



Memorandum

Nexus²⁵ Roundtable Discussion:

***The role of North-South Cooperation in addressing the food-climate nexus:
Looking ahead after the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment***

Rome Event – Friday, July 28th, 2023

The most recent Nexus²⁵ roundtable, co-hosted by Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Southern Voice and the European Think Tanks Group (ETTG), took place in Rome on July 28th 2023. It brought together institutional and non-institutional actors and perspectives from different regions across the Global South and North for a discussion on how to move forward multi-sectoral, multi-level, multi-stakeholder and inclusive approaches that capture complex interconnections between climate change and food security. The event followed key debates during the +2 Stocktaking Moment of the UN Food Systems Summit in Rome that same week. in a time of overlapping regional and global crises with far-reaching consequences for the world's most vulnerable countries.

The effects of the pandemic and the Ukraine war are exacerbating long standing challenges in the food security domain and affecting food production systems and distribution. Consequences of these shocks compound with long-lasting challenges such as the effects of climate change or pre-existing contextual factors, from institutional weaknesses to inequalities and conflicts in driving food insecurity. Climate change acts as one of the major factors disrupting agri-food systems, underlining the importance of integrating climate mitigation and adaptation into sustainable food systems transformation. At the same time, food systems generate over one-third of greenhouse gases, showing how crucial sustainable food systems are for achieving climate goals.

Against this backdrop, the event provided a platform for representatives from international organizations, civil society and expert community to reflect on how to minimize trade-offs and enhance synergies between climate action and sustainable food systems. The roundtable also facilitated an intense exchange of ideas on the challenges facing North-South cooperation on these interlinked transformation agendas, as well as key priorities and promising approaches to overcome these.

Here are some of the key takeaways from our conversation:

- **Addressing underinvestment in the contexts most in need of resources:** Involving smallholder farmers in developing countries in sustainable food systems transformation is key for success. Yet, the share of climate finance that is allocated accordingly remains limited. Developing countries affected by food insecurity and climate risks do not have sufficient resources to tackle different crises at the same time, while the effects of the economic fallout from the pandemic, by shrinking governments' fiscal space, have further strained their crisis response capacity. This underlines the need for better data to identify the contexts where resources are most needed on the one hand, and for greater emphasis on partnerships to channel public and private funds towards transforming food systems in those contexts, on the other. While innovative funding mechanisms involving public as well as private actors are



needed to fill the most critical gaps, strengthening accountability and responsibility of all development partners continue to be a key priority.

- **Adapting small farmers’ and household perspectives:** The compound effects of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, in addition to ongoing local and regional conflicts in developing countries have triggered a multi-dimensional crisis affecting especially the most fragile contexts and individuals. The results of these crises add to drivers of food insecurity that are closely linked to globalization, including greater dependence on global food chains and the effects of climate change. To better understand the combined effects of these drivers, stakeholders – international organizations and beyond – need to emphasize household and small farmers’ perspectives. They also need to acknowledge that social protection has been severely affected and that the lack of global safety nets is a major shortcoming, hampering the capacity and limiting the resources needed to respond to such crises also at the individual and household level. Going forward, investing in strengthening global safety nets are therefore key priorities.
- **Targeted use of financial instruments prioritizing high-impact initiatives:** Initiatives aiming at food systems transformation need to consider the financial space. Fostering effective use of financial instruments to effectively target needs is essential. Given limited resources, smart specialization is key, so is investing in better coordination mechanisms and lending instruments. These may contribute to widening limited fiscal spaces facing food-stressed countries, while helping financing reach local value chains. Promoting high-impact initiatives that aim to support fragile contexts in becoming self-sufficient in the future would also be crucial.
- **Strengthening local food systems:** One of the most relevant lessons of the Ukrainian conflict is the necessity to protect local food systems from shock waves that impact the global marketplace. While lowering import dependence is important, the answer does not lie in replacing imported food with locally grown equivalents, since such an approach could lead to a waste of time and resources for already food-stressed countries. A systemic strategy taking into account populations’ consumption patterns and diets on the one hand, and existing local knowledge on food production on the other, is crucial – so is coordination and support from the international community.
- **A coordinated and multi-level approach between the Global North and South:** North-South cooperation should aim at reducing vulnerabilities at the intersection of food and climate, paying particular attention at strengthening local and regional value chains. To achieve these goals, investing in multidimensional risk analysis is key. This should be combined with growing attention on the adaptation side of climate risks and adequate protection of investments from risks posed by climate change in the most fragile contexts. North-South cooperation should seek to invest in better use of technology and resources based on deep knowledge of specific needs. To make the transition even smoother, sub-national levels should also be included. Municipalities, for example, may better evaluate the social costs of food systems transformation, which should be thoroughly considered in advance.



- **Involving new generations:** Involving younger generations in these transformation processes must be acknowledged as a key priority, as their participation is essential to achieve the predetermined goals. School meals are a new frontier where much can be done to develop resilience programs and a platform for local populations to change habits. Channeling funds on these programs should not be seen as a cost but as an investment in the future.

Global political actors, institutional and non-institutional stakeholders must be aware of the complex interplay between food security and climate change. New policy strategies are required to foster effective and coherent dialogue and cooperation between the Global North and South, promoting inclusive processes and participation of all the parties involved in sustainable food systems transformation on equal footing. A fundamental precondition for this is engaging local communities that are most affected by these crises, who should be provided with sufficient resources to achieve self-sufficiency and supported by robust mechanisms of social protection.