

## **Transforming Food Systems to Meet the Emerging Challenges to Food Security**

Food systems and global food security are at a critical juncture. According to the declaration of the ‘Leader’s Summit on Global Food Security’ hosted by the United States (US) with support from other countries, along with the 77<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly (UNGA) 2022, ‘the compounded impacts from a global pandemic, growing pressures from the climate crisis, high energy and fertilizer prices, and protracted conflicts, including Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have disrupted production and supply chains and resulting food inflation has dramatically increased global food insecurity, especially for the most’ (US DoS 2022).

The world has witnessed dramatic changes since the United Nations Food Systems Summit (FSS) held in September 2021. Owing to the changes described above at the global, regional, and national level, the roadmap agreed at the Summit has been reduced to jumbled up ideas which do not sufficiently identify a clear path forward as to how to transform the world’s food systems (Fakhri 2022). Thus, in the absence of a valid, comprehensive framework on how to reform food systems to provide solutions for present day challenges, countries should produce their own national indigenous and inclusive plans.

Organising the ‘Leader’s Summit on Global Food Security’ in parallel with the UNGA was perhaps meant to (either) renew existing commitments or a result of dissatisfaction with the roadmap of the 2021 FSS. International summits are forums where poor countries can influence the global political agenda. Such forums (FSS, UNGA etc.) also provide wider opportunities to poor countries to collectively seek support to resolve their problems and negotiate international cooperation and support measures to reduce poverty, enhance access to food and eliminate hunger (in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals).

There is now a global consensus that the Pandemic, war in Ukraine and the massive climate crisis have exposed pre-existing fragilities within food systems and their immediate effects are now appearing on the global scale. Unprecedented climate extremes across the globe have reduced crop yields, increased food loss, and damaged ecosystems, thus, indirectly impacting food systems negatively. Resultingly, over the past two years, this situation has led to increase in food prices to record high levels. Lack of adequate social and safety protection measures, combined with restrictions on movement of food commodities, disproportionately impacted poor countries in Asia and Africa. South Asia has been more affected by the pandemic, war in Ukraine, climate change-led disasters and consequent food inflation because it is home to the highest number of food insecure people in the world.

In this backdrop, SDPI is organising this session to:

1. clarify the nature of the problem with the current discourse on food systems,
2. highlight the challenges in connection with agricultural production and hunger, and
3. frame the issue in terms of food systems for societal and economic transformation.

The session will discuss the importance of devising coherent national level food plans not only to meet food security needs but also a wide array of present-day challenges. It will further deliberate upon the inevitability to set the contours of a coherent national approach to governing food production and supply and generate ideas as how to transform food systems to cope with the emerging risks and challenges.

## **References**

Fakhri, M. 2022, 'The Food System Summit's Disconnection from People's Real Needs', *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* vol. 35, no. 16, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-022-09882-7>>.

US DoS 2022, 'Declaration of Leaders' Summit on Global Food Security', Office of the Spokesperson, Media Note, United States Department of State, 20 September, <<https://www.state.gov/declaration-of-leaders-summit-on-global-food-security/>>.

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