



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

SDG-FORUM 2026

AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS AND THE SDGs: ACCELERATING TRANSFORMATION

→ Tuesday, 13 October, 13:30-15:00





Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

SDG-FORUM 2026 • FAO SIDE EVENT

FAO and the SDGs

Accelerating Transformation through the Four Betters

*Agrifood systems: central to the achievement of all 17
Goals*

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Sustainability is not a new idea



Long before the SDGs, people worried about soil, forests and food, and learned to live within nature's limits.

Ancient times

Roman writers warn about lost soils and forests · Iroquois 'Seven Generations'

1713

'Sustainability' first used, in German forestry

1972
UN Stockholm Conference · The Limits to Growth

1987

Brundtland report: Our Common Future

1992

Rio Earth Summit · Agenda 21

2000

Millennium Development Goals

2015

2030 Agenda: 17 SDGs adopted by 193 countries

2027 →

Talks on the next global agenda begin

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Brundtland Commission, 1987



Farmers have known it for centuries

China's mulberry-dyke and fish ponds have combined mulberry trees, silkworms and fish in one cycle for some 2,000 years: an FAO Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System.

The lesson: agrifood systems can feed people and protect nature at the same time.

Sources: Du Pisani (2006); Meadows et al. (1972); WCED (1987); UN (2015); FAO, GIAHS. Photo: FAO Office of SDGs training materials (Galat, 2026).

Not just a report: why this publication matters



Not simply a report.

FAO's corporate statement on:

- 1 Why agrifood systems transformation matters for all 17 SDGs
- 2 How FAO supports Members in advancing the 2030 Agenda
- 3 Why integrated approaches are needed
- 4 Why innovation, governance, inclusion and partnerships are essential
- 5 Why we must already think about what comes after 2030

17 SDG BRIEFS, ONE PER GOAL



Goal by Goal: how agrifood systems transformation contributes to each of the 17 SDGs, and how FAO supports its Members to achieve them

EACH BRIEF CONTAINS

Context

Data highlights

Key challenges

Way forward

FAO examples

Policy recommendations

A way forward for each Goal

Technical solutions

Tools, initiatives, country support

Normative mandate

Standards; custodian of 22 SDG indicators

A long-standing commitment: FAO's Office of SDGs · Strategic Framework 2022–2031 aligned with the SDGs · one consolidated corporate narrative

Sources: FAO (2026), *FAO and the SDGs*, Foreword, p. v, and Introduction, p. 7; FAO Director-General, launch remarks, 29 May 2026.

Food and agriculture touches every Goal

Transforming agrifood systems is essential



Agrifood systems: everything that brings food from farm to fork: growing, fishing, processing, transporting, selling, cooking, eating and wasting food



Food security and nutrition

1 in 3 people cannot afford a healthy diet



Livelihoods and employment

1.3 billion workers, 39% of the global workforce



Water

>70% of global freshwater withdrawals



Energy

~30% of the world's energy use



Biodiversity

Agricultural expansion drives ~90% of deforestation



Climate

~1/3 of global GHG emissions (16.5 Gt CO₂eq)



Health

Undernutrition: a factor in ~half of deaths under age 5



Economic development

USD 1 in agrifood R&D returns USD 10 to society



Not only SDG 2: essential for the SDGs as a whole

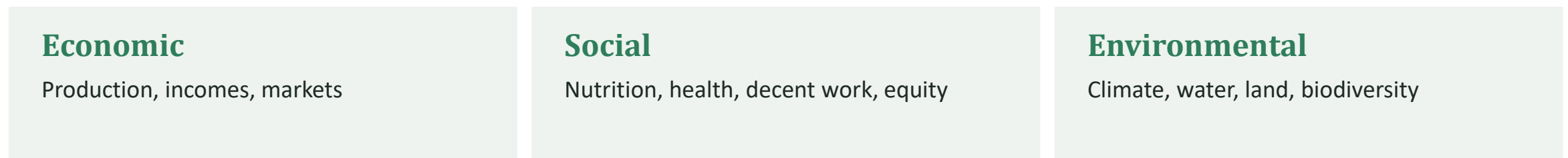
“Agrifood systems are the connective tissue to advance the vision of the 2030 Agenda.” QU Dongyu, FAO Director-General, 29 May 2026

Source: FAO (2026), *FAO and the SDGs: SDG 2*, p. 17; *SDG 3*, p. 27; *SDG 6*, p. 54; *SDG 7*, p. 62; *SDG 8*, p. 70; *SDG 9*, p. 80; *SDG 13*, p. 110; *SDG 15*, p. 127.

Four 'betters': a clear structure for SDG action



The way FAO works: the four betters structure FAO's support to Members in advancing the SDGs · 20 Programme Priority Areas linked to SDG targets



Source: FAO (2026), *FAO and the SDGs, Introduction*, pp. 1–3.

What makes change happen?

Accelerators and enablers



Technology

Digital tools and improved practices



Innovation and science

Social, institutional, financial and technical



Data

Evidence for policy; tracking progress



Complements

Governance, human capital and institutions

CROSS-CUTTING IN EVERY PROGRAMME



Gender equality



Youth



Inclusion

Innovation without inclusion
will not deliver sustainable development.

Technology without governance
will not generate lasting impact.

Data without action
will not change outcomes.

FAO's delivery model: four betters + accelerators + enablers = one cohesive, systems-oriented model to maximize synergies and manage trade-offs

Sustainable development cannot be achieved through technical solutions alone.

Source: FAO (2026), *FAO and the SDGs: Foreword*, p. v; *Introduction*, pp. 3–5; *Conclusion*, p. 152.

Interconnected goals: four examples



Water governance and irrigation

>70%

of the world's freshwater goes to agriculture

Water rights decide who can farm, women's burden and climate resilience

ALSO MOVES



Renewable energy and efficiency

666 million

people without electricity, 84% rural

Cold storage cuts food loss; clean cooking cuts smoke, emissions and deforestation

ALSO MOVES



Innovation and infrastructure

~1 billion

rural people far from an all-season road

Roads, storage and finance: less food lost, more jobs, higher incomes

ALSO MOVES



Sustainable cities

1.7 bn

food-insecure people live in or around cities

School meals bought locally: better diets, school attendance, markets for farmers

ALSO MOVES



Photos: © FAO/IFAD/WFP/E. Sotera; © FAO/S. Gallagher; © FAO/M. Hammi; © FAO/G. Bizzarri. Sources: FAO (2026), SDG 4, 6, 7, 9 and 11 briefs; concept note.

One public market, eight Goals

An integrated approach in practice



A city buys school-meal food from a cooperative of women and young farmers. Jobs are created at every step.



On the farm

Secure buyer and fair contracts for women and young producers; climate-resilient practices



Processing and storage

Solar drying and cold storage; new jobs for young people in processing and logistics



In the city canteen

Fresh, nutritious school meals; a stable public market close to home



17 Who makes it work: the city's procurement rules · the cooperative · a lender for the equipment · technical support

The prize: closing gender gaps could add ~USD 1 trillion to GDP and cut food insecurity for 45 million people

Watch-outs: procurement rules can shut out small producers; quality can raise meal prices for families

Illustrative example built from FAO (2026), FAO and the SDGs: SDG 4 brief, p. 34; SDG 5 brief, pp. 44–47; SDG 7, 8, 11, 13 and 17 briefs.

Everything is connected

Maximize synergies, minimize trade-offs



The SDGs are an integrated and indivisible framework: progress in one domain reinforces outcomes in others.

Positive spillovers

progress in one domain reinforces outcomes in others

- Locally sourced school meals: nutrition, health, jobs and local markets
- Renewable cold chains: less food loss, lower emissions, rural jobs
- Women's rights to land and water: income, productivity, resilience

Trade-offs

when interventions are poorly designed

- Solar installations vs cropland
- Irrigation vs groundwater
- Crop residues for bioenergy vs soil health
- Procurement rules vs small producers

Requires: integrated approaches · systems thinking · policy coherence

Maximize synergies, manage trade-offs: this is what agrifood systems approaches help us do

Source: FAO (2026), FAO and the SDGs: Introduction, pp. 1–3; SDG 5, 6, 7 and 11 briefs; Conclusion, p. 152.

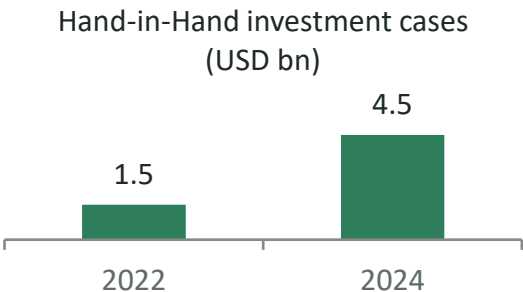
Nobody can do it alone



No country can achieve the SDGs alone. No institution can transform agrifood systems alone.

+72%

development flows to agriculture, 2014–2023, to USD 18.2 billion, yet only ~4.4% of the total

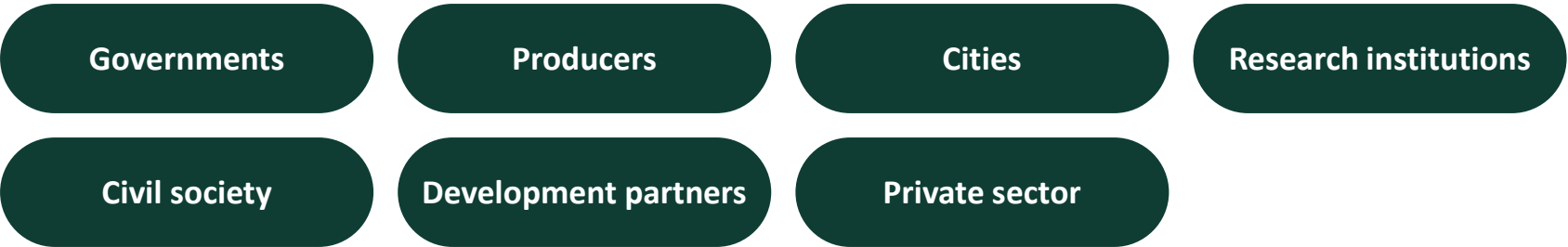


17

Partnerships are not only one Goal among seventeen: they are the means through which all Goals are achieved

The gap: many initiatives still overlook small-scale producers, women, Indigenous Peoples and local governments

ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY



Source: FAO (2026), FAO and the SDGs, SDG 17 brief, pp. 142–148.

Four years left: a decisive moment



Progress on the 139 SDG targets with data (2025)



< 5 years

remain until 2030

645 million

people faced hunger in 2025

2.7 billion

people cannot afford a healthy diet

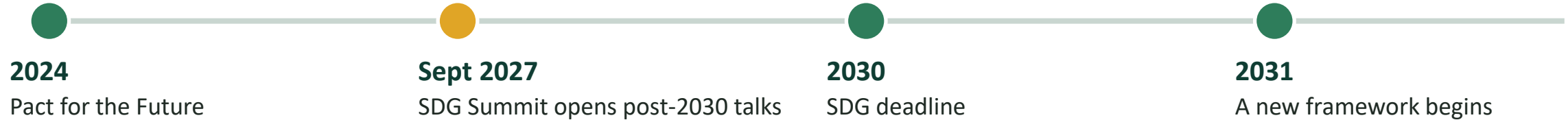
The question is no longer whether we know what needs to be done, but whether we can mobilize the partnerships, investments and political commitment needed to accelerate implementation.

A stocktaking exercise

A call to action

Sources: UN, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2026 – Understanding and addressing the high cost of a healthy diet, 2026*.

What comes after 2030?



CURRENT DISCUSSIONS SUGGEST GREATER EMPHASIS ON



Resilience to multiple crises



Local implementation and territorial approaches



Systems transformation, not sectoral approaches



Partnerships and collective action



Planetary boundaries and sustainability



Science, innovation and technology



Inequality and inclusion

ONE LESSON IS CLEAR

**Complex challenges
require integrated
solutions.**

Agrifood systems transformation will
remain central to those discussions.

Sources: UN, Pact for the Future (2024); IISD SDG Knowledge Hub (2025); IDOS, Beyond 2030; Taylor (2025), IDS; SEI and Monash, Post-2030 Initiative.

From evidence to action

Agrifood systems are central to the achievement of all 17 Goals. The publication provides evidence and a framework for action; progress depends on people, institutions and partnerships.

SCAN THE QR CODE OR FOLLOW
THE LINK BELOW TO DOWNLOAD
AND READ THE PUBLICATION:

<https://doi.org/10.4060/cd8857en>



PANEL DISCUSSION AND SPECIAL REMARKS

Felix Tetteh

Production · Young cocoa producer, Fairtrade Ambassador

Koen Dekeyser

Policy · Policy Analyst, ECDPM

Nevruz Unal

Local governance · Alderwoman, Ixelles

Special remarks: Leonard Mizzi

International cooperation · DG INTPA, European Commission

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