



European
Commission



Everyone at the table

**Independent
Expert
Report**

Transforming Food Systems
by connecting Science,
Policy and Society

*Research
and
Innovation*



Why an Expert Group?

From February 2021 to May 2022 the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation ('DG R&I') established the 'High-Level Expert Group to:

- *advise the European Commission on needs and options for strengthening science-policy interfaces (SPIs) within the context of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit;*
- *address gaps in the provision of food system science and evidence, with a view to supporting improved food system governance.*

Members



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Long term drivers of change

The long term drivers of change that led to the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and food systems transformation commitments:

- *Sustainable Development Goals (2015)*
- *Paris Climate Agreement (2015)*
- *EC Food2030 R&I policy priorities for co-benefits (2016)*
- *European Green Deal (i.e. Farm to Fork, Biodiversity & Bioeconomy Strategies) (2019)*
- *CAP reform (2021)*

Current political agenda



2021 international meetings and their follow-up.



Impact of Ukraine crisis:

- Increasing political importance of food and nutrition security
- Diversification of trading patterns for countries and regions



Starting point for the Expert Group

Existing food systems failings:

- **Diet:** Unhealthy, unsustainable, inequitable.
- **Environment:** 1/3 of GHGs, degradation of natural resources, loss of biodiversity.
- **Food systems at risk:** climate change, conflict, power imbalances.

Sustainable food systems (SFSs):

- A central priority for national and international policy.
- Urgency of food system transformation to address multiple interconnected challenges of climate, environment, health, food poverty, etc.



Starting point for a country/region

- Over 100 countries committed at the UNFSS to ‘national pathways for food system transformation’;
- Food system transformation requires a realistic assessment of where a country/region is starting from, including share of the food system within the overall economy; existing policy framework for the future development of the food systems; adequacy of the existing set of Science Policy Interfaces (SPIs) as a basis for future development;
- In addition to the policy framework, assessment of existing and required institutions for food system transformation.



Initial EG findings

- The landscape is **fragmented**: many SPI are focusing on parts of the (food) system, at different levels and scales; Each SPI has a role – but determining impact is difficult;
- The landscape of SPIs **lacks a “systems approach”** needed to address the complexity and urgency to deliver co-benefits while minimising trade-offs. More **inter and transdisciplinarity is key**;
- There is a need for a multi-scalar (or polycentric) approach to ensure **scientific knowledge and findings at global level can truly impact national and regional levels** to support decision making.



Initial EG findings *(continued)*

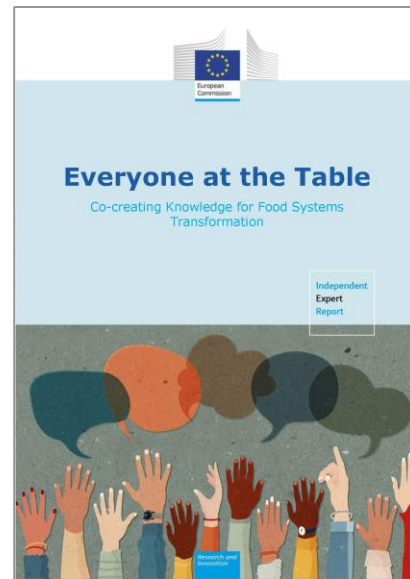
- SAPEA, Need for a rethink: from SPI – to Science-Policy-Society Interfaces:
- A critical requirement for transformation of food systems will be to establish better links between and across scientific communities, policymakers, businesses, and political leaders.
 - 2020, P.87: *‘the interface between **science**, **technology** and **society** is likely to become increasingly significant in policy debates about the future of food’*
 - InterAcademy Partnership, 2018, p. 8: *‘ensuring the coordination of research funding initiatives to address priorities, building of capacity for interdisciplinary work and at the **science–policy interface**’*
- Need to add **‘society’** to engage marginalised and vulnerable groups, relevant private sectors and a broader representation of civil society in processes from which many have been largely excluded.

Phase 1: Mapping existing SPIs

Identifying gaps and drawing lessons

Mid-term report:

Everyone at the Table: Co-creating Knowledge for Food Systems Transformation, launched during an affiliated session of the UNFSS



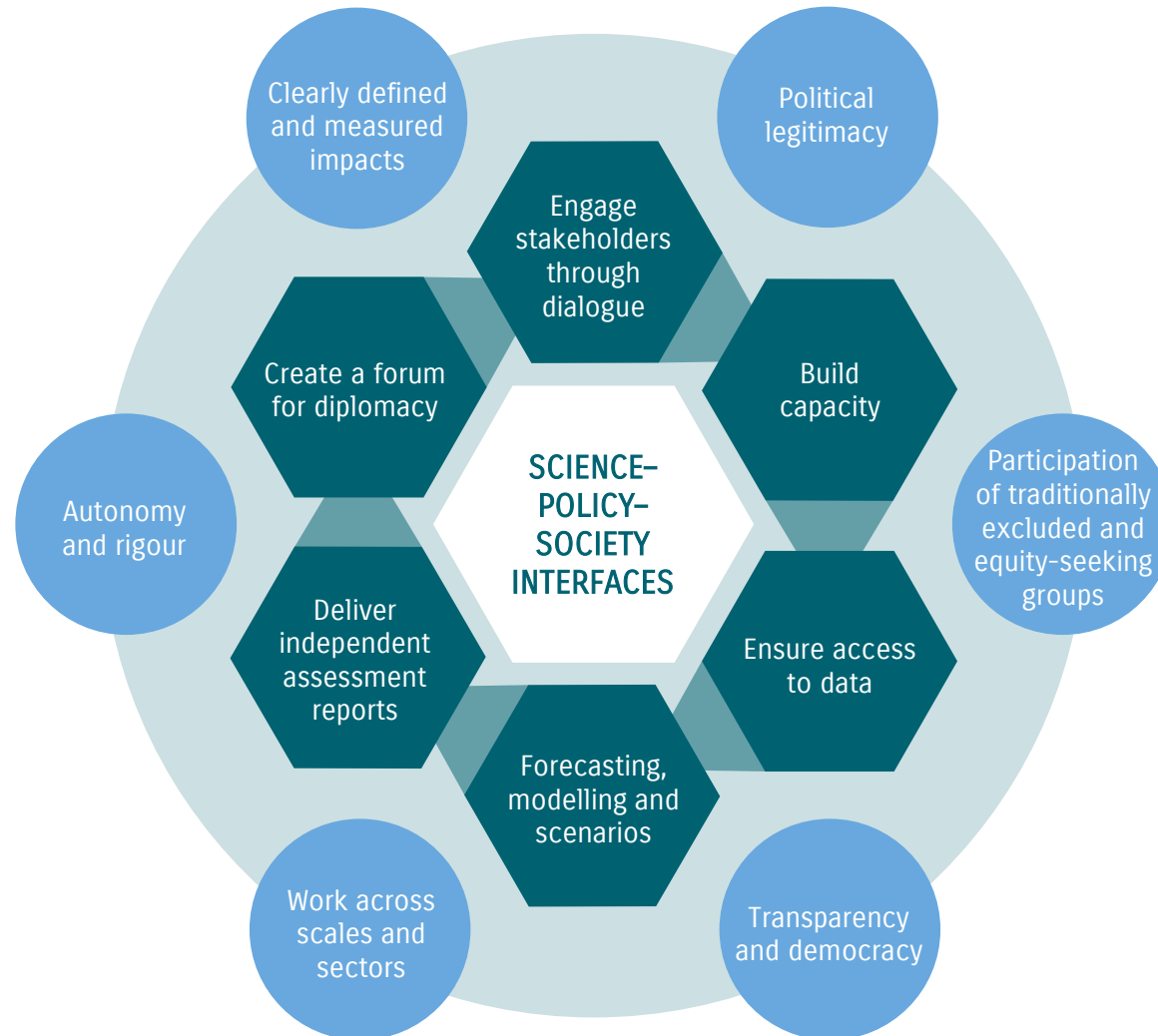
Recommendations to the United Nations' Food Systems Summit Scientific Group from the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group to assess needs and options to strengthen the international Science Policy Interface for Food Systems Governance



Phase 1: Methodology used

- Interaction with the UNFSS Scientific Group
- Affiliated session during the UNFSS pre-summit
- Interaction with high level guest speakers;
- Focus group discussion for SPI mapping in the Arab region on 23 Feb 2022 (Annex 3 of the report)

Phase 2: Identifying SPI functions & principles



● **FUNCTIONS**
● **PRINCIPLES**

Theory of change linking multiple perspectives

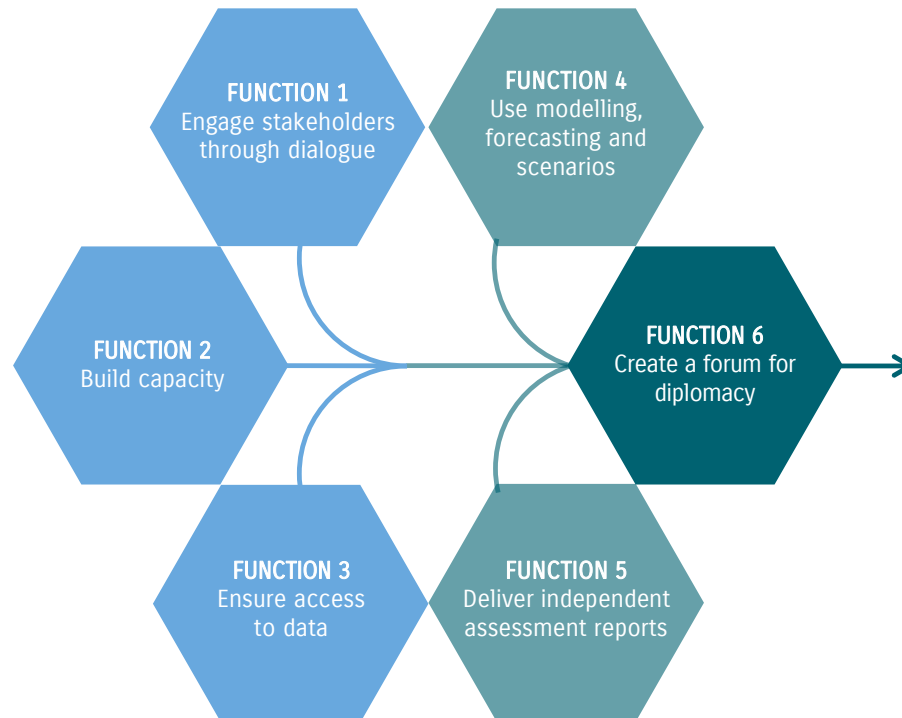
1 The food system must be understood from different perspectives...

2 ...so if Science-Policy-Society Interfaces provide the following functions...

3 ...this should support action and policy leading to food systems transformations

ACHIEVING TRANSFORMATION REQUIRES COMBINING:

- Traditional ecological knowledge
- Lived experience of different stakeholders
- Regional experience
- Scientific expertise
- Data from 'farm to fork'



Stakeholders must be informed by the best science, data and insights from across the food systems to strengthen collective intelligence and effect meaningful transformations

Underlying principles: political legitimacy; participation of traditionally excluded and equity-seeking groups; transparency and democracy; work across scales and sectors; autonomy and rigour; clearly defined and measurable impacts.

Phase 3: Pathways and recommendations



Adapt the current landscape using additional resources and under a broader mandate



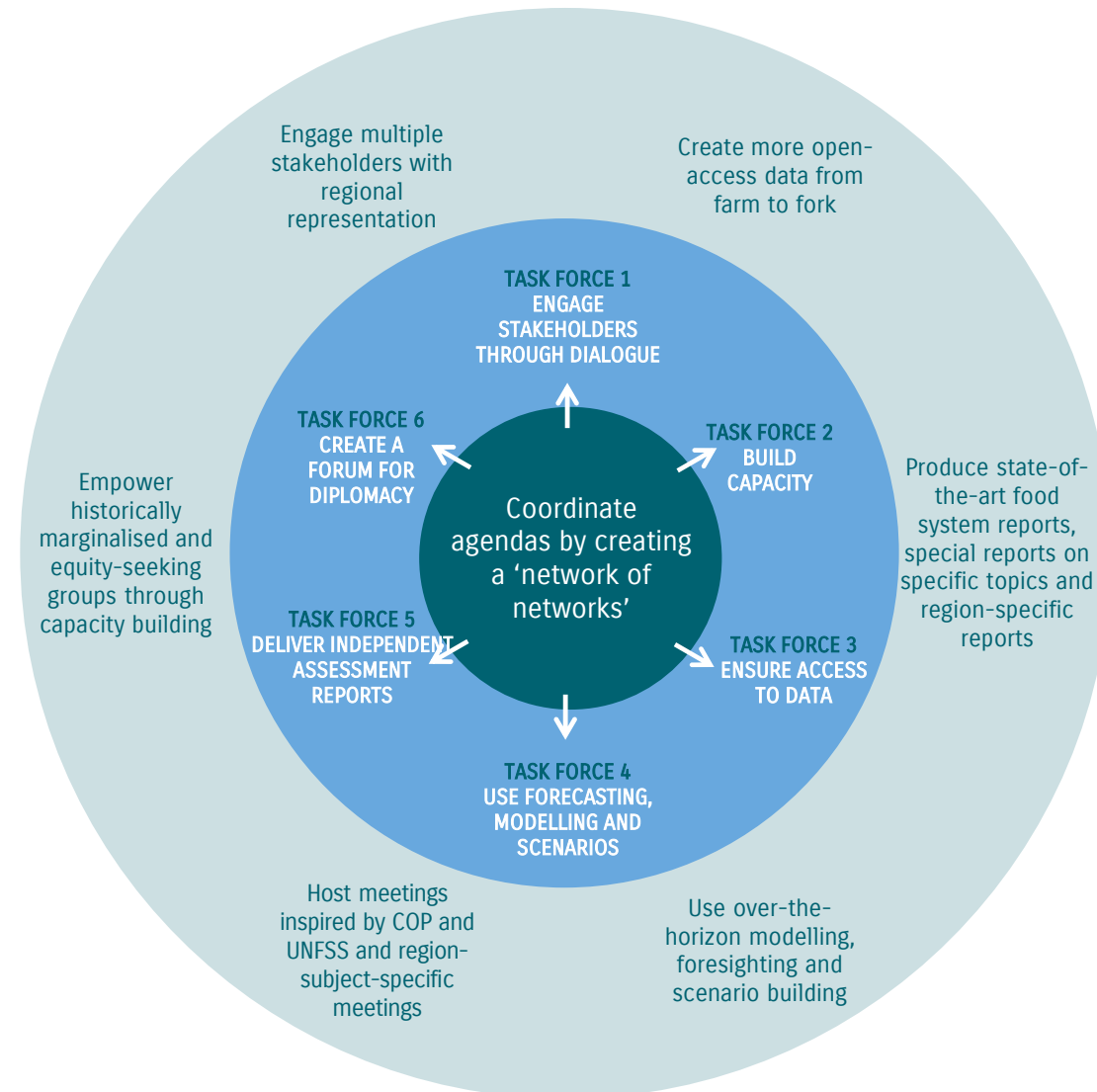
Enhance the current landscape with multisectoral task forces



Coordinate agendas by creating a 'network of networks'

The 3 pathways as complementary approaches

- **PATHWAY 1** Adapt the current landscape with additional resources and a broader mandate
- **PATHWAY 2** Enhance current landscape with multisectoral task forces
- **PATHWAY 3** Create a “network of networks” to act as a coordination hub



Final recommendations for revising food system interfaces:



Pathway 1: Adapt the current landscape using additional resources and under a broader mandate

1. Additional resources and expanded mandates;
2. Greater integration of SPSIs;
3. Interoperable data, global and regional data hubs, capacity building;

Final recommendations for revising food system interfaces:



Pathway 2: Enhance the current landscape with multisectoral task forces

4. Facilitate global food system dialogues and link their outputs with regional and national policymaking;
5. Create a blueprint for a political process on coordinating SPSIs and embedding the results in legitimate political structures;
6. Develop regionally specific and publicly accessible capacity-building modules integrated into extension services;

Final recommendations for revising food system interfaces:



Pathway 3: Coordinate agendas by creating a ‘network of networks’

7. Fund a global coordination hub [*distinct from the UN’s post-UNFSS hub*];
8. Administer funding on behalf of the entire network;
9. Empower and fund national and regional research bodies.



GOALS
PLAN
ACTION

Take home messages

- Food system transformation is **urgent** and requires high level and sustained **political commitment**;
- Policy and decision makers must make use of the best **scientific evidence** and **other forms of knowledge** to support food systems transformation;
- SPSIs must **engage** and **empower** broader civil society, relevant private sector food system actors, academics and decision-makers to build a **collective knowledge base** which address real obstacles to transformative change.



GOALS
PLAN
ACTION

Take home messages *(continued)*

- **Multilateral governance organisations**, such as the European Commission and the United Nations, should **fully adopt a food systems lens** in all their investments and activities;
- In adopting a food systems lens, **national governments** and **regional** bodies should work collectively to connect stakeholders, convene multistakeholder dialogues, articulate policy options and address trade-offs.
- In terms of the global community, the current **landscape of SPSI must be strengthened** to engage a wider range of voices, integrate data, anticipate trends, and set targets and standards.

Report (EN): <https://op.europa.eu/s/wR3w>
Policy Brief (EN,ES,FR,AR,CN): <https://op.europa.eu/s/wR3x>
News & Events: Join the [FOOD 2030 Stakeholder list](#)
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