-policy interface of the Committee on World Food Security. HLPE reports serve as evidence-based starting points for various intergovernmental organizations. This report specifically focuses on food security and takes an in-depth look at food systems and the role they play in facilitating healthy diets. In addition to providing an in-depth look into food systems, this report also offers recommendations which delegates can look towards as ideas for solutions.

United Nations. (n.d.). *Food Systems Summit 2021 Action Tracks*. Retrieved 7 August 2021 from: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/action-tracks>

This webpage contains information about the action tracks for the upcoming World Food Systems Summit. The action tracks showcase where discussions surround the Summit's objectives currently stand. The action tracks allow delegates to see preliminary discussions between stakeholders and learn about how food systems and the challenges facing them is viewed through the various scope of each stakeholder. Delegates can also navigate this website to learn more information about the Summit.

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