



THE FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION FOR NUTRITION (FST4N) APPROACH

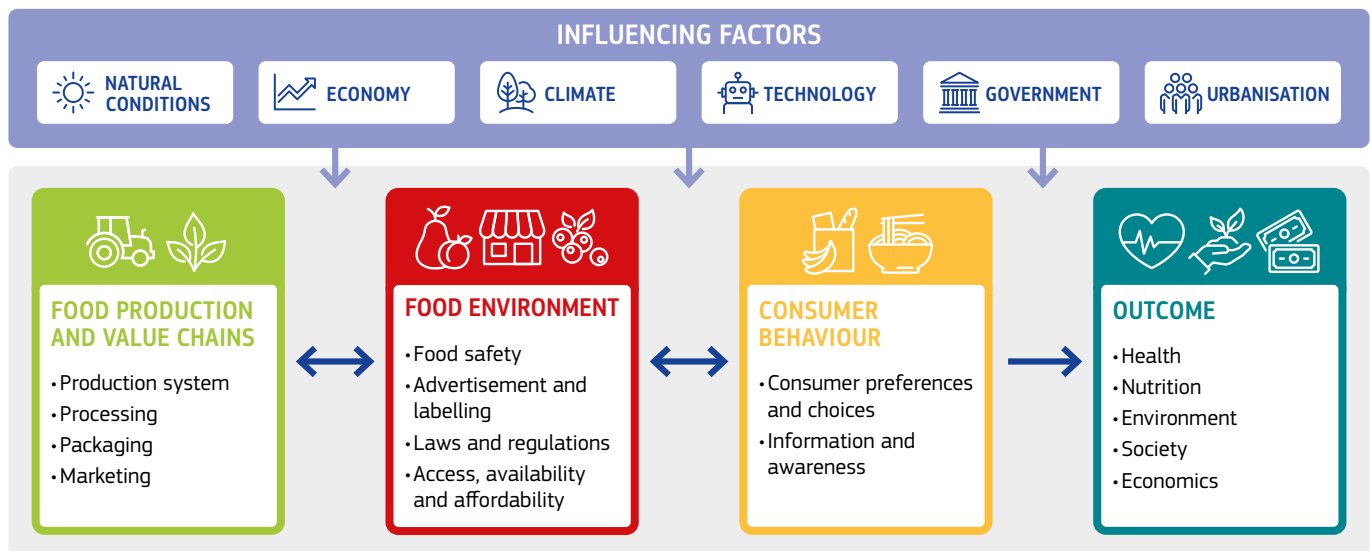
What does ‘food system transformation’ mean?

The term ‘food system transformation’ refers to how to change food systems. It is a complete rethink of the attributes of a food system, including its purpose, rules, and power structures. It is about reshaping the so-called ‘normal’. Food system transformation includes rethinking the key outcomes of food systems.

Until about 20 years ago, the main expectation of food systems was that they produced enough food to feed the world. When increasing production did not solve global

hunger and health problems, food systems were expected to provide food and nutrition security. Today, as the world becomes increasingly aware of the environmental and social costs of focusing solely on food security, much more is envisaged. Food system transformation is about raising the bar, anticipating that food systems must, in some way, generate healthy diets, living incomes for everyone involved in food value chains, and achieve this simultaneously and in an environmentally beneficial manner¹.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM



The importance of food systems transformation for nutrition

Accomplishing SDG1 (No Poverty) and SDG2 (Zero Hunger) requires transforming the food system following a global-to-local model to make it resilient, sustainable and inclusive, able to operate within planetary limits and to offer accessible nutrition for all. Initially, the concept of food systems was applied with the aim of addressing health problems; subsequently, food and nutrition security were included. Now, with greater awareness of the environmental and social consequences of prioritising food security above all else, it is expected to encompass far more. Hence, the transformation of food systems aims to raise standards and to ensure the capacity to provide healthy diets and secure,

living incomes for all those engaged in food value chains.

Food systems should not only seek to provide consumers with healthier and more sustainably produced and distributed foods but also to encourage them to opt for better and more nutritious food. The focus can be summarised as ‘food system transformation for nutrition’ (FST4N). Numerous governments attempt to prioritise nutrition yet struggle to convert this policy into results. This is often due to limited resource mobilisation and insufficient resource allocation through the national budget, as well as being unable to execute the nutrition-related budget efficiently and effectively.

¹ Adapted from FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO. 2021. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021. Transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all*. Rome, FAO; and from HLPE. 2020. *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. Rome

Key shifts needed to achieve FST4N

In order to initiate a transformation of the food system, several shifts² are needed:

Firstly, there is a need for a substantial **shift in consumption patterns** towards adopting sustainable and healthy diets. This requires the widespread adoption of a shared understanding of the components and implications of such diets.

Secondly, there needs to be an **equitable economic transformation** to guarantee that producers and workers involved in the food economy are able to attain a fair living income. This means enabling people to afford and access healthy diets, and ensuring economic fairness throughout the food system.

What governments can do

- **Design a coherent, multisectoral policy and strategy direction for the transformation** that includes FST processes towards 'healthy diet' outcomes within the planetary boundaries.
- **Influence consumption** by steering food prices and taxing food-loss and waste (FLW), public education on healthy diets, product labelling or shifts in food marketing practices towards local farmers' markets to ensure the availability, physical and economic accessibility and consumption of healthy and fresher foods.
- **Ensure equity for those working in the sector** through a combination of steering food prices, implementing labour and land tenure rights, improving social protection and (digital) infrastructure and making transport more efficient and accessible. It could also mean improving rural economic development or creating more economic opportunities outside the food sector as well as making technological innovation available for all.
- **Boost resource efficiency, circularity and biodiversity protection**, via measures such as consuming (at a global level) less animal protein, adopting agroecological approaches, improving energy efficiency and water management, introducing new technologies as well as the 'Internet of Things', linking intelligent devices and the internet to agricultural techniques, or reducing FLW to reduce CO₂ emissions and improve food availability.
- **Diversify food products** produced by different categories of actors at different scales, combined with the right set of policies and strict control mechanisms, as this leads to improved resilience, as was shown during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Enhance investment in research, science and technology, while grounding decision-making in well-managed data.** This will facilitate the application of technological solutions to pivotal challenges, minimise transaction costs and ensure an equitable transition that prioritises inclusivity and leaves no one behind.

C4N supports Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) countries

All SUN countries can request on-demand tailor-made technical assistance and capacity building, in close cooperation with SUN regional hubs. The Capacity for Nutrition (C4N) support focuses on two topics:

- Public Finance for Nutrition
- Food Systems Transformation for Nutrition

Thirdly, a **fundamental change toward environment-positive practices within food production, processing and distribution** is essential. These practices should be designed to achieve a net-zero climate impact while operating harmoniously within the sustainable and safe boundaries of natural resource use.

Finally, it is critical to establish **mechanisms that enhance the resilience of food systems**, to safeguard against the risks of food insecurity, with particular attention to protecting marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Contact

C4N-SUN@giz.de

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2 Adapted from <https://foresight4food.net/why-what-and-how-a-framework-for-transforming-food-systems/>

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Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 36

53111 Bonn

[GIZ](https://www.giz.de)

Contact

Waqas Malik, waqas.malik@giz.de

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