

An International Pact on Monitoring for Accountability for Action on Food Systems: ‘The Accountability Pact’

We, the undersigned scientists and food monitoring experts engaged in generating and translating evidence on progress towards healthy and sustainable food systems,

AGREE on the need for a fundamental reorientation of global, regional, national, and local food systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals¹⁻⁷.

RECOGNISE that

- Food systems are one of the strongest levers for achieving the desired outcomes of human health and wellbeing, ecological health and wellbeing, social equity, and economic prosperity;
- Many food systems interventions can improve more than one of those desired outcomes (‘double-duty’ or ‘triple-duty’ actions);
- Increased action to improve the healthiness and sustainability of food systems can be achieved by strengthening public sector governance, reducing the political influence of vested commercial interests, mobilizing civil society and investors, and strengthening accountability systems⁸.

IDENTIFY the value of robust, independent monitoring of food systems as a catalyst within the Accountability Cycle (*roles for monitoring systems shown in italics*)

- 1) **Setting the account:** defining the objectives and targets for action (*converting high-level commitments to measurable indicators*);
- 2) **Taking the account:** measuring progress towards targets (*monitoring food policies, actions, environments, systems, and consumption*);
- 3) **Sharing the account:** communicating the results to decision-makers (*translating the research into accessible evidence*);
- 4) **Holding to account:** providing incentives and disincentives for those in power to act (*supporting the voices of other actors, eg civil society groups and investors*);
- 5) **Responding to the account:** taking action to improve food systems (*supporting action with evidence and expertise*).

ACKNOWLEDGE that

- The existing **high-level UN statements**⁹⁻¹⁴ regarding food systems, environmental sustainability, and human health are aspirational end-goals which still need concrete commitments, targets, actions and timelines for delivery;
- There is building momentum on the journey towards the **UN Food Systems Summit** in September 2021, and monitoring systems can support many of the emerging solution clusters, coalitions for action, and Member State commitments;
- There is also a growing groundswell of **social movements** for ethical eating, ethical farming standards, healthy and sustainable diets, and demands for action on reducing carbon emissions, water use, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss;
- There are several existing and emerging independent food system **monitoring initiatives and platforms**¹⁵⁻¹⁸.

COMMIT TO expanding the application of our expertise to strengthening food systems monitoring for accountability through generating evidence, translating evidence, and advocating for applying evidence in food systems transformation.

Sign the Accountability Pact [here](#). Visit website [here](#). Register for 1 Sept Webinar [here](#).

SCOPE OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY PACT

Overarching Aim

To help catalyze the evidence-informed transformation of current food systems so that they promote ecological health and wellbeingⁱ, human health and wellbeingⁱⁱ, social equityⁱⁱⁱ and economic prosperity^{iv}.

Objectives

- Bring together scientists and experts engaged in monitoring food systems to commit to continue and extend food systems monitoring and maximize its impact in accountability systems¹⁹
- Actively track governments and the food industry on their progress towards creating healthy, sustainable, equitable and prosperous food systems
- Provide robust monitoring data to support the efforts of civil society organizations, investors, funders and other actors advocating for improved food systems
- Link with other related [clusters](#),^v coalitions, dialogues and initiatives associated with the [UN Food Systems Summit](#)



Figure. An accountability framework for food systems monitoring.

Adapted from Kraak et al. 2014¹⁹.

Webinar

Register [here](#) for a free webinar on 1 September (13:00 CEST, 07:00 EDT, 21:00 AEST) for: UNFSS update, monitoring systems updates, launch of the Accountability Pact, next steps.

ⁱ Ecological health and wellbeing includes sustainability and regeneration of degraded environments

ⁱⁱ Key human health impacts include malnutrition in all its forms, and food insecurity

ⁱⁱⁱ Social equity involves reducing social gradients in food security, malnutrition, and food systems livelihoods; including 'just transitions'

^{iv} Economic prosperity means that food systems generate livelihoods, business profits, and allow national trade exports and balance of trade

^v Multiple clusters are of relevance including: True cost accounting; Children's diet; Food waste accountability; School meals; Healthy food environments; Strengthening capacity; Food systems governance; food supply chains etc

DEFINITIONS

Accountability systems involve how and why decisions are made, who makes decisions, how power is used, whose views are important and who holds decision-makers to account²⁰. Accountability entails individuals or stakeholders answering to others empowered with authority to assess how well they have achieved specific tasks or goals and to enforce policies, standards or laws to improve desirable actions and outcomes. Accountability has traditionally entailed gathering information, monitoring and measuring institutional performance against voluntary or mandatory standards, and using information to improve performance¹⁹.

Double and triple-duty actions refer to strategies that address two or three of the components of the Global Syndemic of obesity, undernutrition and climate change⁸.

Food system(s) ‘embrace the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal (loss or waste) of food products that originate from agriculture (including livestock), forestry, fisheries, and food industries, and the broader economic, societal, and natural environments in which they are embedded’²¹.

Malnutrition in all its forms refers to an abnormal physiological condition caused by inadequate, unbalanced, or excessive consumption of macronutrients or micronutrients²². In burden of disease terms, this is represented by the combined components of child and maternal malnutrition, high body-mass index (BMI), and dietary risks, representing a composite variable of dietary components associated with non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diets low in whole grains, fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds and high in sodium, red meat, and sugar-sweetened beverages²³.

Sustainable food systems promote the global outcomes of human health, ecological health, social equity, and economic prosperity. They have a low environmental impact, enhance biodiversity, contribute to food and nutrition security, are resilient to shocks, and support local food cultures and traditions²⁴.

REFERENCES

1. Whitmee S, Haines A, Beyrer C, et al. Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch: report of The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on planetary health. *Lancet*. 2015;386:1973–2028.
2. International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. The new science of sustainable food systems: overcoming barriers to food systems reform [Internet]. Rome: FAO; 2015. Available from: http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/NewScienceofSusFood.pdf
3. Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition. Food systems and diets: Facing the challenges of the 21st century. London, UK: Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition; 2016.
4. Development Initiatives. Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs. Bristol, UK: Development Initiatives; 2017.
5. High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition. Nutrition and food systems: A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition [Internet]. Committee on World Food Security; 2017 p. 152. Available from: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7846e.pdf>
6. EAT-Lancet Commission. Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems: Summary Report of the EAT-Lancet Commission [Internet]. Oslo, Norway: EAT Forum; 2019 p. 32. Available from: https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/07/EAT-Lancet_Commission_Summary_Report.pdf
7. HLPE. Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security [Internet]. Rome: FAO; 2020 p. 113. Available from: <http://www.fao.org/3/ne664en/NE664EN.pdf>

8. Swinburn B, Kraak V, Allender S, Atkins V, Baker P, Bogard J, et al. The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change: The Lancet Commission report. *The Lancet*. 2019;393(10173):791–846.
9. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [Internet]. 2021. Available from: <https://unfccc.int/>
10. World Health Organization. Global action plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013–2020 [Internet]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2013 p. 103 pp. Available from: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/94384/9789241506236_eng.pdf;jsessionid=37B66CC2E2C412F791DD0104CE6F79AB?sequence=1
11. World Health Organization. Tackling NCDs: ‘Best buys’ and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases [Internet]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017 p. 28 pp. Report No.: WHO/NMH/NVI/17.9. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259232/WHO-NMH-NVI-17.9-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
12. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 24 July 2018. Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) [Internet]. United Nations General Assembly; 2018. Available from: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/72/306
13. FAO, WHO. Sustainable healthy diets - Guiding principles [Internet]. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/World Health Organization; 2019 p. 44. Available from: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6640en/ca6640en.pdf>
14. United Nations. 2021 Food Systems Summit [Internet]. 2021. Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>
15. INFORMAS. International Network for Food and Obesity / Non-communicable Diseases Research, Monitoring and Action Support (INFORMAS) [Internet]. 2021. Available from: www.informas.org
16. ATNI. Access to Nutrition Initiative [Internet]. 2021. Available from: www.accesstonutrition.org
17. GAIN, Johns Hopkins University. Food Systems Dashboard [Internet]. 2021. Available from: www.foodsystemsdashboard.org
18. Lancet Countdown Reports. Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change [Internet]. 2021. Available from: <https://www.lancetcountdown.org>
19. Kraak V, Swinburn B, Lawrence M, Harrison P. An accountability framework to promote healthy food environments. *Public Health Nutr*. 2014;17(11):2467–83.
20. Rochlin S, Zadek S, Forstater M. Governing Collaboration. Making Partnerships Accountable for Delivering Development [Internet]. London: AccountAbility; 2008. Available from: http://www.accountability.org/images/content/4/3/431/Governing%20Collaboration_Full%20report.pdf
21. von Braun J, Afsana K, Fresco L, Hassan M, Torero M. Food Systems - Definition, Concept and Application for the UN Food Systems Summit [Internet]. United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 Scientific Group; 2020. Available from: un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/food_systems_concept_paper_scientific_group_-_draft_oct_26.pdf
22. FAO, IFAD, WFP. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress. Rome: FAO; 2015.
23. GBD 2016 Risk Factors Collaborators. Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 84 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *Lancet*. 2-17;390:1345–422.
24. Johnston J, Fanzo J, Cogill B. Understanding sustainable diets: a descriptive analysis of the determinants and processes that influence diets and their impact on health, food security, and environmental sustainability. *Adv Nutr*. 2014;5:418–29.