

Key points – Food Systems Transformation Regional Meeting

Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine, National Convenor of Lebanon, presented this summary of the discussions held at a regional meeting on March 6, 2024. The presentation took place during a special event on Food Systems Transformation on March 7, 2024, at the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.

Challenges:

1. The Arab region faces significant **development setbacks**, jeopardizing progress towards SDGs and food systems transformation.

The region has been experiencing a **series of crises**, including COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, economic crises and regional conflicts in Sudan, and Yemen, and lately, the war on Gaza, among others. The dire situation following the **war on Gaza** has led to a humanitarian catastrophe of dimensions we hadn't seen before. The conflict in Gaza and war in Southern Lebanon affect human security. It also affected environmental sustainability and therefore sustainability of the food systems and the progress in achieving the SDGs.

2. The region also witnessed severe weather events, droughts and floods, due to climate change.
3. the region is not accessing sufficient financing for its agriculture sector / food systems.

While the complexity of the challenges has increased, they are also clearer.

The way forward:

1. **Food systems as a solution:** Taking a food systems approach is key for achieving universal food security and nutrition, while maintaining environmental sustainability and providing decent livelihoods.
2. **Human-centered approach:** Investing in food systems is a human development investment. Taking a human rights approach and leaving no one behind is crucial.
3. Food systems transformation processes should **involve communities**, including the youth, people with disabilities, and the private sector.
4. Multi-level **cooperation** is necessary, including national stakeholders, different countries, and regions.
5. Ensuring **social protection** for vulnerable groups like poor households and farmers is essential.
6. **Climate action-food systems nexus:** Climate change is exacerbating water scarcity and soil degradation issues. Climate finance presents an opportunity to improve both climate and food system outcomes, but a better understanding of financing needs, more grants instead of concessional finance for LDCs and countries with special needs, more equitable financing, and more investments towards adaptation are necessary.
7. Food systems transformation requires the right type of **governance**, promoting efficient resource management responsible decision-making, and ensuring policy coherence. It demands political will and commitment to address systemic issues.
8. Regional integration and cooperation is essential to ensure food security.

9. **Leveraging the food systems approach** is key on the way forward, as food systems are intricately linked to all SDGs. Keeping food systems transformation pathways alive can continue to help to respond to emerging issues.