



July 21, 2021

Dear President Biden,

In September, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres will convene the [U.N. Food Systems Summit](#) (UNFSS) as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The Summit aims to launch innovative, new actions that will move the needle on all 17 SDGs, which all rely, at least partly, on more sustainable and equitable food systems.

Commensurate with the importance of the issue, we urge you to personally attend the Summit and ensure that your delegation reflects expertise from across all appropriate U.S. agencies, including USAID, USDA, and the State Department. It is important that a diverse and inclusive U.S. delegation to the Summit effectively represent the wide variety of stakeholders and perspectives connected to global food systems. We look forward to continuing to work with your Administration as you actively engage in Pre-Summit planning and commitments development, including actively shaping and leading upcoming coalition groups and discussions, like the UNFSS End Hunger Coalition.

The elevated focus on global food systems is needed now more than ever. In 2020, global hunger rose by an estimated [118 million people to 768 million](#) people worldwide. Hunger is now at the highest it has been in nearly 15 years. The UNFSS is a critical opportunity for the U.S. to drive a collective strategy to turn the tide on global hunger and malnutrition and reach the goal of ending hunger by 2030.

Over the last several decades, the U.S. has demonstrated a commitment to developing innovative programming and cutting-edge research to support agriculture needs globally and end poverty. Programs like Food for Peace, Feed the Future, and McGovern Dole Food for Education have worked to alleviate global food insecurity and malnutrition and reached millions in need. We are glad to see the Biden-Harris Administration continue this legacy through recent funding for pandemic response, the G7 famine prevention and humanitarian crisis compact, and strong statements in support of global food security and nutrition at the G20 Foreign and Development Ministerial.

In advance of the presummit meeting in Rome, InterAction hosted a recent consultation with over 70 technical and policy experts from U.S. based-NGOs, USAID, USDA, and the State Department, and identified the following recommendations for the U.S. to pursue during the Summit:

- Elevate and engage women, girls, and marginalized communities in inclusive and equitable food systems.
- Improve nutritious diets and integrate other sectors beyond agriculture programming to strengthen food systems.
- Build agency and strengthen local food systems and leadership by elevating local perspectives within global systems.

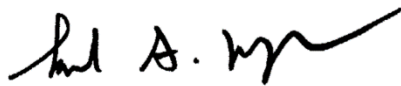
- Make food systems more resilient to shocks and stresses through agriculture practices that promote conservation and natural resource management.
- Use upcoming USG strategy development and legislative opportunities to keep the USG accountable to commitments made at the Summit.

InterAction hopes the UNFSS will deliver on clear commitments to address these challenges, aligned with upcoming policies and legislative commitments. To ensure Summit commitments are equitable, responsive, and sustainable, it is critical to center the needs, voices, rights, and livelihoods of local communities in development and humanitarian response approaches. To support these efforts, InterAction has attached recommendations for areas of focus for the Biden-Harris Administration to elevate and lead on at the upcoming Pre-Summit meetings and the U.N. Food Systems Summit in the fall.

InterAction is pleased to work with the Biden-Harris Administration as it navigates the commitments and principles coming from the UNFSS and works towards building more inclusive and sustainable global food systems. With collective action and expertise, we can reach the goal of ending global hunger.

Thank you for your work and engagement thus far.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam A. Worthington', with a stylized, flowing script.

Samuel A. Worthington

President & CEO

Priority Focus Areas and Recommendations for U.S. Engagement and Commitments in the U.N. Food Systems Summit

Diverse stakeholders, agencies, and governments across the globe are shaping the agenda for the UNFSS. For the past several months, InterAction, the largest United States (U.S.)-based coalition of international non-governmental organizations with 180+ Members working around the world in low- and middle-income countries, fragile and post-conflict states, and emerging economies; has engaged representatives across its Membership and recently convened a consultation with nearly 40 NGOs and 25 representatives from USAID, USDA, and the State Department. The diverse range of policy and technical participants provided insight and perspectives regarding the role of the U.S. to shape food systems, as the world's largest donor of foreign aid, and improve foreign assistance programs. Below are five key areas of focus and recommendations that came from that discussion.

Priority Focus Areas:

1. Elevate and engage women, girls, and marginalized communities in inclusive and equitable food systems.

To effectively address inequitable food systems, it is crucial to engage and empower women, girls, and marginalized communities so as to ensure inclusive programming and interventions. In the world, there are an estimated [768 million](#) food-insecure people; [60% are women and girls](#). Every year [2.6 million children die](#) due to hunger, and three-fourths of all [people living in extreme poverty work in the agriculture sector](#). Gender norms and discrimination, structural barriers, and systemic marginalization exacerbate food insecurity; interventions that are inclusive and transparent are absolutely essential.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen representation of marginalized communities, including women and girls, and ensure indicators target the most vulnerable groups.
- Address structural barriers inhibiting equal access to food systems and productive assets by women, girls, and marginalized groups by utilizing a rights-based and intersectional framework.
- Include women and leaders of marginalized communities in program design and convene consultations that prioritize the voices of women and marginalized communities to better understand the incentives and needs of those communities.

2. Improve nutritious diets and integrate other sectors beyond agriculture programming to strengthen food systems.

USG strategies and frameworks need to look beyond agriculture as an independent approach to development. A multi-sectoral approach that includes water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition, education, environmental conservation and protection, natural resource management, and market access is needed to properly empower communities and households to achieve food security. Food

systems exist in both urban and rural communities, therefore the constraints and possibilities for each community type will vary. Program initiatives need to remain flexible and be rooted in local community context.

Recommendations:

- Adopt and promote locally-led development practices that empower communities to influence the frameworks and programs that are implemented in their communities.
- Utilize a multi-sectoral approach to agricultural development practices that emphasizes the importance of nutrition, WASH, climate-smart and conservation agriculture practices, and agriculture income generation approaches.
- Focus on building agency of communities as a primary initiative of development programming through the use of farmer field schools.
- Support the documentation of indigenous nutritious vegetables and crops to improve databases of locally available foods to support nutrition education and mainstreaming of locally available foods in USG programming.

3. Build agency and strengthen local food systems and leadership by elevating local perspectives within global systems.

To achieve equitable food systems, local food systems and local perspectives must be elevated and strengthened both locally and globally. U.S. policies and programming must foster and establish community ownership of project initiatives and support the development of local food systems both on community and national levels.

Recommendations:

- Emphasize co-creation and locally-led development driven by local actors in U.S. policy and programming.
- Encourage the use of consultations with local organizations to shape USAID development, humanitarian response, and resilience strategies and programs.
- Promote the use of locally accepted nutritious foods as a strategy to both increase accessibility, support local markets, and respect indigenous knowledge of agricultural practices.

4. Make food systems more resilient to shocks and stresses through agriculture practices that promote conservation and natural resource management.

Sustainable food systems start with sustainable agriculture. We are faced with global hunger, malnutrition, and climate crises. It is imperative that we improve agriculture practices that promote conservation and natural resource management. Agriculture practices that restore soil quality, promote watershed management, and have low environmental impacts are crucial to ensure that food systems are resilient and not threatened by stresses and shocks.

Recommendations:

- Promote and preserve biodiversity through conservation agriculture, natural resource management, and by encouraging cultivation of a wide range of species that are locally available.
- Encourage collaboration with local governments to develop effective, accessible, and environmentally-friendly pest management practices, including locusts and fall armyworm.
- Encourage building agency of communities through knowledge and education about conservation, natural resource management, and the importance of biodiversity.
- Utilize local research institutes and universities within program countries to empower local experts to help shape sustainable agriculture strategies that are country-specific.

5. Use upcoming USG strategy development and legislative opportunities to keep the USG accountable to commitments made at the Summit.

The USG can demonstrate leadership by embracing actions that can radically transform food systems. The U.S. can demonstrate commitment to transformed food systems by attending the UNFSS Pre-Summit and Summit and aligning U.S. policies with UNFSS principles. Aligning USG policies will demonstrate how the U.S. will be held accountable for the commitments made at the Summit.

Recommendations:

- Demonstrate accountability of U.S. commitments to ending hunger through strong funding for food systems-related accounts in the FY23 Presidential Budget Request and request that this funding be adaptive and contextual.
- Ensure that legislation such as Global Food Security Strategy Refresh, USAID Climate Strategy, Global Food Security Act Reauthorization, and Farm Bill reflect U.S. accountability and commitments demonstrated at the U.N. Food Systems Summit.
- Hold consultations with in-country implementers and local experts and center local experience, learning, and context-specific expertise in programs and policies.
- Prioritize smallholder farmers, particularly women, in funding, programming, and global coordination for improved food and nutrition security.
- Invest in local and community led value chains to ensure nutritious foods reach markets and promote climate and environmentally friendly foods that are safe, affordable, and nutritious, and prioritize the production of nutrient-dense foods.
- Measure the impact of funding of agriculture and food security by improved nutrition outcomes for children, adolescent girls, and women.
- Use the right to food as the framework for U.S. commitments and initiatives at the UNFSS.