

Stakeholder Consultation – Integrated action towards food systems transformation in India

Background Note

Introduction

Food systems encompass all people, institutions, and processes by which agricultural products are produced, processed, and brought to consumers (FAO 2013). Food systems act as one of the key drivers shaping the political, socio-economic, ecological, and cultural fabric of societies. They have contributed to significant achievements, such as food security for a large population, mitigating some forms of malnutrition, reducing poverty, and enhancing life expectancy, etc. However, the evolution of food systems has also worsened critical challenges, such as persistent hunger, malnutrition, obesity, biodiversity loss, exploitation of natural resources, and climate change. The current global food and land use systems are estimated to cause economic losses exceeding USD 12 trillion annually, compared to the market value of USD 10 trillion of food systems, leading to a USD 2 trillion loss. These hidden costs include health impacts, environmental degradation, and structural poverty (FOLU 2019; Ruggeri Laderchi et al. 2024).

India too faces significant challenges within its food system. Approximately 194 million people are undernourished, while 43.3 million children under five years of age are stunted. Moreover, obesity affects roughly 20 percent of the adult population. The agriculture sector in India, engaging over 50 percent of the workforce, faces critical obstacles such as gaps in climate change adaptation and water depletion, threatening both food and livelihood security. Perverse policies further contribute to excessive water withdrawals, soil degradation, and chemical runoff, highlighting India's status as a global hotspot for nitrogen pollution (Das et al. 2023).

About FOLU

[Food and Land Use Coalition \(FOLU\)](#) is a global community of countries, partner organizations and Ambassadors working to advance sustainability, equity and resilience in food and land use systems. Created in 2017, FOLU supports diversity, embraces disruptive thinking and forges consensus through an evidence-based approach. The Coalition empowers farmers, policymakers, businesses, investors and civil society to unlock collective action at scale. It presently operates in 10 countries including India. FOLU India's vision is a nutritionally secure, healthy and prosperous India, which is sustainably managing its food and land use systems, supported by a productive, efficient and inclusive economy. The FOLU Coalition in India includes the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network (RRAN), The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and WRI India.

[Food System Economics Commission \(FSEC\)](#), global vehicle of FOLU established to provide policy makers with a global analysis of the benefits of transforming food systems, has produced a [global report](#) on the transformation of food and land use systems. The report estimates the hidden costs linked to the current food systems and identifies the elements of what a transformation from today's food systems to an inclusive, health-enhancing, and environmentally sustainable global food system entails. FSEC's analysis of India's food system reveals hidden costs of USD 1.5 trillion annually, primarily driven by poor nutritional outcomes and unsustainable production practices. FSEC's transformation scenario for India suggests that these costs could be slashed by a quarter, equivalent to about USD 300 billion annually (Ruggeri Laderchi et al. 2024; Lord 2023). This reduction would result from healthier diets, reduced environmental impacts, socio-economic improvements, and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. Efforts for addressing these issues separately through different mechanisms are not adequate on their own. So, there is an urgent need to prioritize comprehensive food system transformation with a systemic approach.

In its [India Policy Brief](#), FSEC has outlined criteria for integrated national strategies towards this transformation. These include adopting a comprehensive policy framework to avoid unintended consequences, inclusive governance mechanisms, organizational and technical capacities for implementation. At the same time, it is expected that national strategies will include various policies such as incentives, regulations, innovation, and investment. FSEC has identified five policy priorities at the global level, including shifting consumption patterns towards healthy diets, resetting incentives for agriculture, targeting revenue from new taxes to support transformation, innovating to increase labour productivity and workers' livelihood opportunities, and scaling up safety nets to ensure food affordability for the poorest (Ruggeri Laderchi et al. 2024). These priorities are meant to set the stage for regional and national-level deliberations to advance India's food system transformation.

Regional Consultation

FOLU aims to disseminate the outcomes of the FSEC report to different countries, translating this global understanding to country action through joint efforts towards transformation of food systems. Considering the diversity of the food systems in the country like India, FOLU India Country platform would like to conduct three regional consultations for a better understanding on how to act and also consensus and network building for collective action. The one-day-long regional consultations aim to engage stakeholders from diverse sectors to discuss and deliberate on the recommendations proposed by FSEC and seek inputs on how these recommendations can be adopted for creating action plans for food system transformation in India.

These consultations will be co-organised with organizations who have a strong understanding of the regional scenarios and stakeholder landscape. For west-central region including the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the consultation will be co-organized with the Centre for Environment Education (CEE). Established as a Centre of Excellence under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, CEE is a national level institution mandated to promote environmental awareness nationwide. CEE develops innovative programs and educational materials, while also building capacity in the field of education for sustainable development.

Consultation structure

The consultation will commence with a brief introductory presentation by FOLU India and its regional partner, providing an overview of their work. Subsequently, there will be a concise presentation highlighting the overall initiatives of the FSEC and its India-specific

recommendations, followed by a general discussion on these recommendations.

For an in-depth discussion, participants will be organised into three thematic breakout groups based on their expertise and interests to discuss the pathways for achieving this transformation. The three themes encompass: I) Comprehensive policy frameworks, II) Focus on key areas with maximum impacts, and III) Governance mechanisms.

Each thematic group, after deliberating on the recommendations, will develop a summary presentation on the outcome of their discussion and report back for comments from other groups. The organizing team will document these discussions for further consideration at the national level dialogues. Outcomes of these discussions will be considered for formulation of the initial action areas of the Food Systems Hub (FSH), a national level collaborative platform initiated by FOLU India and Bharat Krishak Samaj.

FSH aims to bring together diverse stakeholders including policymakers, researchers, market players and civil society organizations to address complex food system challenges. It seeks to promote climate-appropriate and resilient systems that enhance food security, nutritional security, and environmental sustainability through knowledge integration, information dissemination, and stakeholder engagements.

The Regional Consultation is scheduled to be held on **28th August 2024 at the Centre for Environment Education in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.**

References

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