

RUFORUM PARTICIPATION IN THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT 2021 DIALOGUE

Report to Stakeholders and Global Community

13th August 2021

Introduction

The UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT 2021 under the theme “Transforming food systems is crucial for delivering all the Sustainable Development Goals,” is scheduled to take place in September/October 2021. The UN special envoy for the Summit is Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and former Minister of Agriculture for Republic of Rwanda.

The Summit is expected to launch bold new actions, solutions, and strategies to deliver progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), each of which relies on healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable food systems. The Summit aims to:

1. Generate action and measurable progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; identify solutions and leaders, and issuing a call for action at all levels of the food system;
2. Raise awareness and elevate public discussion about how reforming our food systems can help us all to achieve the SDGs by implementing reforms that are good for people and planet;
3. Develop principles to guide governments and other stakeholders looking to leverage their food systems to support the SDGs; These principles will set an optimistic and encouraging vision in which food systems play a central role in building a fairer, more sustainable world;
4. Create a system of follow-up and review to ensure that the Summit’s outcomes continue to drive new actions and progress.

The build up to the Summit includes global, State and independent dialogues. Prof. Adipala Ekwamu was designated as one of the 100 Champions for the Food Systems Summit. RUFORUM has been actively participating in [the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit \(UNFSS\) Dialogues](#). RUFORUM organised and coordinated [18 independent dialogues](#) at institutional, regional, and national levels, culminating into the African Heads of State Summit hosted in partnership with the Government of Malawi on [1st July 2021](#). The dialogues under the theme ‘*university- policy dialogues for strengthening resilient and inclusive agri-food systems in Africa*’ attracted academics, researchers, students, smallholder farmers, Government ministers, technocrats and other policy makers at national, regional, and international levels. The

dialogues have fed into the Africa Union Common Position to the Summit, the Pre-Summit hosted by FAO in Rome in July 2021 and are expected to feed into the UN Food Systems Summit in September/October 2021.

RUFORUM coordinated in collaboration with member universities national dialogues as part of the 2021 [United Nations Food Systems Summit](#). Dialogues were hosted in [Burundi](#), [Somalia](#), [Benin](#), [DRC](#), [Sudan](#), [Namibia](#), [Mali](#), [South Sudan](#), and [Zambia](#). The dialogues recommended that national food system frameworks pay specific attention to and analysis of the drivers and components of the agri-food systems; identify data gaps; and, find promising entry points for inclusion to improve nutrition outcomes and poverty reduction outcomes within the food system. RUFORUM participated in independent, State and global dialogues including in those organised by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, Organisation of African, Caribbean, Pacific States, African Union Commission and the Pre-UN Food Systems Summit held in Rome in July 2021.

For Noting and Action by the RUFORUM Network and other Actors:

The dialogues generated three key documents in a stepwise fashion that have commitments and action points for RUFORUM as a network. These are:

1. [The Vice Chancellors Statement](#) presented to Government technocrats and ministers
2. [The Africa's Ministerial Communique of 09 June 2021](#)
3. [The Lilongwe Declaration by African Heads of State](#)

Arising from these, different actors recognised that co-development, co-ownership and joint implementation of UNFSS agreed game-changers for food systems transformation on the continent must be inclusive and provide equitable opportunities for all.

The following are for action, follow-up and engagement with African Heads of State, Ministers and other Policy Makers by the RUFORUM Board and other Network Members:

A. Strengthening agri-food systems

Commitment to:

1. Strengthen production fundamentals such as research and innovation, to direct how we leverage our production resources, generate relevant technologies, test and incubate, and transfer and protect the Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) of these technologies; guide health and climate induced threat surveillance; and inform policy design and accountability; and,
2. Foster global partnerships to develop more sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems that consider the needs of smallholder farmers, the youth and women;

B. Strengthening linkages within and across the education sector

Commitment to:

1. Invest strongly in the education value chain, across universities and vocational colleges, to leverage secondary and primary education to upgrade the skill levels of young people entering the labour force;
2. Work collaboratively with African universities and other actors, in and outside Africa, to marshal the needed capacity to strengthen Africa's food systems and to scale up best practices, including for, but not limited to: increased value addition, and reduction in high post-harvest losses; and,
3. Pursue the requisite partnerships to operationalise the Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHA EA) initiative, the Strengthening Africa's Science Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Capacity for Agricultural and Economic Development (SASTIE); and for Building Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC) as encapsulated in [the African Ministers Communiqué](#) of 5th December 2019 in Cape Coast Ghana.

c. Partnerships for strengthening food and nutrition security

Commitment to:

1. Actively engage in: the European Union-African Union Partnership on Food, Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture Initiative; the Africa Union-European Union Research and Innovation Partnership on Climate Change, Green Circular Economy and Sustainable Energy; the Global Research Alliance on Agriculture Greenhouse Gases (GRA); and other continental and global initiatives; and,
2. Implement the actions agreed upon during the UNFSS 2021.

In addition to the above commitments, universities were specifically urged to critically examine their processes to facilitate youth engagement in agriculture, and providing context specific research solutions. Further, partners were urged to create a multi-stakeholder Capacity Strengthening Platform for Sustainable Inclusive African Food Systems.