

44th Session of the Conference

Concept Note

Roundtable: Four Betters for Innovation and Agrifood Systems Transformation

Background

Agrifood systems possess transformative potential to advance the right to food, ensure food security and safety, promote healthy diets and optimal nutrition, foster equitable livelihoods, stimulate inclusive economic development and enhance the sustainable management of natural resources and system resilience. Governments and stakeholders globally are actively engaging in efforts to unlock this potential, despite persistent structural challenges. These include climate-induced shocks, widening inequality, geopolitical conflict and macroeconomic volatility - all of which compound the fragility of agrifood systems. Slow and uneven progress across key domains - productivity, nutrition, environmental sustainability and inclusive growth - continues to undermine the attainment of global food security and nutrition targets. Integrated, multidimensional progress is essential to secure access to safe, nutritious and affordable food for all, both now and in the future.

In response, the **FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31** articulates a transformative agenda aimed at fostering **MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems**, aligned with the overarching goal of achieving the **Four Betters: Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment and a Better Life - leaving no one behind**.

The Four Betters serve as a strategic orientation framework, guiding FAO's delivery on its mandate and supporting its Members in realizing long-term development outcomes. They encapsulate the integrated and interdependent economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable agrifood systems. The framework is designed to manage trade-offs and optimize synergies in pursuit of **zero hunger, no poverty and reduced inequalities**, while simultaneously advancing climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services and women empowerment.

Achieving the multifaceted objectives embedded in the Four Betters - spanning enhanced productivity, improved nutrition outcomes, environmental stewardship, inclusive economic transformation and social equity - necessitates a **comprehensive systems-based approach**. This approach recognizes the interlinkages and feedback loops across interventions, requiring strategic coordination to navigate synergies and mitigate trade-offs.

Systems approaches represent a paradigm shift and demand **fit-for-purpose, science-driven innovation** across technological, institutional, policy, social and financial domains. For example, innovations in technologies can improve market access for small farmers, while reducing the environmental footprint of their operations and providing opportunities for inclusive participation by women, youth and Indigenous Peoples. Realizing this vision of fit-for-purpose, science-driven innovation requires **mission-oriented governance**, robust organizational capabilities and adaptive institutional frameworks that enable anticipatory policymaking, cross-sectoral collaboration and targeted investment. These integrated approaches are vital to catalysing progress and amplifying the impact towards the achievement of good food for all for today and tomorrow.

Objectives

This roundtable aims to:

- raise awareness and build a shared understanding of the Four Betters as a holistic strategy for addressing the interconnected economic, social and environmental dimensions of agrifood systems transformation, and the importance of innovation in identifying action gaps, managing trade-offs and harnessing synergies across the Four Betters.

- share innovations (policy, institutional, technological etc.) that advance agrifood systems transformations, and discuss experiences and lessons learned from different countries and regions in nurturing and investing in such innovations, illustrating the role played by FAO headquarters and Decentralized Offices.
- provide recommendations for FAO's support to Members.

Content

With the participation of high-level representatives from governments, UN institutions, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, this roundtable will provide a space for Members to share examples of technological, social, policy, institutional and financial innovations that have enabled them to make the shift towards a broad focus across all betters – production, nutrition, environment and equitable livelihoods – and thus present the foundation of transformative change. For example, institutional mechanisms guiding agricultural transformation which adopt considerations of environmental sustainability; policy innovations that bring co-benefits for nutrition, environment and economy; and social innovations where knowledge is co-created to advance local economic development while also supporting climate resilience. It will feature examples of this system's approach needed to balance the outcomes that underpin food security and nutrition.

Draft Programme

Proposed Moderator: Ms Beth Bechdol, Deputy Director-General, FAO

Time	Intervention
5 mins	Welcome and Introduction by Ms Beth Bechdol, Deputy Director-General, FAO
10 mins	Opening Remarks by FAO Director-General, Dr QU Dongyu
10 mins	Technical Presentation to set the scene: Ms Corinna Hawkes, Director, Agrifood Systems and Food Safety Division, FAO Mr Vincent Martin, Director, Office of Innovation, FAO
60 mins	High-level Ministerial Panel: In this panel, country representatives will address the following three key questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is agrifood systems transformation being accelerated? Examples of institutional, policy and technological and financial innovation.• How can agrifood systems transformation be achieved in food crises situations and where significant investments are required?• How are countries diversifying production across different sectors – crops, fisheries and aquaculture, and livestock – in support of economic, environmental and social sustainability?
20 mins	Short interventions from high-level innovators, investors, policy innovators and institutional change agents, responding to the experiences shared by the High-level Ministerial panel.
20 mins	Perspective of farmers, farmer groups, producer associations and the private sector
20 min	Discussion
15 mins	Wrap up and closing by Mr Máximo Torero Cullen, Chief Economist, FAO