CONCEPT NOTE

Catalysing Action to Transform Africa’s Food Systems

Virtual Dialogue - 3 Day Series

28 - 30 September 2021
Summary

Theme: Catalysing Action to Transform Africa’s Food Systems

Objective: To convene a multistakeholder platform for meaningful dialogue and interaction among food systems actors in order to catalyse action on the urgent implementation of coherent policies, strategies and innovative programmes to transform Africa’s food systems to deliver sustainable and healthy food for all.

Participants: The policy dialogue will bring together representatives of international and regional institutions and state and non-state actors, including regional economic communities; international development partners; policy makers; international, regional and national research organizations; universities; farmer organizations, private sector; civil society; and the media.

Date: 28-30 September 2021

Venue: Virtual

Duration: 3 days (10-13h00 GMT +2 each day)
Background

Africa is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its commitments to the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation. The 2019 Malabo Biennial Review report shows that the continent is not on track to meet the Malabo Declaration commitments to enhance investment finance in agriculture (commitment 2), end hunger by 2025 (commitment 3), and enhance resilience to climate variability (commitment 6). Africa’s food systems, in common with the rest of the world, are not delivering, as evidenced by a rise in all forms of malnutrition characterised by undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and obesity. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) accounts for over 90% (237 million) of the world’s undernourished people, while overweight and obesity have become major challenges. In Africa, 33% of adults are overweight, with a further 11% tending towards obesity. Levels of diet-related non-communicable diseases are rising as a result of rapidly changing food systems due to increasing urbanization. Diets have become the leading contributor to global environmental degradation, affecting land, water, biodiversity, climate and air quality.

Furthermore, Africa has many inequalities driven by socio-cultural factors which prevent some segments of society from accessing and benefiting from actions to improve livelihoods and nutritious food, particularly for women, youth, disabled and aged persons, and indigenous populations. There are also structural barriers for several groups, particularly women and youth, to access and own land, extension services and financial services, among others. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded existing vulnerabilities in food systems, revealing fragilities in how food is produced, delivered and consumed. The COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks necessitate transforming African food systems in a way that supports more diverse, affordable, sustainable and healthy diets, with strong food safety and resilient ecosystem considerations. This would need the adoption of holistic, multisectoral approaches working towards food systems that acknowledge and address both underlying issues of food insecurity, as well as acute protracted factors, such as climate hazards and conflicts.

The year 2021 is critical for food system transformation. Over the past 18 months, FANRPAN and its partners have responded to the United Nations Secretary General’s call to support a dynamic and harmonized global push to leverage changes in our food systems to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 through the Food Systems Summit Dialogue process. FANRPAN and its partners participated in and convened 6 independent United Nations Food System Summit (UNFSS) dialogues where challenges, opportunities, lessons and game-changing solutions to Africa’s food systems were discussed. The UNFSS Pre-Summit dialogues provided a platform for inclusive inputs by policy makers, practitioners, researchers, farmer organisations, private sector, civil society, financial service institutions, various social groups such as women’s groups, youth, and many more to generate new ideas to transform African food systems to drive our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and get us back on track to achieve the 17 SDGs and the Malabo targets. All these voices have demonstrated that there is no shortage of solutions to the problems of our broken food systems. What is needed now is to catalyse action to implement the myriad of solutions and innovations.

This year’s FANRPAN Annual Regional Multistakeholder Policy Dialogue is being held a week after the UN Food Systems Summit and is critical for Africa’s food systems. It offers an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the outcomes of the Summit and consider its implications for advancing the commitments made at the Malabo Heads of State Summit and the achievement of SDGs.

2 (https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0235045).
Policy Dialogue Objective and Format
The policy dialogue programme will feature plenary sessions with keynote presentations and sharing of information and theme-based panel discussion sessions for deep analysis of issues. The virtual platform will provide time and space for inputs and questions from participants. Social media, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, will form part of the communication strategy to promote the dialogue as well as disseminate highlights of proceedings and outcomes.

Session Themes
This dialogue provides a platform for African stakeholders to engage and share experiences, lessons, game-changing innovations, and solutions for policy, strategy and programme implementation for building sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems that would deliver sufficient, safe and nutritious food for Africa. The following session themes will be covered:

1. Demand and Supply of diverse, safe and nutritious food
   i)  Building the capacity of consumers to demand diverse, safe and nutritious food
   ii)  Post-harvest management and value addition for improved food safety and quality, reduced food waste and circular economy
   iii) Promotion of African indigenous smart foods and neglected and orphan crops
   iv)  Smart use of policy instruments, e.g. subsidies and tariffs, to promote production of diverse and nutritious food
   v)  The role of input suppliers (e.g seed systems, agrochemicals), trade and food markets: incentivising markets to provide nutritious and safe food

2. Adaptation and Resilience: Building Back Better
   i)  Enhancing resilience of food systems to climate change, pandemics and other shocks
   ii)  Nature as a solution - For resilience, mitigation and sustainable development (biocontrol, agroecology)
   iii) Climate proofing investments and transitioning to a green economy
   iv)  Promoting innovative public and private climate finance
   v)  Using evidence to inform policy and practice to stimulate adaptation and resilience (iFEED)
3. Inclusive food systems: Leaving Noone Behind
   i) Enhancing ability of food systems to deliver poverty reduction and sustainable, equitable livelihoods.
   ii) Youth engagement in agricultural and food system value chains
   iii) Women empowerment for sustainable and resilient food systems
   iv) The role of media and social marketing in building demand for safe and nutritious food
   v) Amplifying the voices of indigenous peoples and people living with disabilities
   vi) Harmonisation of food systems policies across sectors

Cross cutting issues
   i) Financing and investment to transform agriculture and food systems
   ii) Research and innovation to transform agriculture and food systems
   iii) Building the capacity of African institutions to deliver transformed agriculture and food systems
   iv) Scaling up technology and innovation to transform food systems

Expected Outcomes and Outputs
The most important outcomes from this regional dialogue will be firm resolutions and recommendations from a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral base on how to catalyse urgent action towards implementation of game-changing solutions that will make a significant contribution to the transformation of Africa’s food systems. The recommendations will cover all key actors along the food system value chain from farm to fork.

The dialogue will facilitate virtual knowledge exchange and networking. It will generate information and knowledge products such as videos, presentations, proceedings and resolutions. All these outputs will form the basis for policy advocacy engagements at regional and national levels.