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Introduction to Food Systems and Multi- Stakeholder Mechanisms



Food systems challenge

Today, our food systems are destabilizing our planet and failing to provide all people with healthy and nutritious diets.



80% land use change & habitat destruction

(WWF, 2020)



93% fish stocks unsustainably or maximally harvested

(IPBES, 2019)



Circa **30%** GHGs emissions

(IPCC, 2019)



Up to **811 million** people faced hunger in 2020 - rising since 2017

(FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2021)



2 billion people are obese or overweight / **40%** of all food produced goes uneaten

(WWF, 2021)



Key driver of emerging zoonotic diseases - pandemics

(UNEP 2020)



By 2050, **80%** of food will be consumed in cities

(Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019)

Urgent transformation towards sustainable food systems is critical to achieve the SDGs of Agenda 2030 and maintaining the Paris Agreement temperature rise to 1,5°C. Food systems are indeed the greatest challenge, but they also present the greatest opportunity.

The case for a systems-based approach

In the last several decades, policies to address food issues have taken a compartmentalized, **linear approach that has failed to address the complexity of our food systems**’ interrelated challenges. For instance, the ‘**Green Revolution**’ resulted in the production of more calories, but it did so at a huge cost to the environment, and yet **did not achieve its goal** of eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

There is a growing recognition that complex and multidimensional issues, such as achieving sustainable food systems, **require cross-sectoral approaches that are “systems-based”**. With a systems lens the focus is on the way that **the system's constituent parts (activities, actors, outcomes) interrelate** over time, instead of looking partially at only one constituent part.



WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS?

A **sustainable food systems approach** “considers food systems in their entirety, taking into account the interconnections and trade-offs among the different elements of food systems, as well as their diverse actors, activities, drivers and outcomes. It seeks to simultaneously optimize societal outcomes across environmental, social (including health), and economic dimensions” (UNEP, 2019a).

A systems lens requires inclusion of voices

Actors are at the center of the food systems. However, not all actors, particularly the vulnerable and powerless, are able to **express their voice at the decision-making table**.

So, to apply a food systems lens to their policies, governments must **rethink food systems governance** to embrace a more inclusive variety of voices and foster citizens' agency. Evidence supports the idea that **participation can deliver better policies, strengthen democracy** and build trust.

In parallel, frameworks must be created **across geographic scales to promote policy coherence** and implementation effectiveness.



THE CONCEPT OF 'AGENCY'

Agency refers to the capacity of citizens to take on, and seek to resolve (not just participate in) traditional public policy problems. Agency is understood as shared responsibility for social problems, performance of tasks related to addressing them, and deliberation over how to proceed. It entails regular power sharing. Agency is thus manifested by substantive, not symbolic, citizen contributions to a collective decision or public policy.

About the study



Research objectives

1.1. General objective

This study seeks to **identify, study and analyse 10 national and sub-national sustainable food systems multi-stakeholder mechanisms** (SFS MSMs). It aims to understand and share the contribution that they make to embedding the food systems approach in policy-making processes and supporting the transition toward sustainable food systems.



Research objectives

1.2. Specific objectives

- Understand how national and sub-national mechanisms support governments in working more effectively with other actors and integrating sustainability policies with other relevant food systems policies (e.g. nutrition, food security, transportation, protection for small producers) at different levels (international to local) with a more holistic approach.
- Describe examples of concrete achievements made by these mechanisms in relation to the promotion of more sustainable food systems (e.g. environmental and other food systems benefits), and capture the key challenges they face.
- Understand the formats, sustainability principles and key food systems priorities of these mechanisms, the way they engage actors (and which actors), and analyse, in as much detail as possible, how these factors influence their success and the achievement of results.
- Promote knowledge sharing and foster innovation in the way that these mechanisms collaborate, mobilize more support for them in general, and stimulate the emergence of more similar mechanisms at different levels.



Introducing SFS MSMs

In recent years, there have been a range of innovative governance experiences known as **Sustainable Food Systems Multi-Stakeholder Mechanisms (SFS MSMs)**: These are participatory decision-making mechanisms created to advise, develop or implement policies that promote of sustainable food systems. Through the inclusion of actors, MSMs are better positioned to embody a systems-based approach.

What do SFS MSMs look like?

- Take different organizational models, names and roles (food policy council, food boards, food coalitions, etc.).
- Take a range of forms in relation to durability, legal status, and representativeness
- Operate at different geographic scales, and their roles and mandates can also vary.

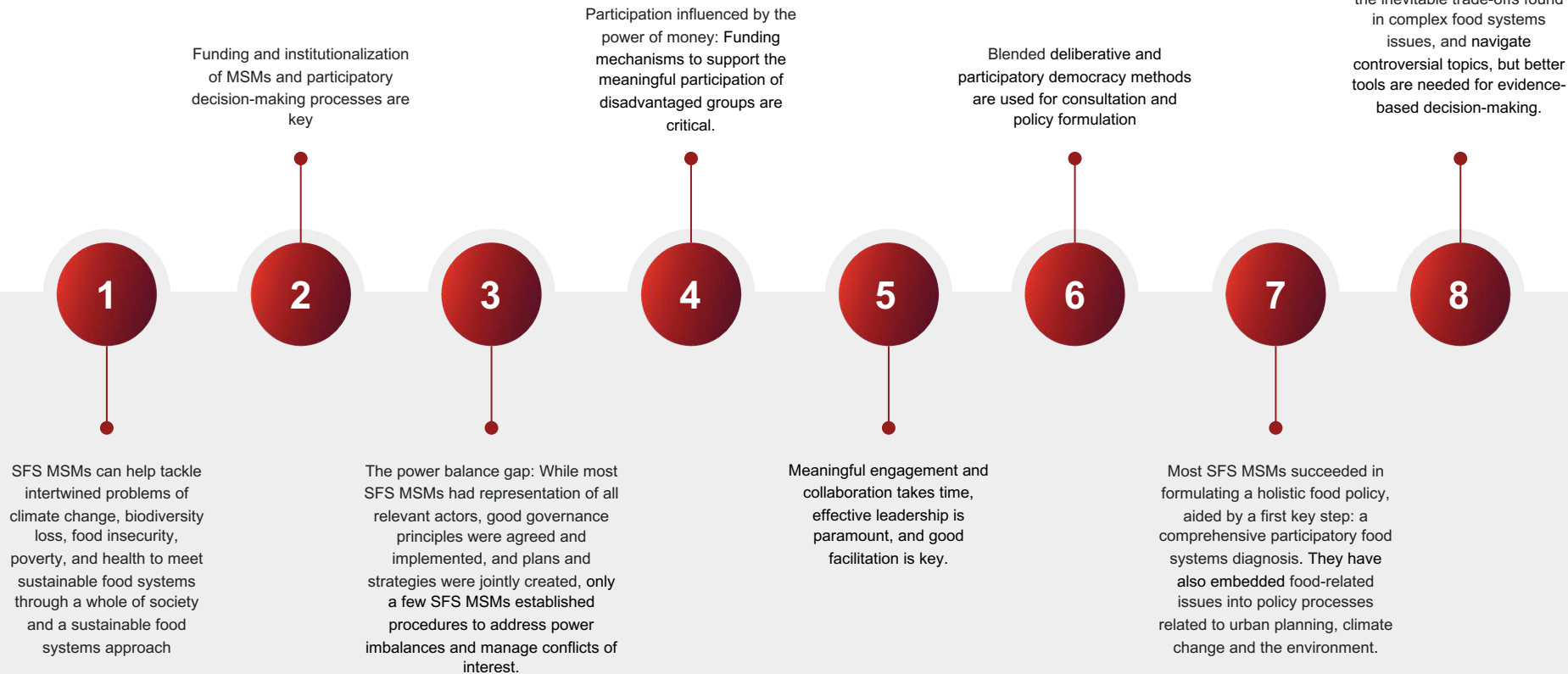
The limitations of governance mechanisms

- There are **limitations to participatory and deliberative multi-stakeholder governance**. Some authors argue 'Multistakeholderism' can pose a challenge to democracy, the legitimacy of governance, the protection of common goods, and the defence of human rights.
- Although participatory and deliberative governance and their different multi-stakeholder experiences are certainly not perfect, a growing body of **evidence shows that multi-stakeholder governance with core democratic values and appropriate mechanisms can be successful** in addressing complex issues in an inclusive way.
- This is why **understanding current MSMs experiences**, their characteristics, flaws and success factors is extremely important today. This research initiative set off to start **addressing this knowledge gap**.

Key Takeaways



Key takeaways



**Summary of
Comparative
Analysis
of 10 SFS MSMs**



Main findings

01

Foundational and structural factors

- It takes more than political will to create an effective SFS MSM.
- Building successful collaboration takes time.
- Funding is crucial.
- Institutionalization is pivotal.
- Connecting at different levels promotes a greater impact.

02

Roles and thematic areas of SFS MSMs

- The majority of the SFS MSMs studied are directly involved in policy formulation.
- Lobbying and advocacy are key roles played.
- SFS MSMs work is still dominated by a focus on agricultural production, but there are winds of change: a focus on consumption and environmental issues is emerging.
- Growing uptake of the 'food systems approach'.

03

The “rules of the game”: governance and dialogues

- All food systems actors (sectors, constituencies, activities) are represented in the SFS MSMs
- All SFS MSMs benefit from government support.
- The SFS MSMs have set relevant goals, plans and strategies, considered a key element for their effectiveness and results.
- Most SFS MSMs adopt, apply and respect multiple good governance principles.
- The balance of power gap: Only a few SFS MSMs have established procedures to address power imbalances and manage conflicts of interest.
- Good facilitation helps: Most SFS MSMs studied appoint a facilitator for meetings.

Main findings

04

Stakeholder engagement

- The level of participation and engagement of all stakeholders in the SFS MSMs regular meetings is high.
- Government and private sector representatives engage more frequently in verbal exchanges. This could reflect a more active use of (informal) lobbying.
- Participation influenced by the power of money: Funding mechanisms to support the participation of disadvantaged groups is critical.
- Networking, information and learning are strong motivations of participants to engage in the SFS MSMs collaborative work.
- Effective collaborative leadership is paramount.

05

Lessons from policy formulation and implementation

- Most SFS MSMs have supported the formulation of food systems policy, and contributed to embedding food topics in related agendas (e.g. climate change).
- The first key step: a holistic participatory food systems diagnosis.
- Most SFS MSMs used a blended whole-of-society approach, combining deliberative and participatory democracy methods.
- In most SFS MSMs, dialogue among actors addressed the inevitable trade-offs and navigated controversial topics.
- The main topics prioritized in the food policies are: sustainable diets, food diversification, food environments, local food production and (peri-)urban farming.
- All the SFS MSMs engage in policy implementation, but the level of engagement and roles played vary greatly among SFS MSMs.

06

Participants perceived achievements and challenges

- **Perceived achievements:** 1st- “Networking of food stakeholders”, which increases connectivity among food systems actors and their capacity for action. 2nd- “Policy formulation” including the “mainstreaming of food into other related policy processes”.
- **Perceived drivers of collaboration and success.** Four key elements perceived as key drivers of successful multi-stakeholder collaboration:
 - the balanced representation of all food systems actors;
 - the conducive leadership and governance;
 - the trust built upon many years of networking and collaboration;
 - and the perceived political support.
- **Perceived challenges.** The main challenge reported by SFS MSMs is ensuring financial stability. Additionally, participants identified low political support and the limited time to engage in additional activities as major obstacles faced by their SFS MSM.

Individual case studies

CASES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

1. **France:** French National Food Council (CNA)
2. **Denmark:** Organic Denmark
3. **India:** Eat Right India

CASES AT SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL

1. **Ghent (Belgium):** Gent en Garde Food Policy Council
2. **London (UK):** London Food Board (LFB)
3. **Montreal (Canada):** The Montreal Food System Council (CSAM)
4. **Los Angeles (USA):** Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC)
5. **Quito (Ecuador):** Quito Agri-Food Pact (PAQ)
6. **La Paz (Bolivia):** Municipal Food Security Committee of La Paz (MFSC-LPZ)
7. **Antananarivo (Madagascar):** The Antananarivo Food Policy Council (AFPC)



**Examples of
Case Studies –
National SFS
MSMs**



CASE STUDY SUMMARY

France: French National Food Council (CNA)



About:

- The CNA's main role is to be an advisory body on food-related issues in France
- It has established processes for consultation and debate to take into account the perspectives of the whole French society.
- It operates at a national level and is a highly participatory SFS MSM, with a broad and diverse representation from each food system stakeholder.

Achievements:

- Since its creation, the CNA has issued 87 opinions ("avis") on issues like food in hospitals, collective food catering in schools, food packaging etc - these have been instrumental in advising the work of the ministries attached to the SFS MSM.
- The CNA participates in the development of the National Food Program (*Programme national pour l'alimentation - PNA*) which was adopted in 2010 and defines the objectives of French Food Policy.
- The CNA has contributed to the drafting of the law on the future of agriculture, food and forestry (2014), and many food-related policies in France.
- In particular, the CNA was instrumental in the development of regulations for school food catering services (2017)

Challenges:

- Private and public sector members' perceived resistance to the transformative change.
- Only 43 percent of respondents believe the SFS MSM has a good mechanism for dealing with power relations; a low 29 percent think that the leader uses a good mechanism for resolving disagreements; and 43 percent believe that the mechanisms processes are not conducive to the equitable participation of members.
- Perceived lack of political will and support and limited stakeholders' time to participate.

CASE STUDY SUMMARY

India: Eat Right India



About:

- Eat Right India is an institutionalized SFS MSM hosted by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) that focuses on three themes: eat safe, eat healthy and eat sustainably.
- It participates in policy formulation processes, facilitating new food-related initiatives and has a budget allocated for implementation.
- It operates at a national and state level and brings together 15-20 primary stakeholders.
- It applies a “whole of government” and “whole of society” approach.

Achievements:

- Eat Right India is aligned to the National Health Policy 2017, which focuses on preventive healthcare, and flagship programs such as “*Ayushman Bharat*” (National Health Protection Mission), “*POSHAN Abhiyaan*” (PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment), “*Anemia Mukd Bharat*” and “*Swachh Bharat Mission*”.
- Eat Right India has contributed to the formulation of policies, strategies or action plans, such as the formulation and adoption of the food fortification policy and the Smart City Mission led by the Ministry of Urban Affairs.
- The SFS MSM developed several actions for the three themes to be applied on the ground such as the Food Safety Training and Certification and the Food Safety Magic Box to fight adulteration.
- It launched several consumer awareness campaigns to encourage healthier food choices, reduce food waste, plastic use, and sustainable cooking oil use.

Challenges:

- As a relatively new MSM, it still faces a range of challenges: the inadequacy of its representativeness; a leadership and governance not always conducive to multi-stakeholder work; a lack of budget to support participation and collaboration; and low perceived political support.

**Examples of
Case Studies –
Sub-National
SFS MSMs**



CASE STUDY SUMMARY

Quito (Ecuador): Quito Agri-Food Pact (PAQ)



About:

- The PAQ was born in a context of persistent food insecurity in Quito.
- It functions as a citizen consultation and advisory body, to encourage collective action and new initiatives among members.
- It operates at a city-region level and brings together about 30 different stakeholders, representing Quito's food system.

Achievements:

- A food systems diagnosis was carried out in 2016-2017, resulting in the development of the Quito's Food System Sustainability Plan and the Quito Food Charter in October 2018, and later in the design of the Quito Agri-Food Strategy in April 2019, formulated in alignment with the pre-existing food-related policies.
- Quito's Agri-Food Strategy is recognized by the mayor's office as a city planning instrument and as an official policy.
- The PAQ fostered a highly participatory process and strong citizen engagement and commitment for the development of the Food Charter and the Agri-Food Strategy.
- The SFS MSM provided input and lobbied to include food issues in the Quito Climate Action Plan, in the Territorial Development Plan, and in the city's strategic planning in Vision 2040.
- The PAQ has strengthened the voices of all actors, and convened and coordinated a wide range of stakeholders that formed collaborative networks.
- The new mayor of Quito, Jorge Yunda, signed in March 2021 the city's adhesion to the Glasgow Declaration

Challenges:

- Limited budget due to lack of full political support.
- As long as the Agri-Food Strategy is not elevated to become a Municipal Ordinance, no budget is assigned for its implementation. Nevertheless, different activities and projects are carried out in alignment with the strategy

CASE STUDY SUMMARY

Antananarivo (Madagascar): The Antananarivo Food Policy Council (AFPC)



About:

- The AFPC has a "policy as practice" approach: its work is focused on supporting key stakeholders implementing food-related projects together (instead of focusing on policy formulation alone).
- The AFPC functions as a consultative body that promotes collective and new actions among members, and participates in policy formulation processes.
- It operates at a city-region level and brings together over 31 different stakeholders representing Antananarivo's food systems.

Achievements:

- A diagnosis of Antananarivo's food system was first developed using participatory methods and going beyond the sectoral framing of problems.
- The AFPC has started to draft collaboratively its first strategy, within the framework of the City-Region Food System project, with the mobilization of a large number of stakeholders via 1,500 household surveys, 30 focus groups and 40 individual interviews. Priorities were established following the findings of the food system's diagnosis.
- The strategy has a multisectoral perspective of the food system that seeks to go beyond value chains, putting forward specific solutions tailored to the local urban-rural context, and with a multilevel governance approach.
- The SFS MSM contributed to the formulation of coherent actions in relation to food, eg. the Urgent Multi-sectoral Plan to address COVID-19 issues.
- It has established networks for knowledge exchange, including free training at an experimental micro-gardening site.

Challenges:

- Lack of budget.
- Poor organization of actors in joint activities, and the lack of formalization of the decisions adopted.
- As a recently created MSM, a pending task for the AFPC is to establish its good governance principles and mechanisms. Therefore, management of power relations and disagreements remains a gap.
- The AFPC has not succeeded yet in getting stakeholders to grasp the benefits of a 'food systems approach'.

About

This publication contributes to the One Planet Network (OPN) Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Programme's goal to accelerate the shift towards sustainable food systems through a holistic approach. The study has been commissioned by the Community of Practice on Food Systems Approach on the Ground (CoP-FSAG) of the One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme (OPN SFS Programme).

Community of Practice on Food Systems Approach on the Ground (CoP-FSAG)




This project is part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI). The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) supports this initiative on the basis of a decision adopted by the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag).

Resources:

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[Full Report](#)
[Executive Summary](#)

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based on a decision of the German Bundestag



Thank you