



15th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) in 2023

Food Systems Transformation: A Worldwide Response to Multiple Crises

Background paper

With the 2030 Agenda, the international community has set itself ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, such as ending global hunger. The year 2030 is only eight harvests away. There is not much time left to reach the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 “zero hunger” and to realise the human right to adequate nutrition, especially in the countries of the global south. The number of people affected by hunger is continuing to rise. In 2021, between 702 and 828 million people in the world suffered from hunger, 46 million more people than in 2020 and 150 million more people than in 2019. In addition to the climate crisis, the extinction of species and the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has become a new driving force in this crisis of global food security. The world is currently facing the worst food crisis since World War II.

Therefore, the international community urgently has to develop and implement sustainable, innovative, and viable solutions to realise the right to adequate food for the entire world population by 2030. The only expedient solutions are those that address food security, the climate catastrophe, and the extinction of species alike. A comprehensive transformation of global food systems is of vital importance in this regard.

The **2023 GFFA** is set to build on the UN Food Systems Summit for this process. Its aim is to promote discussion and to explore possible ways for global and national collaboration in a spirit of partnership. There is a special focus on the following four questions:

1. How can we create crisis-proof food systems?

The COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine have revealed how vulnerable our food systems are and how essential it is to transform them to become more resilient and sustainable, even in this difficult situation. It has become apparent that stable prices and food security in times of crisis depend on functional supply chains and transparency in global markets. One-sided dependencies, no matter in which area, make food systems more vulnerable, as illustrated by the current situation in the markets for grain, vegetable oil, and fertiliser due to the war in Ukraine. One topic of discussion at the GFFA will therefore be the steps that the global community has to take to establish additional site-adapted, crisis-proof, sustainable food systems worldwide. More specifically, discussion will focus on how to design more sustainable supply chains, respond to fertiliser shortages, reduce food losses and waste, promote sustainable diets and consumer behaviour, and diversify local production and import structures.

2. How can we create climate-friendly food systems?

The climate crisis poses a growing threat to global food security. The farming sector is particularly affected by it since production happens in and together with nature. At the same time, food systems contribute substantially to climate change. Desertification, water shortage, and the increase in extreme weather events are causing considerable losses and threaten the livelihoods of millions of people – especially smallholder farmers in the countries of the global south. One thing is certain: a global transformation of food systems is more urgent than ever to reach the climate protection goal (SDG 13). How this can be achieved will be discussed in this thematic block. One of the topics will be how the farming sector can store more carbon and become more energy-efficient. Other issues that will be addressed are how to develop and establish climate-smart crop production systems, how to advance breeding and how to use water more sustainably and stock it in the landscape water regime for longer.

3. How can we preserve biological diversity?

Deforestation, the extinction of species, the loss of genetic diversity, and the destruction of ecosystems are advancing: every day, up to 150 plant and animal species disappear from Earth. Both natural biodiversity and agrobiodiversity, i.e. biodiversity created and used by humankind, are in decline. However, biological diversity is vital to our existence and that of future generations, which is why it must be preserved and used sustainably. In the context of multiple crises, the GFFA aims to explore ways in which natural resources, species, and habitats as well as genetic diversity can be preserved while sustainably producing food for a growing world population (SDG 15). For this purpose, we intend to build on the outcomes of the COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

4. How can we improve collaboration for sustainable global food systems?

Strong and functional multilateral, inclusive, and interdisciplinary collaboration that involves all relevant stakeholders, as specified in SDG 17, is needed to achieve SDG 2. On a local level, it is necessary to engage vulnerable groups in particular in policy and project design and to provide help to self-help in the medium and longer term. Actions must be coherent since global crises can only be tackled through concerted efforts on all levels of intervention. The architecture of internationally active institutions and organisations plays a major role in this matter. Discussions will be held at the GFFA on whether institutional changes are necessary for the transformation towards sustainable food systems, and if so, which. Points of discussion will include how to strengthen the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as a participatory multistakeholder forum, how to implement comprehensive, interdisciplinary approaches (One Health) in international standard setting, e.g. in the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and how to promote multilateral research collaboration.