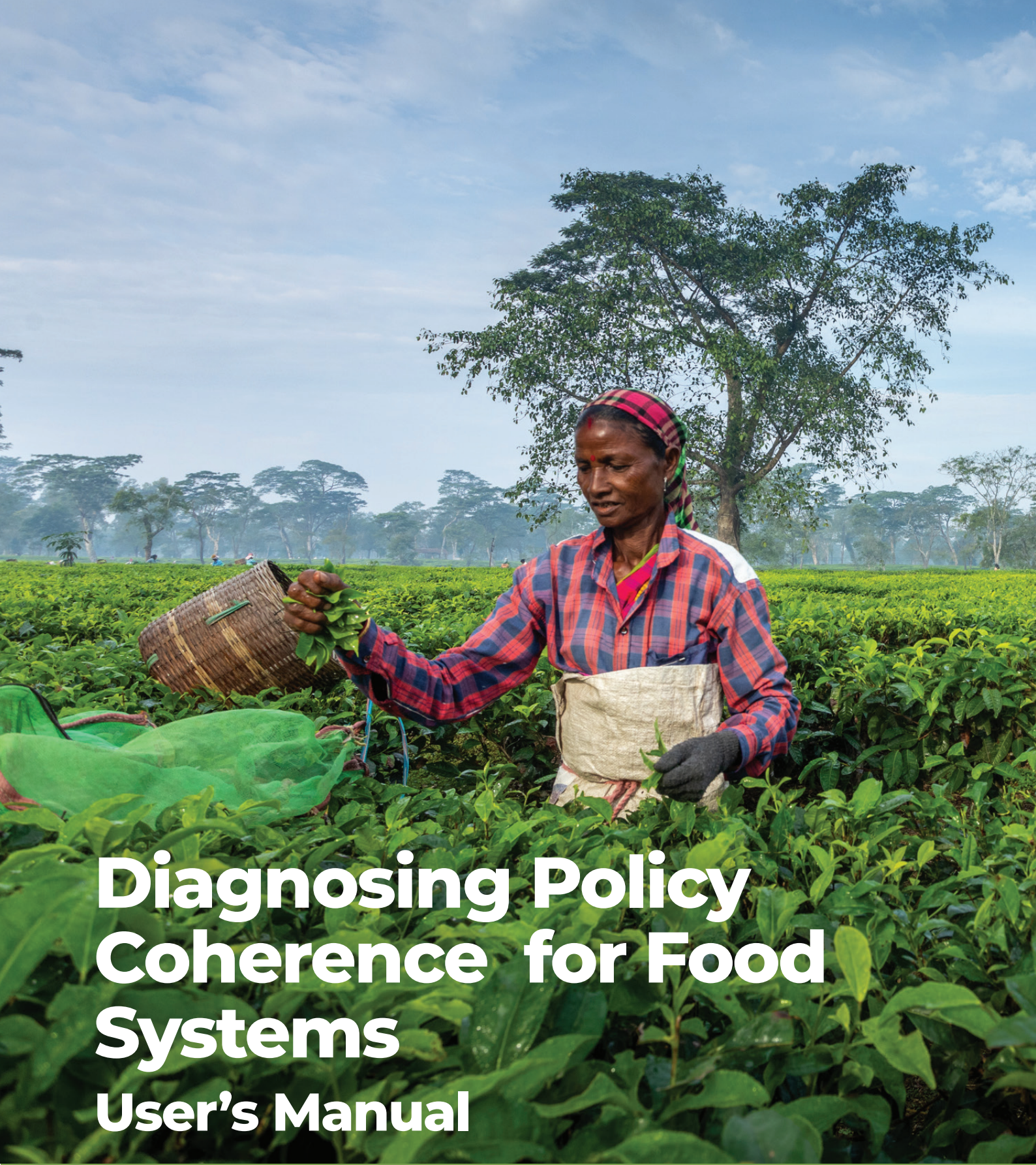
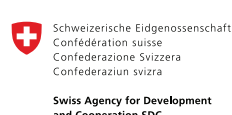




Diagnosing Policy Coherence for Food Systems User's Manual

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List of Abbreviations Used

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FSPC	Food Systems Policy Coherence
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFSS	United Nations Food Systems Summit
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Introduction

About the Food Systems Policy Coherence Diagnostic Tool

Addressing interlinked challenges related to nutrition, health, environmental sustainability, livelihoods, and economic growth requires integrated approaches that work across all aspects of food systems, as opposed to in sectoral silos. The 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) crystallised widespread agreement on the need for this kind of 'food system transformation' to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and resulted in the establishment of over 100 country 'food system pathways' – guides for future transformation.

What are food systems?

A food system is all of the people and activities that play a part in growing or raising, harvesting, transporting, processing, and selling or serving food. Policies that affect food systems come from multiple different sectors, such as agriculture and health. When referring to a 'food systems approach' here, we are referring to approaches that consider multiple sectors and/or outcomes of food systems and the interactions among them, as opposed to those that are sector-specific.

Implementing these food system pathways requires policies to be aligned across sectors – i.e., for them to be coherent. Based on Parsons and Hawkes (2019), we define food systems policy coherence (FSPC) to be, 'The alignment of policies that affect the food system with the aim of achieving health, environmental, social and economic goals, to ensure that policies designed to improve one food system outcome do not undermine others' and, where possible, take advantage of synergies across policy areas to achieve better outcomes for all¹.

The Food Systems Policy Coherence Diagnostic Tool (henceforth, 'the tool') is meant to enable interested stakeholders to identify areas of coherence and non-coherence among food system policies in a given country. It is meant to provide actionable recommendations for ways in which FSPC could be improved. The intended audience of users includes policy analysts or advisors, researchers, and policy advocates, within the public sector, civil society, and / or academia. While the tool was developed primarily considering the experiences of low- and middle-income countries, many of its questions are applicable in high-income countries, either directly or with some modification.

1. A synergy is a positive interaction where action to achieve a goal in one area enhances achievement of a goal in another area; a trade-off is a negative interaction where action to achieve a goal in one area hinders achievement of a goal in another area.

The tool was developed by GAIN and AKADEMIYA2063 as part of Nourishing Food Pathways, a programme that seeks to accelerate progress towards The Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG2) by supporting inclusive and coherent food systems transformation in ten countries.

The tool is modular and uses the following structure:

- Module 1 is a cross-cutting module, focusing on the processes and systems that support policy coherence
- Module 2 focuses on coherence among specific policies. It has six submodules, focused on:
 - Agricultural Policy and Instruments
 - Health / Nutrition Policy and Instruments
 - Environmental Policy and Instruments
 - Trade Policy and Instruments
 - Social Affairs Policy and Instruments
 - Industrial, Economic, and Monetary Policies and Instruments

What about decentralised policies?

Policy decision making in many countries is decentralised to the sub-national level (e.g., states in Nigeria and India, counties in Kenya). However, the tool is primarily designed to examine coherence across policy areas at the national level. In principle, the tool could be adapted for use in decentralised government structures through simple rephrasing and limiting the scope of the review to a state, county, etc. It may be the case that some topics of the tool (e.g., trade policies) are relevant at the national level while others (e.g., health policies) are set at the state level; in such cases, a hybrid approach could be used.

However, the existing documents and guidance all assume application at the national level within a fairly centralised government system.

Module 1 can be used alone if the focus is solely on processes and systems. Module 2's submodules can be used with or without Module 1. Users are also welcome to, using the structure provided by the tool, develop their own submodules of Module 2 to address specific food systems goals within their context.

This tool aims to simplify the concept of policy coherence to a manageable number of potentially high-impact areas where incoherence may be expected. This is done to ensure it is practical and feasible to use, within a reasonable amount of time, by someone who is knowledgeable on food systems policy within a given context but not an expert in FSPC or with extensive analytical experience. However, it does mean that some aspects of policy coherence will not be captured. For example, the tool focuses only on coherence of policies across sectors (i.e., horizontal coherence) at the national level and does not look at

coherence across different levels of government (i.e., from city to state to national – vertical coherence). Users could, however, adapt the existing modules to focus on vertical coherence among key policies of interest.

Methods for completion

The methodology for tool completion draws on the most common methods used in policy coherence analysis for food systems (Devi et al 2024). The tool can be completed through one of two overarching methods:

1. Self-completion by a knowledgeable stakeholder or group of stakeholders who is / are very familiar with the food systems policy context in the target country, who consults key documents as needed.
2. Key informant interviews with knowledgeable stakeholders by a third party, combined with review of key documents.

Under Approach (1), completion is relatively rapid but there may be greater risk of bias through reliance on a limited number of stakeholders, applying their own judgment. Validation by review by or presentation to a broader group of stakeholders is strongly recommended.

Under Approach (2), the involvement of a third party can help to improve the objectivity of the results, though it will likely be more resource-intensive. The recommended process has three steps: (1) review key documents to answer as many questions as possible; (2) triangulate those answers through key informant interviews; and (3) if needed, review additional documents suggested by key informants to fill in gaps or verify key informants' responses. This can be followed by validation or review by a broader group of stakeholders, such as through a workshop. The fewer stakeholders or documents included in the original data collection method, the more important it is to ensure a validation step.

We do not recommend reliance on expert completion or stakeholder interviews alone without triangulating the information with actual policy documents.

Stakeholder Selection

Which stakeholders to select as key informants or validation participants will vary by context and the goals of and audience for the analysis. In general, those who work in food policy / food systems transformation broadly, as opposed to in a specific sector, will be highly valuable participants, particularly for Module 1. This can include, for example, the UNFSS convenor or members of their team; advisors for a national food policy; members of a food policy working group; researchers studying food policy; or civil society members supporting food policy design and implementation. Particularly in the case of Module 2, this may need

to be complemented by sectoral experts in agriculture / livestock / fisheries, health / nutrition, environmental sustainability, social policies, and trade / industry. For sectoral experts, the interview will likely focus only on their areas of expertise; such interviews may thus be significantly shorter than for a generalist expert.

An ideal application would likely involve both generalists and sectoral specialists from multiple sectors, including those from government, academia, and civil society. However, completion should be feasible with fewer stakeholders where resources do not permit such a comprehensive approach.

If no validation step is included, we generally recommend interviewing a minimum of 8 stakeholders, with at least one of these being a cross-sectoral expert. An iterative approach to stakeholder selection may be used: begin with general food systems experts, then complement with sector-specific experts where there are knowledge gaps.

During stakeholder interviews, it is important to not just ask the question as written but also probe, follow up, and verify that the respondent has understood the full context and nuance of the question before recording their answer. Since the questions can be complex and subtle in their differences, we do not recommend using the questions as a stakeholder survey (i.e., sending them to stakeholders to complete independently) as opposed to in an interactive interview.

Documents to review

Documents to review will vary somewhat by country. At a minimum, we suggest all the main high-level sectoral policies and / or strategies / strategic plans in sectors of high relevance to the food system. Some instruments and sub-policies directly related to food will likely also need to be included, prioritising those with a direct impact on prices / incentives (e.g., those related to subsidies, taxes, trade instruments, price policies), as these tend to be the most likely to come into conflict with some goals. Other policy instruments and more minor policies can be included based on their importance within the local context and / or relevance to the goals of most interest within a given application. It is also recommended to ask stakeholders which additional policies they recommend including, or whether the chosen policies are sufficient.

Some examples of policies and instruments included in the initial applications include the National Food Security Policy, the Five-Year Plan, the Annual Plan, the Wheat Policy, the Prime Minister's Initiative for Solar Irrigation, the Price Control Act, the Law on Agricultural Extension, the Regulation on Food Labelling, the Regulation on National Agricultural Research and Innovation, the Regulation on Agricultural Insurance, the National Health Vision, the Strategic Plan for Food Crops Research, Decree on Distribution of Subsidised Seeds and Fertiliser, the Multisectoral Nutrition Policy, the Dietary Guidelines, the Food Fortification Act, the Maternal Nutrition Strategy, the National Climate Adaptation Plan, the

Nationally Determined Contributions (to Climate Change Mitigation), the National Energy Efficiency Policy, Action Plan for the Circular Economy, the Water Resources Act, the Fisheries Ordinance, the Regulation on National Food Reserves, the National Disaster Management Plan, the Income Support Program, the Labour Laws, the Social Welfare Law, the Minimum Wages Act, the National Gender Policy, the Strategic Trade Policy, the Customs Tariffs, the Economic Transformation Plan, the Industrial Policy, the State Bank Policy on Credit and Loans, the Policy on Special Economic Zones and Tax Incentives, the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, the National Long-Term Development Plan, and the Omnibus Law on Job Creation.

For the less subjective and simpler questions, the user could consider using an evidence-based Artificial Intelligence chatbot (i.e., one that provides citations to sources back up its answers) to facilitate gathering information; this might help to speed up the process considerably. However, the user must always verify the accuracy of that information and should be transparent about which Artificial Intelligence was used and in which ways.

Documenting Supporting Evidence

There is necessarily some subjectivity to the responses to many of the questions in the tool: they entail a judgement call and are not clear yes / no answers. To help mitigate this, the person completing the diagnostic should carefully document the reason behind their choice and make that documentation available alongside the results. This documentation should include the sources of the answer (e.g., a specific document or key informant), an explanation for why it was chosen if needed, and any subtlety or nuance in the answer (in cases where neither answer is a perfect fit). Documentation also helps reviewers to verify the accuracy of the results, enables users of the results to understand how to apply the recommendations, and helps ensure consistency if the application of the tool is repeated over time.

As a general principle across all modules, if no information can be found to support an affirmative response (i.e., that something does exist or happen), the response should be assumed to be negative (i.e., that it does not exist or happen).

What if there is a gap between what's on paper and what happens in practice?

There is often a gap between what is written in a policy or instrument (what is 'supposed to' happen) and what is implemented (what actually happens). Understanding this is important, as it is only with implementation that policies can affect change. However, assessing this in practice is very difficult. In the interest of simplicity, the tool does not attempt to examine the extent to which policies have been implemented in practice: it focuses on what exists on paper / in plans. However, where a user knows, or stakeholders opine, that there is a large shortcoming in the implementation of a policy that appears strong on paper, that information can be incorporated into the recommendations emerging from the application of the tool.

Module 1: Structures and Mechanisms

This first module of the tool examines whether there are mechanisms and structures in place that can work to create and maintain food systems policy coherence. It can be used as a standalone diagnostic to obtain a rapid picture of mechanisms and organisational structures that are likely to enable policy coherence (though not guarantee it). It can also be used in combination with Module 2, which will provide a more comprehensive picture of actual policy coherence.

Development of the Module

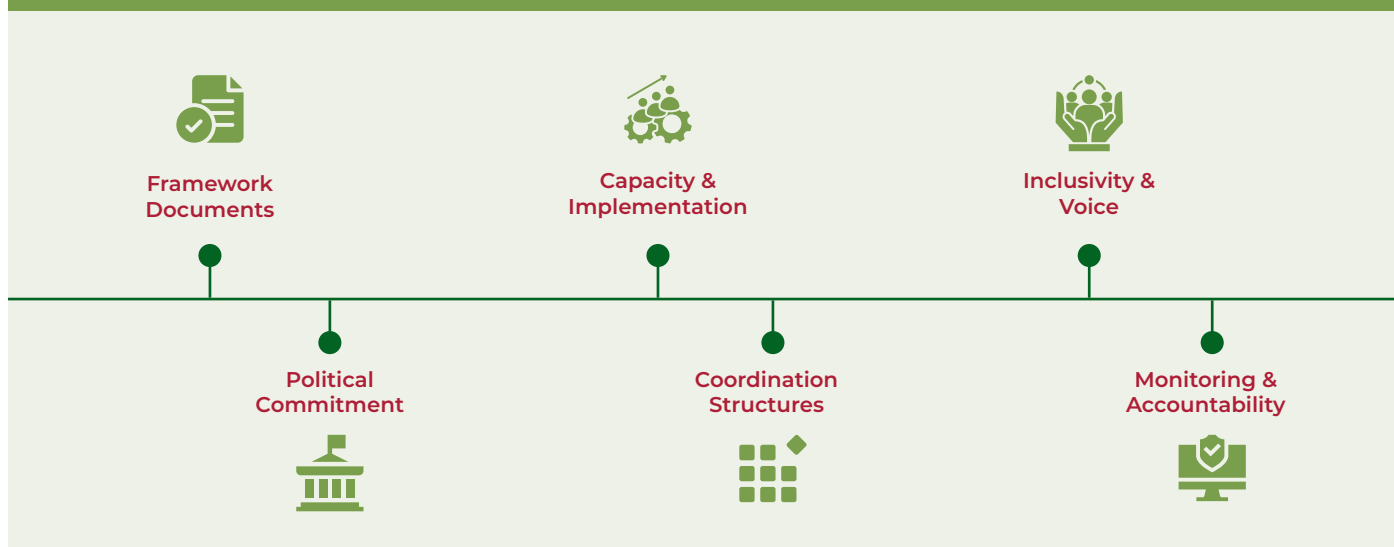
The module is based on prior research on and tools for assessing policy coherence (OECD 2019; 2021; 2023; Deconinck 2022; Mackie, Ronceray, and Spierings 2017) as well as on the UNFSS process (UNFSS 2022; FAO 2024b)². It draws most heavily on the OECD Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) Self-Assessment Tool and the UNEP-led SDG indicator for SDG 17.14.1 on policy coherence for sustainable development. Both tools were reviewed, and all questions of relevance for the food systems policy application were flagged. This excluded those on long-term vision (as the FSPC diagnostic tool focuses on coherence at one point in time, rather than across time / inter-generationally); specific references to sustainable development; transboundary impacts (as the focus was on policies within a given country); and vertical coherence. Next, the questions were refined to focus more specifically on food systems (instead of sustainable development writ large), and the answers were adapted accordingly. Some questions or criteria that had been vaguely worded were also made more specific; this was particularly the case for information from UNEP (2023), which does not include actual questions but rather bullet-points on topics.

The other main sources of information were the UNFSS Member State Dialogues Synthesis reports and the FAO-led UNFSS pathways analysis (UNFSS 2022; FAO 2024b); these were used to identify main processes used or suggested to support food systems policymaking or implementation that were not yet covered in the draft questions. Finally, other prior research on policy coherence (Mackie, Ronceray, and Spierings 2017; Deconinck 2022; OECD 2021) was reviewed to identify any remaining structures or mechanisms suggested to support policy coherence (either specific to food systems or not) that were not yet reflected in the questions. Finally, the questions were cross-checked against the results of a scoping review on policy coherence measurement (Dewi et al. 2024) to identify any gaps.

2. Mackie et al, 2017. Policy coherence and the 2030 Agenda: Building on the PCD experience. ECDPM Discussion Paper 210;

The draft module was reviewed by four experts in the project's Advisory Group, and their detailed feedback was used to develop version 1 of the module. This version was then piloted in one country (Nigeria), and the feedback from that piloting was used to adapt it. Version 2 was piloted in an additional eight low- and middle-income countries, as well as the four nations of the UK to understand applicability in high-income countries, and the feedback from that piloting was used to adapt it to a final version.

Applying Module 1 in Practice



Module 1 is comprised of six sections (see graphic at left). These should be completed in order, as some questions build on answers to a prior section. However, users can leave a module partially completed and return to it later if additional data are needed to complete it. All questions are multiple-choice, and nearly all of them have only one answer selected for each question. The exception to this is noted in the explanation of that question, below. In most cases, the best way to fill out Module 1 will be to review key documents, then conduct a few key informant interviews to fill in gaps or reconcile conflicting information. The key informants of greatest relevance to Module 1 are generalists: those who have cross-cutting expertise related to food systems or food policy, as opposed to sectoral experts.

Within a key informant interview, Module 1 is applied by asking the questions in the guide to the respondent. In some cases, the question wording may need to be slightly adapted to the respondent or the context. For example, the question:

1.1. Does the country have a “Food System Pathway” document submitted via the United Nations Food System Summit (UNFSS) process (including those submitted after the 2021 UNFSS itself) or another national-level, high-level document (strategy, policy, plan) that presents a vision and action priorities or plans for the food system as a whole, going beyond sectoral policies?

Might be adapted to Does Pakistan have a “Food System Pathway” document...? in the case of Pakistan.

Some questions may need to be broken down into follow up questions. For example, if the answer given to ‘Does Pakistan have a “Food System Pathway” document...?’ were ‘Yes’, the interviewer would need to follow up to ask ‘Was that document submitted through the UNFSS process?’, since the response options for the question differentiate between a document submitted through the UNFSS process and one that is not.

For most questions, these adaptations should be obvious; where they are not, the following subsections provide detailed guidance on adaptation of the question to the interview format.

Where the respondent does not understand the question or has follow up questions, the interviewer should respond to these and provide any needed follow-up information. However, they should be careful not to suggest that there is a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer to any question or to pass judgment on the respondent’s response.

If the module has already been partially completed through one key informant interview, the user may choose to reframe the questions that are already answered to be confirmatory rather than open. For example, the above question 1.1. could become:

I understand Pakistan submitted a Food Systems Pathway document via the UNFSS process in 2021. Is that correct?

This should make the interview go faster. Once multiple respondents have confirmed a given piece of information, the user may choose to not follow up on it in future interviews, and instead only focus on the questions for which definitive information has not yet been obtained. However, where the user has doubt about the original answer to a question, it is recommended to follow up with other key informants and to retain the more open question, as confirmatory questions run the risk of bias.

With document review, Module 1 can be applied flexibly, based on the documents being considered. In general, Module 1 will be less dependent on documents than Module 2. The main document that is expected to be needed is the country’s flagship food policy document / UNFSS pathway (if any); this will probably require thorough review to complete the module but should yield responses to multiple questions. Other documents of relevance will be additional national policies, reports / documents / websites from the UNFSS process, and searches of government websites and / or the general internet.

The following subsections provide specific guidance for completing each section of Module 1.

Section 1: Framework Documents

Sources: Section 1 relates to the vision and leadership dimension of the OECD (2019) definition of policy coherence for sustainable development and the 'normative framework' question of the OECD PCSD self-assessment. It considers the extent to which a vision for a food systems approach is articulated in key policy documents. Devi et al (2024)'s review of the literature also emphasises the importance of a long-term vision and institutional commitment to achieve policy coherence, noting that framework documents are often needed to support this vision. Questions 3, 4, and 5 in this section are taken from (or very similar to) those used by FAO in their pathway document analysis (FAO 2024b).

Rationale: The rationale for including this section is that having framework documents that lay out a vision for food systems, beyond sectoral silos, can be an important first step to improving food systems policy coherence. The more comprehensive, well thought-out, and detailed this document is, the more likely it is to lead to coordinated and coherent efforts. Hence, more comprehensive documents receive higher scores.

Question 1.1 - Does the country have a “Food System Pathway” document submitted via the United Nations Food System Summit (UNFSS) process (including those submitted after the 2021 UNFSS itself) or another national-level, high-level document (strategy, policy, plan) that presents a vision and action priorities or plans for the food system as a whole, going beyond sectoral policies?

This is a key question, as several subsequent questions refer back to it. A few points to note:

- The user can verify the existence of an UNFSS pathway documents by checking the UNFSS Hub website, here: <https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/member-state-dialogue/dialogues-and-pathways/en>.
- If that website lists a pathway for the country in question, the response should be (a).
- If it does not, however, the user should follow up to determine whether there may be a document completed and submitted through the UNFSS process that is not yet reflected on the website (e.g., one submitted after the 2021 UNFSS).
- For documents other than those submitted through the UNFSS process, this could be a strategy, policy, action plan, strategic plan, or similar. The key aspect to note is that it should refer to the food system as a whole, going beyond sectoral policies.
- An example an appropriate document would be England's Government Food Strategy.
- A sectoral policy, like an Agriculture Policy, would not be appropriate.

Note the text that appears after this question:

In the remaining questions, across all modules, 'pathway / strategy' refers to either the UNFSS pathway document or the alternative national high-level food systems policy, strategy, or vision.

In the case of both a UNFSS pathway and a document developed and approved through the country's own political processes, defer to the national document, as opposed to the UNFSS pathway, unless the UNFSS pathway is clearly more recent and comprehensive than the national document.

Question 1.2 - Does that pathway / strategy consider multiple food system sectors?

This question is best answered by a review of the document, which can also consider questions 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5, and potentially other questions (e.g., 6.1). **As such, if the answer to Question 1 is yes, we highly recommend that the user review that document in detail and use it to answer these questions directly**, as opposed to including them in a key informant interview.

If this question were to be implemented within a key informant interview, this question would need to be broken down into a series of separate questions, such as:

*Which food systems sectors does that pathway / strategy consider? Anything else?
What about [sector name]?*

Does the document articulate clear linkages and connections (e.g., synergies and trade-offs) among those sectors?

The examples of domains given here are those specified in Box 1. They are expected to be sufficient in most cases, but if, in a given country, another domain is highly relevant (e.g., industry, technology), that can also be considered.

Box 1. Food Systems Sectors and Stakeholder Types

For the purposes of completing this document, please consider the following different **food systems sectors**: Food production (agriculture, livestock, fisheries, agro-forestry); Food industry, trade, and commerce (processing, retail, markets, foreign trade in food); Environment (resources used for food, impact of food supply chains on the environment); Health (nutrition, foodborne disease, diet-related diseases); Livelihoods (employment, labour policies); Education and Culture; Social (incl. social protection, gender equity); Finance; and Disaster preparedness, resilience, or emergency response.

And these **stakeholder types**: businesses; workers; farmers; NGOs and foundations; Indigenous Peoples; science and academia; government; and consumer groups.

One potential error to avoid is to count a sub-sector as a separate sector. For example, nutrition should be considered a sub-sector of health, so the pathway would not be considered to cover multiple domains if it just mentioned health AND nutrition.

In answering the question, the user will need to consider both parts of it: having multiple sectors named, and there being clear linkages / connections articulated among them.

'Linkages and connections' between hypothetical Sectors A and B can be made in any of the following ways: cross references to a section or external policy about Sector B in a section on Sector A; mentions of Sector B in a section on Sector A; explicit discussions of synergies and / or tradeoffs, linkages, connections, feedback loops, interactions, or similar between Sectors A and B; a discussion of a cross-cutting issue mentioning aspects related to both Sector A and Sector B; or a note of the need to consider actors / interests / institutions related to both Sector A and B with regards to a given topic.

Question 1.3 - Does the pathway / strategy document include a specific vision for the future of the national food system (e.g., by 2030)?

A 'vision' here refers to a high-level, forward-looking declaration that outlines the country's aspirations and long-term goals for the food system. Visions are usually framed in inspirational terms, describing an idealistic future state for that country's food system. It may not be labelled as a vision but instead described as 'objective', 'goal', 'aim' or similar.

Note that a distinction is made regarding whether that vision has an achievement date associated with it; this is included because referencing a specific date makes it more possible to hold government to account for achieving the vision. This could be phrased as a specific date or year (e.g., by 2050, by December 31 2030), to a time period (e.g., within the next ten years), or to another milestone (e.g., by the next UNFSS, by the end of President X's term).

If the document includes dates / timeframes for some aspects but not all, this is sufficient and the user should answer 'Yes, a specific vision with a specific date for achieving it is provided' but note that some parts of the vision could have more specific target dates. This would be the case for the first example, England, given below, while all three examples would rate an 'a' response to the question.

Examples:

From England's Government Food Strategy³:

Our objectives for this strategy are to deliver: a prosperous agri-food and seafood sector that ensures a secure food supply in an unpredictable world and contributes to the levelling up agenda through good quality jobs around the country; a sustainable, nature positive, affordable food system that provides choice and access to high quality products that support healthier and home-grown diets for all; and trade that provides export opportunities and consumer choice through imports, without compromising

3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-food-strategy/government-food-strategy>. Note while some aspects of the strategy refer to the UK, the scope of the strategy is officially limited to England.

our regulatory standards for food, whether produced domestically or imported. [While there is not a clear achievement date associated with the vision / strategy overall, some later parts of the document refer to 2030.]

From Sweden's Food Strategy⁴:

Vision 2030: The Swedish food chain in 2030 is globally competitive, innovative, sustainable and attractive to operate within.

From Ethiopia's UNFSS Pathway Document, titled 'Vision 2030'⁵:

Our vision is for a holistic transformation of Ethiopia's food systems from production to consumption that promotes enhanced food safety, nutrition and diets, improved livelihoods, greater land preservation and restoration and greater resilience to shocks and stress. We seek to transform our food systems using a sustainable and healthy diet-centered lens that minimizes tradeoffs through calling for strong collaboration across all food systems actors, uniting around a common goal of healthy and sustainable diets for all.

Question 1.4 - Does the pathway / strategy document lay out key objectives or priorities for change (i.e., specific issues within the food system that are the most important to address) and concrete targets associated with those changes?

Here the focus is on the identification of specific objectives / priorities for change (i.e., specific issues within the food system that are the most important to address). The identification of specific objectives or priorities can help support accountability.

Targets refer to specific things to be achieved, ideally by specific dates. For example, lowering obesity rates to X% within the next 10 years, or reducing greenhouse gas emissions from food systems by Y% by 2050. If a specific target for the objective is given but without an associated date / time period, that is sufficient for choosing response (a). If just a date is given without a specific target, that is not sufficient for choosing response (a); the response should be (b). If a directional target (e.g., raise or lower) is provided but not a specific numeric one, that should be considered sufficient for choosing response (a), but the user should note that the policy would be stronger with more specific numeric targets.

Response (a) requires targets to be provided for 'most or all'; use at least 75% as the threshold for 'most': if fewer than 75% of the priorities / issues are not associated with targets, the response should be (b), not (a).

4. https://www.government.se/contentassets/16ef73aaa6f74faab86ade5ef239b659/livsmedelsstrategin_kortversion_eng.pdf

5. https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/docs/unfoodsystemslibraries/national-pathways/ethiopia/2021-09-09-en-draft-ethiopian-food-system-position-paper-09012021.pdf?sfvrsn=3f26f78a_1

Examples:***From England's Food Strategy:***

To achieve these objectives we will seek to

- broadly maintain the current level of food we produce domestically, including sustainably boosting production in sectors where there are post-Brexit opportunities including horticulture and seafood*
- ensure that by 2030, pay, employment and productivity, as well as completion of high-quality skills training will have risen in the agri-food industry in every area of the UK, to support our production and levelling up objectives*
- halve childhood obesity by 2030, reducing the healthy life expectancy (HLE) gap between local areas where it is highest and lowest by 2030, adding 5 years to HLE by 2035 and reducing the proportion of the population living with diet-related illnesses; and to support this, increasing the proportion of healthier food sold*
- reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the environmental impacts of the food system, in line with our net zero commitments and biodiversity targets and preparing for the risks from a changing climate*
- contribute to our export strategy goal to reach £1 trillion of exports annually by 2030 and supporting more UK food and drink businesses, particularly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), to take advantage of new market access and free trade agreements (FTAs) post-Brexit*
- maintain high standards for food consumed in the UK, wherever it is produced*

Question 1.5 - Does the pathway / strategy document lay out measures or interventions (i.e., specific actions that should be taken to address the issues named)?

The focus now is one level of specificity further: specific actions, measures, or interventions that should be taken to address the issues named.

Response (a) requires measures or interventions to be provided for 'most or all' issues; use at least 75% as the threshold for 'most': if fewer than 75% of the priorities / issues are associated with specific measures / interventions, the response should be (b), not (a).

Example:***Excerpts from England's Government Food Strategy:***

'15) The key new measures and proposals in this strategy to deliver against our objectives are below.

16) Objective 1: To deliver a prosperous agri-food and seafood sector that ensures a secure food supply in an unpredictable world and contributes to the levelling up agenda through good quality jobs around the country.

- *The continued production of healthier, high quality, tasty food and drink domestically remains of vital importance for our economy and food security. We will support farmers to broadly maintain levels of domestic production through productivity gain and our new farming schemes. We will enable growth in key sectors, including horticulture and seafood, making the most of post-Brexit opportunities.*
- *Innovation will be a key component to sustainably boost production and profitability across the supply chain. We have committed to spend over £270 million through our Farming Innovation Programme and are supporting £120 million investment in research across the food system....*
- *It is essential that there is a sufficient, qualified, and well-paid workforce to support every food and drink business, dispersed around the whole country. To address near term need, the government will release the additional provision of 10,000 visas under the Seasonal Worker Visa Route, including 2,000 for the poultry sector...*
- *Ensuring our agri-food industry workforce has the necessary skills to take advantage of new and emerging innovations will help drive greater efficiency and production. We will work with industry to review existing skills programmes, identify improvements, and tackle barriers that currently prevent uptake....'*

From this excerpt, only two of the four points include specific measures or actions; based on this information alone, the response would be (b).

Ethiopia's UNFSS Pathway document lays out five goals and supports these by 22 game-changing solutions, six of which it prioritises for particularly strong policy commitment. All five goals are linked to at least one solution. The response would be (a).

Question 1.6 - Was the pathway / strategy document developed through the input of stakeholders from multiple different food systems and / or sectors?

This question focuses on the process behind the document, not the document itself. The rationale is that a process that involves stakeholders from different sectors is more likely to reflect coherent approaches among those sectors. It is important that input include not just consultation but also incorporating the ensuing ideas and feedback to at least some extent

The information to answer this question may be in the document (e.g., in a preamble, authorship statement, logos or addresses of different agencies being included, forewords / signatures from multiple sector representatives, or description of how the document was developed.) Alternatively, it may be on the landing page on the government website where the policy is posted, or elsewhere on the government website. If not, it may require asking a key informant who was involved with the process.

Note that for the response to be (a), at least six different types of stakeholders from at least six food system sectors (see Box 1) must be included; options (b) and (c) refers to somewhat lower thresholds; and (d) refers to cases with only one stakeholder type AND only one sector.

Example:

The Food Policy for Canada notes engagement with indigenous peoples, civil society, businesses, and citizens in addition to the government, as well as with its standing Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council, which includes those working in the public sector, industry, academia, and civil society. It thus involved at least six stakeholder types. While the policy is housed in the agriculture sector, those involved in its development had expertise in business / industry, labour rights, health, social protection, and environmental sustainability. It thus involved at least six sectors. The answer is (a).

Section 2: Political Commitment

Sources: Section 2 also relates to the vision and leadership dimension of the OECD definition of policy coherence for sustainable development and to the 'political commitment and leadership' section of the OECD PCSD self-assessment (OECD 2019) and OECD recommendations on PCSD, as well as part of the 'institutionalised political commitment' section of the UNEP-developed SDG 17.14.1 indicator framework (UNEP 2023). It also aligns with the best practices identified by Devi et al (2024). The difference compared to Section 1 is on the focus on political commitment to a vision, as opposed to the articulation of a vision in a document. Section 2 is thus more closely focused on leadership while Section 1 focuses on vision (OECD 2019).

Rationale: High-level political commitment to a 'food systems approach' (i.e., to seeing food issues as interconnected and cutting across sectors and thus requiring cross-sectoral, coordinated approaches) and to the principle of policy coherence helps elevate their importance in the eyes of other government actors, helping create incentives for coordination towards greater policy coherence.

Question 2.1 - Did the country express high-level commitment to the pathway / strategy (i.e., by a Minister, President / Prime Minister, or Vice President / Deputy Minister) through a statement before or during the UNFSS?

This question examines high-level commitment to the pathway / strategy, based on the understanding that high-level commitment makes it more likely that food system actors will be able to access the resources and support they need to implement the pathway. It may also facilitate accountability for achievement. Commitments made through the UNFSS process are scored more highly because of their public, international nature and the possibility to increase accountability through the UNFSS follow-up process.

The answer can be obtained by looking up the country under '(Pre-) Summit Statements' here: <https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/member-state-dialogue/en>. Ideally, the user should verify that the statement refers specifically to the pathway / strategy, but if that is not possible (e.g., broken weblinks to the relevant video), they can assume the existence of a statement alongside a pathway implies high-level commitment.

Example

Argentina has a Pre-Summit statement from a Minister (of External Affairs) and a Summit statement from the President; Azerbaijan and the Bahamas have them from their Ministers of Agriculture; the response would be (a) in all cases. In contrast, Belize and Myanmar have no statements, while Peru only has a statement from their permanent representative to the Rome-based international organisations (a mid-level role); the response in these cases would be (b). South Sudan has no pathway document, so its response would be (c).

Question 2.2 - If not, has high-level commitment to the pathway / strategy, or to a food systems approach in general, been expressed in another forum since 2015?

This question should only be used if the answer to Question 2.1 is 'No' or 'Not applicable'. It refers to high-level commitment expressed outside of the UNFSS process. This is scored separately for a specific document / policy than for a general 'food systems approach': a commitment to a specific document / policy is likely more directly linked to support for specific actions and resources, whereas a general approach is more vague and open to interpretation.

It is not necessary to use the literal phrase 'food system' as long as the commitment includes recognition of issues of food transcending different sectors and thus requiring a coordinated approach to address.

This could be verified in various ways:

- Where there is a pathway / strategy / policy document of relevance, the document itself or the landing page may contain such a commitment, or there may have been a signing ceremony or public event at which it was endorsed.
- Where there is not, the user can search online for remarks made about food by relevant officials, probably through a government website. They can also ask key informants about this.

Question 2.3 - Are there any provisions or mechanisms to promote sustained commitment to a food systems approach beyond electoral cycles or government terms?

This question is probably best responded to by a key informant. Potential provisions could include: the outgoing / incoming administration signing off on the pathway / strategy; including the pathway / strategy / action plan in the party platform or election manifesto; having key food systems staff who are not political appointees and thus remain in their roles regardless of election cycles; having a dedicated bureau / department that is assumed to continue to exist across administrations; having food systems mechanisms enshrined in legislation that extends beyond terms; or having ongoing support structures in parliament, such as a working group.

In asking this to a key informant, the user will probably want to ask about each potential mechanism in turn (e.g., did the incoming administration sign off on the pathway? Was the pathway included in the party platform?), then finish with a cross-cutting question 'Are there any other provisions or mechanisms to promote sustained commitment to a food systems approach beyond electoral cycles or government terms?' or similar.

This is the only question where multiple answers can be selected if applicable. In this case, all applicable answers should be selected, but when it comes to scoring, only the highest-scoring should be scored (e.g., if there is an answer associated with a score of 2 and one with a score of 3, and both are selected, the question should be scored as '3').

Example

In Pakistan, food system pathways priorities have been included in manifestos of major political parties. In addition, Pakistan ensures continuity of food system policies through institutionalised food security strategies and a dedicated Food System Secretariat, which is intended to remain operational and unaffected by political transitions. In this case, the response is (b) AND (c); since (b) is associated with a higher score (3), the question should be scored as 3.

In Australia, a National Food Plan was developed and released in May 2013, but was not adopted due to a change of government in September 2013. In this case, the answer would have been (d) – and the impact of lacking such a mechanism on lower likelihood of coherence going forward was clear (Farr, Bogard, and Parsons 2025).

Section 3: Capacity and Implementation

Sources: Section 3 draws on the 'policy integration' aspects of the OECD recommendations on PCSD (OECD 2023) and the equivalent section of the OECD (2019) PCSD self-assessment, as well as the 'institutionalised political commitment' section of the UNEP-developed SDG 17.14.1 indicator framework (UNEP 2023).

Rationale: While a framework document can be an important first step to improving food systems policy coherence, it should then be embedded within actionable policy processes and documents, to which a government can be held to account, and supported with resources needed to implement it.

Question 3.1 – Has the pathway / strategy been formally adopted or ratified politically, according to the government's process?

This refers to formal adoption or ratification of the pathway / strategy, which entails a higher level of support and commitment for seeing it achieved. The specific process for doing this will vary from one country to another.

This could be verified in various ways:

- The document itself or the landing page may contain such information.
- The government may maintain a comprehensive list of all ratified / adopted strategies.
- The government websites or the press may have information about the adoption (e.g., covering an event like a signing ceremony).
- The user can ask key informants about this. This is particularly important for understanding whether there is a process in course or initiated, even if the formal adoption has not yet come.

Example

Sweden's National Food Strategy was passed by the Swedish Parliament in 2017; its official reference number is 2016/17:104.

Question 3.2 - Has an action plan that sets out required policy changes and investments to operationalise the pathway / strategy been developed?

This refers to an action plan for operationalising the pathway / strategy, which can help move from a strategy to actual actions. It may not be called an 'action plan', but it should have specific changes and investments that need to be made. It is possible that the pathway / strategy document itself will contain this level of detail.

This can be verified by searching for such a document and verifying its content or by asking a key informant. A key informant's view is particularly important for understanding whether there is a process in course or initiated.

Example

Sweden's Food Strategy is accompanied by a three-part Government action plan, published on the government website⁶. The answer is thus 'a) yes'.

As of early 2025, Bangladesh has launched several targeted initiatives to address specific food system components, but it is still working on developing an action plan to operationalise its pathway in a more comprehensive manner. The answer in this case is 'b'.

Question 3.3 - Have the priorities laid out in the pathway / strategy and / or action plan (if developed) been incorporated into national policies, strategies, and plans or are they based on / referencing preexisting national policies, strategies, and plans?

Question 3.3 refers to the pathway / strategy being reflected into national policies, strategies, and plans and / or being based on / referencing those plans. This is important in terms of moving from a strategy to actual action and ensuring alignment, as opposed to a siloed approach. 'Incorporated' could include an explicit reference to the pathway / strategy document itself in the policies / strategies / plans, or noting the priorities from the pathway / strategy document in the national policies / strategies / plans without referencing the pathway / strategy document.

This can be verified by reviewing the pathway / strategy for references to other policies, reviewing sectoral or other national policies / strategies / plans for references to the pathway, or asking a key informant. A key informant's view is particularly important for understanding whether there is a process in course or initiated.

Complete integration is unlikely to be identified; in the case of partial integration, the user should choose 'yes' but can also flag areas where more integration is needed.

Examples:

Azerbaijan's pathway priorities have been integrated into the National State Program of Agriculture Food Production and Food Processing 2022 2026. Albania's National Pathway is incorporated into the country's National Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries and the National Strategy on Development and Integration. Switzerland developed a new Action Plan for Food Waste Reduction and a new Climate Strategy for Food and Agriculture as part of the National Pathway implementation (UN Food Systems Coordination Hub 2024). In all of these cases, the answer would be 'yes'.

6. https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/155c6e51b4c94db7bb8768e7a0849491/200914_hp-del-2.pdf

Question 3.4 - Is there a costed investment plan or budget to support the implementation of the pathway?

This refers to an investment plan or budget, which is important for supporting implementation.

This can be verified by searching for such a document and verifying its content or by asking a key informant. While budget limitations will usually mean that less is allocated than optimally desired, the plan or budget should be sufficient to cover implementation of most parts of the pathway; if it would clearly fall short of that, or only has very narrow applicability, then the 'partial' option should be selected. A key informant's view is particularly important for understanding whether there is a process in course or initiated and whether the amount allocated is near sufficient, given the needs.

Example:

Sweden's food strategy's action plan (part 2) specifies investments of SEK 122 million annually up to and including 2025, noting that SEK 540 million was earmarked for work on the implementation of the Strategy from 2014–2020⁷. In this case, the answer is 'yes'.

Question 3.5 - Is / Are there a plan(s) or structure(s) (either internal to or external to the government) to support capacity building of government staff across sectors on key topics related to 'food systems' and integrated food systems approaches?

This asks about mechanisms to improve government staff capacity to work on and understand integrated food systems approaches, which can support their ability to follow through on the pathway and increase their understanding of coherence across sectors. Capacity-building could include training courses, online modules, written training materials, integration into induction processes, seminars, and similar, and could be delivered internally or externally to the government.

The best source of this information is likely a key informant.

7. <https://www.regeringen.se/informationsmaterial/2019/12/regeringens-handlingsplan-del-2-en-livsmedelsstrategi-for-sverige--fler-jobb-och-hallbar-tillvaxt-i-hela-landet/>

Section 4: Coordination Structures

Source: Section 4 relates to the coordination mechanisms dimension of the OECD (2019) definition of PCSD, the 'ensuring whole-of-government coordination' principle of OECD (2023), and the 'Inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination' section of UNEP (2023). It examines mechanisms that enable the flow of information and the alignment of actions among different sectors or stakeholders. While the Diagnostic Tool generally does not consider vertical coherence, one question is included on this within this section; this draws on the 'subnational engagement' principle of OECD (2023) and 'Consultation and coordination across government levels' section of UNEP (2023).

Rationale: Having a dedicated coordination structure that brings together actors from across sectors and includes those who have a multi-sectoral mandate can help to increase communication, coordination, and coherence.

Question 4.1 - Is there a lead government institution or individual responsible for food systems transformation?

Having a lead government institution or individual responsible for food systems transformation is thought to support coherence because such an entity should be looking across sectors and be able to play a role in resolving policy divergences and trade-offs. This could be an individual or an institution. The question distinguishes between entities under the more direct oversight of the executive branch (e.g., prime minister or president) and those primarily under the oversight of a sectoral minister (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture, Planning, or Food) on the understanding that those under a sectoral minister may have a bias towards that specific sector and may have limited power over and / or insight into other sectors, though this may not always be the case.

The best source of this information is likely a key informant.

Example

Pakistan has designated institutional leadership for food systems under the oversight of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research. In Bangladesh, the lead government institution responsible for food systems transformation is the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU), which operates under the oversight of the Ministry of Food. In both cases the answer is (b).

Question 4.2 - Is there an ongoing national-level platform or forum (e.g., interdepartmental taskforce, committee, council, meeting, conference) to promote dialogue and coordination within government across sectors / ministries / agencies on food systems topics, broadly encompassing food systems (e.g., National Food Council, Food System committee)?

Question 4.3 - Is there an ongoing national-level platform or forum (e.g., interdepartmental taskforce, committee, council, meeting, conference) to promote dialogue and coordination within government across sectors / ministries / agencies on a specific food system topic or goal (e.g., Multisectoral Nutrition Council, Food Security Taskforce, Climate Forum (including food systems aspects of climate))?

These questions ask about the existence of an ongoing national-level platform or forum to promote dialogue and coordination within government across sectors / ministries / agencies on food systems topics. Examples of this would be interdepartmental taskforces, committees, councils, recurring meetings or conferences. The first (Q 4.2) refers to efforts that broadly encompass food systems, as opposed to those on more narrow topics (e.g., intersectoral committees on malnutrition, agricultural development, or climate change). The second (Q 4.3) refers to those on a specific food system topic or goal; in this case, intersectoral committees on malnutrition, agricultural development, or climate change would be counted.

Both questions' responses should exclude one-off, non-recurring events (e.g., the preparation meetings for the UNFSS).

The best source of this information is likely a key informant.

Examples

Slovenia has a Strategic Council for Food (or Strategic Council for Nutrition), set up in 2022. It involves actors and coordinates actions from several parts of government, including Agriculture, Forestry, and Food, Health, and Environment, Climate, and Energy. It covers cross-cutting food related topics like healthy eating, carbon footprints, food waste, and school meals (Fras et al. 2023). For Slovenia, the answer would thus be 'yes' to Question 4.2.

Ireland's High-Level Implementation Committee is an inter-ministerial committee responsible for overseeing and implementing Ireland's Food Vision 2030 strategy, which cuts across a broad range of food systems issues. For Ireland, the answer would thus be 'yes' to Question 4.2.

Finland's Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group on Food Systems is part of a larger Sustainable Development Coordination Network in Finland that includes representatives from all line ministries and aims to enhance PCSD across sectors⁸. For Finland, the answer would thus be 'yes' to Question 4.2.

Ireland also has a Women in Agriculture Working Group, which focuses specifically on improving gender equality within agriculture in the country. It includes members

8. https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/docs/unfoodsystemslibraries/regional-progress-reviews/europe-central-asia/national-pathway-progress-review_unfs-coordination-hub.pdf?sfvrsn=d77d0e7c_3

from different government agencies within food production, as well as several private-sector stakeholder and farmer groups, again all within food production. While this is an important initiative, it does not seem to involve different sectors, since all actors are within food production. As such, this would not merit a response of 'yes' to Question 4.3.

The Cellule de Lutte contre la Malnutrition (CLM) in Senegal was created in 2001 by the Senegalese government to combat malnutrition. It is placed under the authority of the Prime Minister of Senegal. It consists of representatives from different technical ministries involved in nutrition (such as health and agriculture), local authorities, NGOs, and civil society. It helps coordinate various actions and actors involved in reducing malnutrition, specifically. For Senegal, the answer would thus be 'yes' to Question 4.3.

Question 4.4 - Are there designated champions or advocates for a coherent food systems approach embedded within different government departments / agencies?

This question asks about designated champions or advocates for a coherent food systems approach embedded within different government departments or agencies. A policy champion is someone who advocates for a specific policy solution or issue within a political system. A policy champion may be a politician, bureaucrat, researcher, civil society leader, or any other actor who has the skills, network, and influence to bring attention and support to a policy agenda—in this case, a food systems approach. A country may have several such people, or none. The response should be (a) only if there are champions or advocates across more than two government departments or agencies.

The best source of this information is likely a key informant.

Example

In Pakistan, government officials within most ministries are designated as food systems champions. The answer is thus (a).

Question 4.5 - Are there any provisions or mechanisms in place to engage different levels of government, such as city, state, and subnational regions, in food systems policy?

This question offers a small insight into vertical coherence (coherence across levels of government) by asking whether there any provisions or mechanisms in place to engage different levels of government, such as city, state, and subnational regions, in food systems policy. This could take many forms:

- Ongoing coordination mechanisms that involve different levels of government, such as working groups or forums
- One-off consultations with different levels of government
- Formation of subnational-level strategies or action plans related to food systems

Other options are also possible. A country may have several such mechanisms, involving different levels of government (e.g., cities, states). Note this does NOT refer to coordination mechanisms that coordinate among actors across different countries, such as coordination on agriculture policy across European countries under the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). It also does not refer to coordination mechanisms that coordinate among entities across geographies but at the same level of government, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which creates a network for sharing best practices in urban food policies across cities worldwide. It refers only to coordination across different levels of government (local, state, regional, national) within a given country. Note that the answer distinguishes between these being fully functioning and comprehensive across different levels of government and parts of the country and them being only partially implemented or not comprehensive. The best source of this information is likely a key informant.

Section 5: Inclusivity, Stakeholder Engagement, and Voice

Sources: Section 5 relates to the 'stakeholder engagement' principle of OECD (2023), and the 'participatory processes' section of UNEP (2023). It also aligns to the review of Devi et al (2024), who note that one of the main best practices identified in the literature on food systems policy coherence is inclusive collaboration among different types of stakeholders, including civil society.

Rationale: Integrating stakeholders from diverse fields into the policymaking or feedback process can help ensure that diverse perspectives from across food systems are included, which can help uncover synergies and trade-offs between sectors and support greater coherence. It is particularly important that such processes are inclusive and involve traditionally marginalised groups.

Question 5.1 - Did the country organise Food System Summit Dialogues in the run-up to the 2021 UNFSS? If so, did these Dialogues include stakeholders from multiple groups among: businesses and workers; farmers; NGOs and foundations; Indigenous Peoples; science and academia; government; and consumer groups?

This question focuses on the Food System Summit Dialogues, which were held in the run-up to the 2021 UNFSS to include the voices of different stakeholders within the process of developing food systems pathways. Holding such dialogues may indicate that the resulting pathway and subsequent food systems actions represented the view of a broad set of stakeholders; they may also be an indication of the general inclusion of diverse stakeholder groups in food-related consultations in the country.

Dialogues that included more diverse groups are scored more highly. The rationale for this is that the more diverse groups involved, the more opportunities for highlighting diverse views and indicating potential areas of coherence / incoherence among those stakeholders' priorities.

Information on dialogues and participation by gender, sector, and stakeholder group can be found in the 'feedback form' on the 'event page' for the dialogue at <https://summitdialogues.org/explore-dialogues>; links to many of these feedback forms are also included in the Annexes of the three Member State Dialogue Synthesis reports.

The user should review this information and note down whether dialogues were held and, if so, how many different groups were involved. To choose response (a) or (b), it is not necessary for ALL dialogues to include this many different groups, just for at least one to do so, or for the total number of groups represented across all dialogues to meet this threshold. The participants as recorded in the FSS Dialogues Official Feedback form map on to the categories used here as follows:

- Businesses and workers: Small/medium enterprise/artisan, Workers and trade union, Large national business, Multi-national corporation
- Farmers: Large-, medium-, and small-scale farmers
- NGOs and foundations: Local Non-Governmental Organisation, International Non-Governmental Organisation, Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
- Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous People
- Science and academia: Science and academia
- Government: Member of Parliament, Local authority, Government and national institution, Regional economic community, United Nations, International financial institution
- Consumer groups: Consumer group

'Other' should not be counted.

Refer only to official member state dialogues (in orange on the web page), and only to national (as opposed to subnational) ones within those.

Examples

Switzerland held several dialogues. One of these⁹ included participants from business and workers; NGOs and foundations; science and academia; consumer groups; and government (5 categories). The answer is (a).

Vietnam held two national official dialogues. For the first, no information on participants was provided. For the second, it included participants from farmers; NGOs and foundations; science and academia; and government (4 categories)¹⁰. The answer is (b).

Sri Lanka held no dialogues. The answer is (d).

Question 5.2 - Are there mechanisms in place for consulting non-governmental technical / scientific experts on food system policies that cut across different sectors and feeding their inputs into policymaking or decision making?

This question asks about mechanisms for consultations with non-governmental technical / scientific experts on food system policies that cut across different sectors, based on the reasoning that this type of technical input can help to highlight potential synergies and trade-offs. It distinguishes between processes that deliberately aim to include experts from different sectors versus those that do not, based on the expectation that involving experts from diverse sectors makes it more likely that areas of difference or incoherence among different sectors approaches will be identified and addressed.

9. <https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/5003/official-feedback-5003-en.pdf?t=1617981610>

10. <https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/35195/official-feedback-35195-en.pdf?t=1629033916>

Mechanisms can be ongoing (e.g., standing advisory groups, working groups, or similar) or only formed in relation to specific policy efforts (e.g., an expert consultation on or review of a particular policy during its drafting).

The best source of this information is likely a key informant.

Example:

In February 2025, Norway's parliament created a public committee to explore the future of the country's food system, focusing on public health, climate and nature in relation to agricultural, fisheries, and food policy. It involves four ministries and aims to ensure a systems approach, with The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food in the lead. The committee will also look into connections with security of supply, trade and international trade rules, as well as how businesses and other stakeholders can work together. The committee involves experts from various fields, such as economics, marine sciences, and the bioeconomy.¹¹

Question 5.3 - Are there mechanisms in place for consulting non-governmental, non-expert stakeholders (e.g., citizens, civil society groups, private sector groups) on food systems policies and feeding their inputs into policymaking or decision making?

This question refers to mechanisms for regularly consulting non-governmental, non-scientific stakeholders on policy questions and feeding their inputs into food systems policymaking or decision making. The stakeholders in question include citizens, civil society groups, and private sector groups. Mechanisms could be the opportunity to provide written feedback, referenda, public hearings, town hall meetings, and citizen panels.

The question considers whether a diverse variety of stakeholder groups are included. Any process that is open to the general public (such as a referendum or online comment board) would qualify as including 'diverse groups.' For those that are not open to the public, the user should consider whether there are large barriers to participation—for example, an onerous process of accreditation, only allowing a specific type of civil society group, or not allowing an entire section of society (e.g., the private sector, women) to participate. This is somewhat subjective, but the user should explain their response either way.

Users may be confused about the distinction between Q5.2 and Q5.3. There are two: (1) Q5.2 focuses on expert stakeholders while Q5.3 focuses on non-experts, and (2) Q5.2 emphasises the need for a cross-sectoral focus while Q5.3 emphasises the need for inclusion of diverse stakeholders.

Example:

Germany organised a citizens' assembly, 'Nutrition in Transition: Between Private Concerns and State Responsibilities' ('Ernährung im Wandel: Zwischen Privatangelegenheit und staatlichen Aufgaben'), in 2023-2024. This was officially

¹¹. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/skal-se-pa-hvordan-vi-kan-styrke-barekraften-i-det-norske-matsystemet/id3086933/>

mandated by the German Bundestag (Parliament) to bring citizens' perspectives into the political debate on nutrition policy. It was comprised of 160 randomly selected citizens aged 16 and over. This represented a diverse slice of the population, and there was also a scientific / expert advisory group. The members met face-to-face and online and discussed diverse topics, such as food labelling and animal welfare, and issued nine recommendations, which were presented to parliament in 2024.¹² As such, the answer for Germany would be (a).

The Irish government's website indicates that public comment periods were open twice on the Environmental Assessment of the Draft Agri-Food Strategy (first on its scope before it was designed, and then on its results). Members of the public had multiple options for engagement, including via an online form, email, or mail, and it was open to all members of the public.¹³ The response for Ireland would this be (a). However, the user might note that the scope for consultation seems to be limited to environmental aspects of the food system – unless they were able to otherwise verify the existence of consultations on other food systems topics.

12. <https://www.bundestag.de/en/parliament/process-nutrition-995912>

13. <https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/bd894-public-consultation-on-the-environmental-assessment-of-the-draft-agri-food-strategy-to-2030/>

Section 6: Monitoring and Accountability

Sources: Section 6 relates to the 'Policy effects and impacts' and 'monitoring, reporting, and evaluation' principles of OECD (2023), the 'impact analysis and assessment' and 'monitoring, evaluation and reporting' sections of the OECD PCSD self-assessment, and the 'Monitoring and reporting for policy coherence' section of UNEP (2023).

Rationale: Monitoring and evaluation can help to increase accountability and make it more likely that policies and plans are actually implemented. Where assessments include a focus on impacts across food systems sectors or goals (i.e., synergies and trade-offs), they can support the process of coherence by identifying key trade-offs to mitigate or synergies to support.

Question 6.1 - Does the pathway / strategy document or the action / implementation plan based on it (see Section 1) include key performance indicators (KPIs)?

This question refers back to the key document identified in Section 1 – the food systems pathway or food policy document, and / or the action plan based on it (if existing). Key performance indicators (KPIs) refer to quantitative measures that can be used to track achievement (or not) of the pathway or actions. They should be specific and measurable, such that one could clearly report on them without ambiguity. For example, 'improved agricultural productivity' would not be a KPI, as it could refer to many different indicators and types of productivity, but 'average annual wheat yields (kg/ha)' could be.

It is possible for the KPIs to appear in an annex or separate document, so long as it is clear that they apply to the pathway and action / implementation plan.

The top answer should be selected only where the KPIs are fairly comprehensive, covering at least 75% of the main goals / priority outcomes / targets set in the pathway.

(see example under Q6.3, below)

Question 6.2 - Are there domestic milestones or dates and mechanisms for review and reporting on progress of the implementation of the food system pathway / strategy?

This refers to milestones / dates and mechanisms for review and reporting on progress of the implementation of the food system pathway / strategy. A milestone is meant to be a specific date or event (e.g., in 5 years, annually, in 2030). A mechanism explains the way in which the review or report will happen, such as commissioning an external review, ministry X publishing an internal review, or official Y reporting at a session of parliament. Many different mechanisms are acceptable; the important aspect is that they are specified. The focus is only on domestic milestones and mechanisms, not those set by international processes (e.g., the UNFSS+2 'stock-taking'), but a country committing to report along the lines of an international process would be counted as 'yes' here. The existence of an

international milestone or mechanism to which the country has not committed would not count.

Such information could be contained within the pathway / strategy, in an accompanying document, or in a subsequent one. It could also be obtained from a key informant, but the milestones and mechanisms should be public to be counted: a key informant opining that they exist but without any public information to support that claim should not be counted.

(see example under Q6.3, below)

Question 6.3 - Are there clear responsibilities for who should conduct the monitoring and reporting on progress of the implementation of the food system pathway / strategy?

This refers to specifying responsibilities for who should conduct the monitoring and reporting on progress of the implementation of the food system pathway / strategy. This would often be the responsibility of the government, but it could be in any governmental sector / unit. It is also possible that the government could task an external organisation (e.g., a university) with doing it. If a document simply specifies that there will be monitoring and reporting, without noting a person or entity responsible for that, the answer should be 'no'. Such information could be contained within the pathway / strategy, in an accompanying document, or in a subsequent one. It could also be obtained from a key informant.

Example:

Ireland's 5-year Food Vision 2030 strategy includes content on monitoring and reporting, as follows: 'Implementation will be overseen by a High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC), Chaired by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.... The HLIC will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of Food Vision 2030 and its key tasks will be to: a) Progress the delivery of the four Missions. This will be achieved by driving delivery of the implementation plan and monitoring the key high-level indicators. b) Consider each Mission at least once annually and focus on particular issues or priorities in the agri-food sector. In this context, the HLIC may select priority actions for delivery. c) Review the annual report of the Environmental Working Sub-Group. d) Engage with all the key stakeholders on a regular, planned basis, including through stakeholder dialogues and engagement with the sectoral stakeholder groups. e) Communicate the work of the HLIC in progressing implementation, including the publication of an annual review. In the context of this review and the work of the HLIC generally, the missions, goals and actions should be kept under review in light of changing circumstances within the sector or the evolving policy environment.'

The document goes on to specify specific goals for each of four 'missions' and to connect those to specific indicators and targets by 2030. For example, Mission 1 is 'A Climate Smart, Environmentally Sustainable Agri-Food Sector'. Its goal is 'A climate-

neutral food system by 2050, with verifiable progress achieved by 2030, encompassing emissions reductions, carbon sequestration, air, biodiversity and water quality.' Among its indicators are:

- 'Nitrous Oxide: Emissions associated with chemical fertiliser use to reduce by more than 50% by 2030.
- Water Quality: The Strategy commits to reduce nutrient losses from agriculture to water by 50% by 2030.
- Biodiversity: It is envisaged that by 2030, 10% of farmed area will be prioritised for biodiversity, spread across all farms throughout the country.
- Air Quality: *Ammonia emissions to reduce to 5% below 2005 levels by 2030.'*

Indicators under other 'missions' cover diverse topics like farm incomes, animal welfare, and agri-food exports¹⁴. Two annual reports with progress on indicators are provided on the government's website.

Ireland's strategy thus has clear KPIs ('(a)' for Q6.1), and specific milestones (annually) and mechanisms (an annual review report) ('(a)' for Q6.2), and clear responsibilities for monitoring and reporting (the HLIC, Chaired by the Minister) ('(a)' for Q6.3). For Q6.4, it is clear that 'all the key stakeholders' will be involved as part of the monitoring reporting process, but the specific types of stakeholders included (and whether it includes non-governmental ones), as well as when and on what their feedback is obtained, is not clear. For Q6.8, at least some reporting has been publicly provided, but the user would need to assess how comprehensive it is relative to the strategy's scope. A key informant interview could help to clarify those points.

Question 6.4 - Are there clear mechanisms for making the monitoring / reporting participatory among non-governmental organisations, such as by including non-governmental stakeholders' views as an input into the monitoring or by sharing the results of the monitoring / reporting with them for feedback?

This refers to making the monitoring and reporting on progress of the implementation of the food system pathway / strategy participatory, beyond just government organisations. This could be through consultation processes or allowing non-governmental actors to submit feedback that is considered in the monitoring and reporting, or by allowing them to comment on the report (and have those comments taken into account).

Such information could be contained within the pathway / strategy, but normally such a document would not go into this level of detail. Instead, it may be in an accompanying document, or in a subsequent one. It could also be obtained from a key informant. Since in many countries this will be referring to processes that have not yet happened, the user can answer based on what is planned (according to documents or a key informant), even if it has not yet happened.

14. <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/223260/35746090-a182-48aa-acda-66b88048c720.pdf#page=null>

Example:

In the above excerpt from Ireland's Vision 2030, for Q6.4, it is noted that 'all the key stakeholders' will be involved as part of the monitoring reporting process, but the specific types of stakeholders included (and whether it includes non-governmental ones), as well as when and on what their feedback is obtained, is not clear. A key informant interview could help to clarify those points.

Question 6.5 - Does the government provide any methods or tools to assess the potential impacts of policy, laws or regulations on different parts of the food system (i.e., their synergies and trade-offs), such as check-lists or regulatory impact assessments?

This refers to methods or tools to assess the potential impacts of policy, laws or regulations on different parts of the food system (i.e., their synergies and trade-offs). This can include check-lists or regulatory impact assessments, a systematic process used by governments and regulatory bodies to analyse potential economic, social, and environmental effects of proposed regulations or policy changes.

The question distinguishes between mandatory and optional; if there is not clear evidence that the process is mandatory, it should be assumed to be optional. It also distinguishes whether the assessment includes explicit inclusion of cross-sectoral impacts (synergies and trade-offs); if this is not specifically stated in a relevant government document, it should be assumed to not be included.

This information is probably best obtained from a key informant, though reports from prior impact assessments on a government website could also be a source of such information.

Question 6.6 - Is the relevant food pathway / strategy document subject to regular review and revision (e.g., through a review clause)?

This question refers back to the key document (pathway / strategy) identified in Section 1 and asks whether it is subject to regular review and revision. This could be implemented by a review clause in the document that refers to that document specifically, to a public commitment to review / revise the policy by a relevant government actor, or to the existence of a general policy under which all strategies / action plans are subject to regular review. The question distinguishes whether or not the review period is clearly specified (e.g., by a specific date, or after a specific amount of time).

Such information could be contained within the pathway / strategy, in an accompanying document, or in a subsequent one. It could also be obtained from a key informant.

Question 6.7 - Are there structures, projects, or plans to build capacity or tools in the public service to collect and analyse evidence about the impacts of different policies (i.e., their synergies and trade-offs)?

This asks about mechanisms to improve government staff capacity, specifically for collecting and analysing evidence about the impacts of different policies (e.g., synergies and trade-offs). This can support staff's ability to examine and ensure coherence across sectors. Capacity-building could include training courses, online modules, written training materials, integration into induction processes, seminars, and similar, and could be delivered internally or externally to the government. The question also covers tools: e.g., check-lists, guides, websites, to support such processes. Either or both would yield a 'yes' response. The question refers to existing structures and projects, but also to plans for doing this in the future. It distinguishes between those specific to food systems and those more generally.

The best source of this information is likely a key informant.

This asks about the actual results of monitoring: data that show how the country is performing in terms of achieving its food systems transformation goals over time. The focus here is on quantitative results; while qualitative information about performance is also useful, it is harder to translate into accountability without being complemented by quantitative results that can clearly be compared to targets. It will often be the case that such reporting is based on other reports and data sources, but to count here, the government must either aggregate those data into their own report or must clearly reference which indicators in which other sources can be seen as monitoring results. (That is, it is not sufficient for a report on a relevant topic, like a National Nutrition Survey Report, to simply be published by a government agency, without being explicitly tied to food systems transformation achievement).

This reporting could be conducted by a third party (e.g., an NGO or research institute), as long as it is clear that the government has officially delegated that responsibility to them. Monitoring conducted by a third party without government endorsement / delegation would not count.

(see example under Q6.3, above)

Scoring and presentation of the results of Module 1

The scoring rubric for Module 1 is included in Annex 1 of the Modules document. In brief, each answer option is associated with a numeric score (0 to 3). The scores for all questions within a given domain are summed, and this sum is associated with score of low, moderately low, moderately high, or high. The scores can be presented at the level of the domain or for all individual questions, depending on the level of detail useful to the target audience. Examples of how to present the results of Module 1 in a summary table can be found in the country-level results briefs available on <https://www.gainhealth.org/policy-coherence-toolkit>.

However, more useful than the scores will be the recommendations. In the scoring guide, each response is associated with a general recommendation. However, the user can (and where applicable, should) adapt these generic recommendations to the specific country context to make them more specific and actionable. The recommendations should be reported in the final output.

Module 2: Coherence among Policies and Key Food Systems Goals

Module 2 focuses on identifying specific instances of coherence or incoherence between a country's food systems policies and key goals of food systems transformation – and in so doing, areas of coherence and incoherence across different policies. The Module presents the user with a series of questions regarding the country's policies in different domains and the presence or absence of different types of policy elements; these are considered in terms of whether they reinforce or conflict with a set of common food systems goals. The tool provides recommendations for users to consider in cases of non-coherence. It also flags some (non-exhaustive) key trade-offs between policies and other goals, and possible strategies to mitigate those trade-offs.

Development and Structure of the Module

The design of Module 2 began with identifying key outcomes to target for food system transformation: what does a food system need to deliver to be functioning well across all its diverse areas? Outcomes were chosen to cover 4 of 5 of the 'Action Areas' from the UNFSS (excluding Means of Implementation): Nourish All People, Boost Nature-Based Production Solutions, Advance Equitable Livelihoods, and Build Resilience.

Specifically, we reviewed the themes emerging in UNFSS pathways analysis by FAO (2024), consulted on 6 Jan 2024, which analyses the share of country food system pathway documents that mention each of 45 themes. We excluded themes related to 'means of implementation', which refers to cross-cutting processes that support the achievement of outcomes, like 'regulation' or 'innovation', as opposed to specific outcomes. We also excluded themes that were too general to enable specific analysis as a goal (e.g., like 'water' and 'land'). We then ranked the remaining themes by the share of countries mentioning them in their pathway document and included the top six¹⁵. This was done to ensure the outcomes included were relevant to many countries. Some goals were simplified to focus on the key aspect and avoid conflation of different goals (e.g., 'healthy diets from sustainable food systems' was simplified to 'healthy diets').

15. There was a tie for sixth place between 'Food Systems for Women and Girls' and 'Food Quality and Safety'; we chose to keep 'Women and Girls' since a primarily health-related goal (healthy diets) was already included. Food safety should be seen as a priority topic for future module development.

The resulting list was as follows (with the share of analysed pathway documents naming each outcome given in parentheses):



Next, within each outcome, we identified a set of specific goals that could be pursued to achieve that outcome. For example, for 'zero hunger', we included 'increased supply of main staple crops' and 'affordable food prices for main staple crops'. While goals associated with less poverty / higher incomes and stronger social protection are also important for hunger reduction, these aspects were covered under other, more specific outcomes or go beyond the scope of the food systems (for the case of poverty / incomes among non-food-system workers). The result was a list of 10 goals, shown in Table 1 and described in detail following the table.

Table 1. The food system goals

Outcomes	Goals
Zero hunger	Increased supply of main staple crops
	Affordable prices for main staple crops
Climate and disaster resilience	Food systems better adapted to climate change
	Climate change mitigation through food systems
Healthy diets	More nutritious food consumption
	Less unhealthy food consumption

Outcomes	Goals
Reduction of food loss and waste	Reduction of food loss (post-harvest, pre-consumer) and food waste (consumer-level)
Decent work and adequate (living) incomes or wages	Adequate / living wages for food system workers
	More effective nutrition-sensitive social protection
Inclusion and empowerment of women and girls	Empowerment of women and girls to participate in food system transformation and inclusion of women and girls in the benefits of food system transformation

Zero hunger

- **Increased supply of main staple crops.** This goal aims to ensure stable and sufficient production (or importation) of staple crops, needed to ensure sufficient staple foods are available for consumption to avoid hunger. In countries with large levels of employment in agriculture, supporting staple crop production also plays an important role in poverty reduction. It can be supported by initiatives such as improving agricultural productivity through sustainable farming practices, access to quality inputs, and the adoption of efficient technologies.
- **Affordable prices for main staple crops.** This goal aims to ensure prices of staple foods are affordable for all segments of the population to be able to purchase the amounts they need to avoid hunger. This can be done using effective market mechanisms, subsidies, and economic policies that strike a balance between affordability and fair compensation for farmers.

Climate and disaster resilience

- **Food systems better adapted to climate change.** This goal focuses on adapting food system practices to a changing climate. This involves, for example, promoting resilient crops and farming practices, enhancing water and soil management, and supporting farmers in implementing adaptation strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate variability and extreme weather events.
- **Climate change mitigation through food systems.** This goal focuses on mitigating climate change (i.e., preventing it from becoming worse) through actions in the food system. This can include reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural activities, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and use of renewable energy within the food system (e.g., solar-operated irrigation or cold storage).

Healthy diets

- **More nutritious food consumption.** This goal promotes the consumption of diverse, nutrient-rich foods with the ultimate outcome of improving overall public health. This goal involves encouraging and supporting the production and availability of and consumption of nutritious foods, as well as educating consumers about healthy eating habits.
- **Less unhealthy food consumption.** This goal aims to discourage the production and marketing of unhealthy foods through regulations and public awareness campaigns to reduce the consumption of unhealthy foods, such as those high in sugars, fats, and salt.

Reduction of food loss and waste

This goal seeks to enhance efficiency in the supply chain to reduce food waste from post-harvest to the final consumer, with potential benefits for environmental sustainability, worker incomes, and food availability and affordability. Food loss refers to post-harvest, pre-consumer loss; minimising food loss after harvest involves improving storage, transportation, and processing infrastructure and practices to preserve food quality and quantity. Food waste refers to that at the household or food service (e.g., cafeteria, restaurant) level; minimising food waste at this level can be promoted through educational campaigns, technological improvements, and interventions in food service settings.

Decent work and adequate (living) incomes or wages

- **Adequate / living wages for food system workers.** The focus of this goal is on promoting decent work standards and improving the livelihoods of food systems workers. It involves ensuring equitable and adequate labour wages and benefits, safe working conditions, and similar.

What about other goals and policy areas?

The 10 goals and 6 policy areas included in the tool are necessarily non-exhaustive. Examples of important goals of food systems transformation that are not covered include preventing foodborne disease, conserving or restoring biodiversity, fuelling economic growth through food systems, and empowering youth or indigenous peoples. Policy areas not covered include Information, Communications, and Technology Policy and Housing Policy.

Users who are interested in specific goals or policy areas not covered here could develop their own modules examining these, using the general approach presented in the tool. If this is done, we would welcome them sharing such modules with GAIN for potential inclusion in the toolkit.

- **More effective nutrition-sensitive social protection.** This goal involves implementing comprehensive social safety nets and nutrition support initiatives to enhance food security and the well-being of food system workers. It aims to strengthen nutrition and social protection programmes to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to adequate, safe, and high-quality food.

Empowerment of women and girls to participate in food system transformation and inclusion of women and girls in the benefits of food system transformation

This goal aims to ensure that women and girls have equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes in agriculture and food-related activities. Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls within the food system is crucial for achieving higher productivity and income. This can be done by providing extension services, training, access to information, finance, markets, healthcare, and other tailored support that address the specific needs of women and girls.

Looking at all of these ten food systems goals jointly, while not exhaustive of all food systems goals, is meant to ensure a sufficiently comprehensive and cohesive approach to achieving sustainable and robust food systems.

Next, for each goal, a set of questions was developed to enable the user to review policies across six policy areas (health, agriculture, environment, social, industrial / economic, and trade), to see how they contribute to or detract from that goal. While policies in other sectors may also influence the food system, policies in these six areas are seen as particularly instrumental in driving and shaping the food system. To keep the tool manageable, the scope was limited to focus only on the main areas of contribution or detracting; in some cases, there was limited overlap between a given policy area and a given goal, meaning that few (or, in one case, no) questions were included on that policy-goal combination.

A number of different sources were consulted when formulating these questions, including both empirical evidence on coherence in existing policies as well as theoretical and empirical research on which types of policies and instruments support the achievement of each of the target food systems goals. Similarly, the development of generic recommendations as well as potential tradeoffs and mitigation options was informed by literature review on impacts of policies and policy and programmatic options for achieving food systems goals. Sources included Schneider et al (2025), FAO (2024a), UNSCN (2016), Caleffi, Hawkes, and Walton (2023), Hawkes et al. (2020), OECD (2021), Thow et al (2018), and World Cancer Research Fund (2022).

What if a question is not applicable in my context?

Generally, all questions should be answered, but if a user feels that a particular question is not relevant within their context, they could include a 'not applicable' response with justification. However, users should think critically before doing this. For example, some might think biofortification policies are not relevant for upper-middle or high-income countries, as to date these exist exclusively in low- and lower-middle-income countries. However, micronutrient deficiencies are also common in upper-middle and high-income countries, and it may be the case that biofortification is a viable response to this issue in some such contexts—even if it is not yet in place.

Applying Module 2 in Practice

Module 2 is comprised of six submodules, one for each policy area, further broken down into sections for each of the ten food systems goals. Each section contains a set of specific questions, aiming to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. The questions are all answered with a 'Yes' or 'No', though there may be multiple options for 'Yes' or 'No' for a given question; the user should read through all responses carefully before choosing the one that is the best match.

The tool assesses policy documents that set out the intention of a policy and the instruments through which policymakers seek to achieve these intentions—i.e., what is planned and exists on paper. It does not attempt to assess the extent to which these intentions are implemented in practice. The user should approach it with this mindset and be sure any key informants consulted are also aware of this focus.

The most efficient way to complete Module 2 is generally to approach it sector-by-sector (i.e., complete all of the Agricultural Policy questions, cutting across all goals, as opposed to completing all the Zero Hunger goal questions, cutting across all sectors). This is because the documents to review and key informants to consult are usually organised by sector, not by goal. However, the user should read the entire Module 2 through at least once before beginning to apply it, so that they can recognise when a piece of useful information for answering a question in another part of the tool emerges unexpectedly. One good practice is to initially map out all the sources (whether documents or key informants) to be used to answer all questions, then grouping questions and consulting sources accordingly.

Note that when referring to specific questions in the rest of this manual, we use a code for the policy area (H - health, A - agriculture, E - environment, S - social, IE - industrial / economic, T - trade), followed by the goal and the question number under that goal. For example, S5.1-1 refers to the first question under goal 5.1 (adequate / living wages) within the Social Policies module.

Data Sources

It is advised to complete Module 2 through a combination of key informant interviews and review of policy documents. Relying primarily on interviews, supplemented by document review as needed, may be the most efficient approach, but the balance may vary depending on the context. The informants should be knowledgeable persons working within or with strong knowledge of the six policy areas listed above. For example, they may be civil servants working in relevant ministries, or academics who have deeply studied the relevant policies. Of note, it is very unlikely that one key informant will be able to reply to all questions across all sub-modules of the tool—and this would make for a very long interview. Instead, it is recommended to carefully select a subset of sub-modules and / or questions for each respondent, depending on their expertise.

All policy contexts are dynamic, and it may be difficult to identify the right key informants and / or policy documents during a time of change (e.g., after an election cycle, or during a restructuring). It is recommended to avoid applying the tool during the most dynamic periods (e.g., right before a major election) but it is not possible to fully avoid this natural dynamism. Instead, it can be noted and considered as part of the results and recommendations (e.g., flagging that while a current policy area is strong, it may be repealed under a new administration that has just come into power). In some cases, including key informants from both former and current governments may provide a more nuanced picture of the longer-term policy context.

Where the answers are based exclusively on the answers given by key informants, they should be supplemented with more detailed explanations of why a given answer was selected. This will help ensure that the answers are supported by facts rather than based on sentiment. Furthermore, when completed, the module (or parts of it) can be sent to reviewers for comments and suggestions on whether the right responses have been selected. This is particularly recommended when the user has mainly relied on policy document reviews to complete the tool.

In a few cases, a question will highlight a specific source that can be used to respond to it; for example, some questions can be answered using data from the Food Systems Dashboard. However, the user can always choose not to use these data sources, if they know a better source. For example, the NOURISHING Policy Database is a useful source for many policies related to diets, but its coverage outside Europe is incomplete. Note that the URLs included for these sources are functional as of May 2025; if the user finds they no longer function, s/he is advised to conduct an internet search using the name of the resource.

Question structure

Most questions in the module are structured as straightforward multiple-choice questions. In some cases, there will be two 'yes' or two 'no' options, which are signalled with 'Yes (1)' and 'Yes (2)' and similar. The user should be careful to select the right one.

There are some cases in which a question is duplicated across two submodules. For example, mandatory nutrition labels on foods helps with both increasing consumption of nutritious foods AND decreasing consumption of unhealthy foods, so a question on this appears in the submodules for both of these goals. These are generally flagged in the module at the end of the question. After verifying the question is identical, the user can simply copy-paste the answer from the first question into the answer to the second question. However, the scores and recommendations associated with the response are not always the same: one response may be 'conflicting' for one goal but 'reinforcing' for another. So, the user should carefully check that the correct scoring and recommendations are used. For questions that include 'and / or' followed by a list of examples, the answer should be 'yes' if any of the listed examples are present; all examples do not need to be present.

In some cases, a question includes various examples of what it is referring to; for example, 'Support could include tax rebates or holidays, credits or financial incentives, subsidies, or training'. In such cases, where at least some of those examples (or other similar ones) are included, the answer should be affirmative ('yes'). However, the aspects that are not included in the present policies / instruments could be featured in the ensuing recommendations. For example, if a policy included the tax rebates but not training, the user could suggest it be expanded to include training.

Interpreting questions and terms

This section provides further guidance on certain technical terms used throughout the module.

Support: Many of the questions in Module 2 ask whether policies and instruments in a particular area include support for a given issue or objective. If not otherwise specified, 'support' for an issue or objective refers to financial or human resource allocations to the issue / objective, recognition of the issue / objective as a priority or a goal, or inclusion of provisions that aim to contribute to the issue / objective.

Staple crops: The main staples are usually grains, roots, or tubers, such as maize, wheat, rice, or potato. In most countries, there will only be 1-3 main staples that form the majority of people's staple intake. These can be identified by a knowledgeable key informant or by consulting the FAOSTAT data on Supply Utilization. For example, using the Food Supply data, one could identify crops (or their derivatives, such as flour of) which have values in excess of 400 kcal / capita / day as staples.

It is suggested that sugar and edible oil (or oilseeds) not be included as staple crops, even if they are widely eaten, but rather to focus only on starchy staples. One exception to this, noted clearly in the relevant questions, is when questions concern large-scale food fortification, in which case oil and salt, in addition to staple grains / flours, should be considered.

Nutrient-dense crops or nutritious foods: These refer to those foods that are eaten in smaller amounts than staples but widely agreed to be important parts of a healthy diet for nearly all people. This would include nearly all fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds; because animal-source foods have a more nuanced role in the diet (beneficial in moderation, but with potential for harm if overconsumed), their classification in this category may need to be assessed on a context-specific basis. However, the category would usually include eggs, fish and other seafood, most dairy, and many minimally processed meats. It would exclude most highly processed, packaged foods. Useful country-specific examples of these foods can be found through the Global Diet Quality Project country-adapted tools, <https://www.dietquality.org/tools>, considering food groups 4-10, 13-15, 17-21, and 25.

Whole grains would be counted here, but the user should be cautious about assuming that grains at the production stage will remain whole at the consumption stage: for example, in a country where most wheat is consumed as refined flour products (e.g., white bread, chapatti), a subsidy on wheat production at the farm level should not be assumed to be supporting a nutrient-dense whole grain; however, a subsidy of whole-grain wheat products (compared to refined wheat products) at retail level could be seen as supporting nutrient-dense foods.

Unhealthy food or foods high in salt, sugar, and fat: These two categories are largely overlapping, but policies may be more likely to phrase the group in terms of 'high in salt, sugar, and fat' to provide more specificity and make targeting easier. This category includes most fast food, many 'street' foods, and most highly processed packaged foods, such as confectionery products, sweetened baked goods, highly sweetened dairy, and savoury packaged snacks. It includes all moderately or highly processed meats. Useful country-specific examples of these foods can be found through the Global Diet Quality Project country-adapted tools, <https://www.dietquality.org/tools>, considering food groups 11, 12, 16, 22-24, and 26-29.

Drought-resistant (or drought-tolerant) crops: These are plant varieties that can survive and produce yields under conditions of low water availability. This may be due to shorter growing cycles, deep root systems, waxy leaf coatings, and other mechanisms to reduce water loss. They include specific varieties of a crop species that are bred for drought tolerance (e.g., drought-tolerant wheat) as well as whole species that are generally drought tolerant. Some examples of the latter category include sorghum, teff, pearl and finger millet, fonio, cassava, groundnut, amaranth, and sweet potato.

Climate-resilient crops: This category includes drought-tolerant crops but also includes crops with other features that make them resilient to climate stresses, such as heat resistance, flood and salinity tolerance, and pest and disease resistance. Again, they can be specifically bred for this purpose, or be naturally resilient.

Climate-smart practices: These refer to practices in agriculture (or livestock or fisheries) that aim to maintain or sustainably increase agricultural productivity amid changing climates. They include the use of climate-resilient crops as well as water management, integrated pest management, conservation agriculture, agroforestry, nutrient management, and sustainable livestock management.

Food system workers: Unless otherwise specified, this refers to people who work in all parts of the food system, such as input manufacturers, fishers and farmers, food processors, slaughterhouse workers, food warehouse staff, shop clerks, and restaurant or food service workers. When considering labour-related policies, it is important to be inclusive of both informal and formal employment: in many countries, some (or even most) food system workers may be informal workers (e.g., household members, seasonal or day labourers, informal market or street vendors) as opposed to workers with a formal contract. To 'count' fully within the questions of the tool, policies should apply inclusively to informal workers as well as formal workers. Where this is not the case, a recommendation may be to extend protections awarded to formal-sector workers to informal workers.

Scope of policies

The scope of the tool is on presently applicable policies (excluding those under development); domestic policies (excluding those that apply to other countries, such as international development programmes the country runs abroad); and policies as they are written / intended to be (not considering gaps or changes that might arise in implementation). While the scope is generally meant to be limited to only national-level policies, if a policy topic is decided at the subnational level (e.g., states, regions), the user could choose to review the policies across all regions and aggregate them into one answer.

Specific versus general policies

In most cases a policy that covers a particular crop, population, or food about which the question asks but also covers others will count as existing (usually a 'yes' response): the policy does not need to apply only to the specific aspect the question is asking about, as long as that aspect is included. For example, a general social security law that covered food system workers would count as 'yes' to question S5.1-1, and an R&D policy that covered many crops, including staples, would count as 'yes' for question A1.1-1.

Mandatory or required measures, versus voluntary, optional, or encouraged measures

In general, any question that asks about requirements, regulations, limits, standards, or restrictions should be assumed to be referring only to mandatory ones, not voluntary ones, unless this is explicitly stated otherwise. Voluntary guidelines alone are usually of limited impact relative to mandatory ones.

Classifying policies within sectors

For some topics or policies, it is clear which policy area they fall within and there is little ambiguity. However, other topics may cut across policy areas; for example, market information systems might be covered under agricultural, environmental, or industrial policies. A policy guideline related to using climate-smart agricultural practices might be classified as an agricultural policy or an environmental policy. There is no universal guidance on this that applies across all contexts, so the user will need to apply their judgement to classify policies and seek the right documents to consult. In some cases, the same policy will be included in multiple policy areas (e.g., and Environmental Farm Management strategy could likely count in both 'agricultural' and 'environmental' policies).

There may be some situations where a policy does cover the suggestion action / topic, but that policy is not within the specific domain where that question appears in the tool. For example, question E1.2-7 asks 'Do environmental policies and instruments include support for more efficient use of agricultural chemicals?' It may be the case that this is not covered by environment policies but is covered in agriculture policies. In such a case, the person completing the tool should select the option that is most accurate regarding the holistic set of policies across all sectors but should also note that this could be improved by also noting it in the target sector's policy. In this case, the answer may either be flagging an area where coherence could be improved by ensuring consistency across different policies (e.g., mentioning agricultural inputs in environmental policies as well as agricultural ones) or it may be simply indicating that, within that context, the topic in question falls outside the domain of that policy areas (e.g., in some countries environmental policies may not cover agricultural topics in detail by design).

What if the answer is not a clear 'yes' or 'no'?

In many cases, a question will ask for a 'yes' or 'no' answer when the reality lies somewhere in between. For example, a county may have policies that apply to some groups of people and not others, or some foods and not others. In these cases, it is for the user to judge whether it is, on balance closer to a 'yes' or a 'no' considering the scale and ambition of the policy (i.e., is it large and ambitious and likely to have a significant impact on a large share of

the relevant target audience, assuming it is well implemented? Or is it small and narrowly targeted such that, even if well implemented, only a small share of the food system / the population would be affected?). They should also document that decision and bring the nuance into their recommendation, such as by noting the existence of a policy that needs scaling up in its applicability to be truly effective.

Policy-Sector Specific Submodules

This section explains each policy-sector-specific submodule in more detail, including explanations of any key terms or concepts specific to that policy sector. Due to the length and level of detail of Module 2, no specific question-by-question explanations are given. In all cases, the suggested documents to review are non-exhaustive and may not apply in all countries.

Agricultural policy and Instruments

This section covers strategies, regulations, and guidelines aimed at supporting primary food production, including productivity, sustainability, and economic viability. It includes not only crop production but also livestock and fisheries (wild catch and aquaculture) sectors. It addresses access to agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, seeds, pesticides, animal feed, animal genetic material, and herbicides, as well as access to machinery and equipment such as tractors and irrigation systems. It also encompasses access to information on markets, weather, and finance. Policies that focus on the latter part of the food value chain (e.g., processing and retail) would normally be covered under 'industrial / economic policies', not here, though this may vary by country.

Key documents to review: the national agricultural policy, strategy, or development plan; fisheries policies; livestock policies; agricultural input policies; national food security strategy; and land use and management policies. There may also be specific documents related to climate-smart agriculture, agricultural mechanisation or training, agricultural research and development, animal welfare regulations, agricultural transformation, etc.

Health and nutrition policy instruments

This section focuses on how the food system supports public health goals, including nutrition. Such policies help shape food production, distribution, acquisition, and consumption patterns to address issues such as malnutrition, overweight / obesity, diet-related non-communicable diseases, and food safety.

Key documents to review: Public health policies, nutrition policies or strategies, dietary guidelines, action plans related to malnutrition or diet-related non-communicable diseases, food security strategies, and national food safety acts and regulations. International guidelines from organisations like the World Health Organization and FAO can also be consulted to understand how local policies compare to global standards.

Environmental policy and instruments

This section assesses topics related to sustainable resource use, climate change mitigation, ecosystem protection, and the alignment of agricultural practices with environmental sustainability. It may include policies related to forestry, land use, and water use. These policies ensure that natural resources are used efficiently and responsibly, ecosystems are preserved and restored, and agricultural activities do not contribute to environmental degradation.

Key policy documents to review: Environmental sustainability policies or strategies, land use regulations, climate change mitigation measures, nationally determined contributions, sustainable agricultural practice guidelines, water management policies, agrochemical use guidelines, biodiversity conservation policies, renewable energy incentives, waste management strategies, environmental impact assessments, and documents relating to ecosystem protections. Note that there may be agriculture-specific environmental policies or regulations, which could be consulted for both this section and that on agricultural policies.

Trade policy and instruments

This policy area ensures that international trade supports and enhances domestic food-related goals. Trade policies that apply to food influence the availability, affordability, and diversity of food, which directly impact dietary patterns and nutritional outcomes. Traded food also represents embedded environmental impacts and has impacts on livelihoods. By aligning trade policies with broader food system goals, countries can mitigate potential negative effects of trade on local food systems, such as market volatility and excess dependency on imports, while benefitting from the positive aspects, such as lower prices for consumers and expanded access to diverse foods. While many aspects of trade can indirectly impact food systems (e.g., through altering the labour market dynamics), this submodule focuses only on trade in food or food-related inputs / equipment.

Key documents to review: Economic policy reports, consumer protection laws, national trade policies or strategies, impact assessments for agricultural export and import trade, and trade policy briefs, regional trade agreements, and World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreements.

Interpreting tariffs and trade barriers

Tariffs should generally be assessed at the Harmonized System (HS) 6-digit level; for example, '100590 - Maize (excl. seed).' While tariff lines tend to vary within commodity group (e.g., at HS8 and HS10 levels), the HS6 level should give a sufficient indication of the average level of tariff for that crop. When documenting the explanation for a selected answer, the tariff analysed should be listed along with its level and the date on which the policy was issued. Occasionally, tariffs will be specified in absolute terms (e.g., dollars per tonne) rather than as a percentage (ad valorem). In many cases a simple conversion can be made using an annual average commodity price, but in others expert opinion on the extent to which a tariff may impact the outcome under consideration may be required.

Import bans should include those applied for any specified reason, e.g., environmental concerns, human health terms, and protection of domestic industry.

Discriminatory trade policies are policies that are applied differentially to different countries or categories of countries. Judgement may be needed as to the tariff level applicable to the countries which would, in the absence of discriminatory tariffs, be likely to be major suppliers of the product.

In many cases, trade rules may vary by the trading partner – e.g., tariffs might be lower for key trading partners with which specific agreements have been negotiated. Ideally, the user would look at all policies across all trade partners and create an overall weighted average for the question, weighting by the volume of trade. Since this is not feasible, we suggest focusing on the countries' largest trade partners for the most important foods/crops/goods in that category but noting in recommendations where there are variations for other partners.

Social affairs policy and instruments

This policy area helps ensure that food systems are equitable and inclusive, benefiting all societal groups, especially the vulnerable. It aims to address social inequalities and improve well-being by ensuring access to nutritious food, promoting equal resource distribution, fair labour practices, adequate wages, and social protection during crises. This is a broad policy area, and there may be ambiguities in which policies fall within it; it would generally include labour policies, education, gender equity or women's empowerment, social security and social protection programmes (including disaster relief). However, often only small parts of these policies will be relevant to the application of the tool (e.g., only the parts of education policies that relate to school meals programmes).

Key documents to review: Gender equality action plans, national food security strategies, social protection programmes such as cash transfers and food assistance, public health nutrition policies, school feeding programmes, nutrition action plans, minimum wage

legislation, occupational health and safety standards, and labour rights legislation. Other important global standards and recommendations include the International Labour Organization's labour standards and recommendations.

Industrial, economic growth, and monetary policies and instruments

These policies shape the economic landscape of food systems by fostering industrial development, driving economic growth, and maintaining monetary stability. They aim to boost productivity and efficiency in agriculture, encourage investment in food infrastructure and technology, and stabilise food prices. Moreover, they intend to promote income growth and create job opportunities within the food sector, enhancing food security and reducing poverty. These policies generally focus more on the economy as a whole or the post-primary-production (post-farm) parts of the food system (e.g., processing, retail), while primary production is covered under Agriculture policies.

Key documents to review: National development plans, economic growth and industrialisation strategies, national agricultural investment plans, national budget documents, taxation and subsidy policies, industrial development policies, technology and innovation strategies, trade and export promotion policies. Other key documents to review for recommendations and global standards are WTO agreements, regional trade agreements, World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic reports, or IMF Monetary Policy Frameworks.

Recording answers

When completing Module 2, four things should be noted for every question:

- **The answer.** For every question, the user should ensure only one answer is selected. If there is ambiguity, the user should make the determination of which is most true, perhaps using the recommendations to elaborate on any nuances.
- **An explanation,** where necessary. In some cases, the response may be so straightforward that none is required, but some brief explanation is usually helpful.
- **The sources** consulted, whether this is a policy document, secondary data, or a key informant. Ideally, this should be specific (e.g., the document title and page number, the informant's name) to enable another user to verify or replicate the results.
- Where applicable, a **recommendation** for improvement. The tool already provides standard recommendations in the case of 'conflicting' answers; however, these are generic, and a locally adapted recommendation (e.g., to refer to the specific policy that could be changed, or the specific way in which it could be changed) is usually more helpful. In addition, there may be cases where the answer is 'reinforcing' but there are still weaknesses in the policy that could be strengthened to help it become even more reinforcing; these can also be noted.

As an example of 'localising' a recommendation, QT1.2-7 asks 'Are agricultural or processing equipment and machinery on the country's import prohibition list?'; in the case of yes, the generic potential recommendation is 'Consider easing import restrictions to increase agricultural supply and productivity, which can ultimately help drive down food prices.' However, a more useful locally specific recommendation could be 'While there are no import restrictions on agricultural machinery, there are restrictions on importing machinery needed for food processing, such as flour mills and dosifiers for fortification, within the 'Support Local Manufacturing Industry Act' of 2017. The Act should be modified to exempt these products.' (This is a fictional example).

Annex 1 provides an example of completed questions, showing this information being recorded in practice. Both a basic table and a more sophisticated spreadsheet for tracking responses have worked well in practice.

While not required, users can also flag examples of particularly strong policies and best practices, which can help to provide encouragement to local policy actors as well as foster learning across contexts.

Scoring the results of Module 2

Answers are categorised to reflect varying degrees reinforcement of or conflict with the target goal; some are neutral. **Reinforcing** means that a given policy supports achievement of the food system goal in question. **Conflicting** means that the policy contradicts or undermines that specific food system goal, which could result in inefficiencies, reduced effectiveness, or negative outcomes – but does not necessarily (as discussed in the ‘Using the Results’ section). Neutral implies neither significantly advancing nor hindering the food system goal in question. In most cases, a situation where a policy could be in place but is not is considered neutral, but there are some where it is considered conflicting – particularly for policies that are widely adopted or recommended at the global level, such as banning trans fats or criminalising gender-based violence.

In some cases, scores of ‘highly reinforcing’ and ‘highly conflicting’ are used to distinguish between weaker and stronger levels of coherence or incoherence among the answers.

Examples:

Question EI3.1-3 asks if economic or monetary policies and instruments limit the availability of foreign exchange, either generally or specifically for the importation of nutrient-dense foods; ingredients or equipment for processing of nutritious foods; or agricultural inputs and equipment. A **Yes** answer, economic or monetary policies do limit foreign exchange availability, is seen as **conflicting** with the goal of encouraging more nutritious food consumption, as such policies might reduce the availability and affordability of such foods. A potential **recommendation** is suggested to revise these policies to remove such limits.

There are two ‘No’ options to this question:

- If policies and instruments neither limit nor facilitate foreign exchange availability, this is seen as **Neutral** (having no particular effect on achievement of the goal). This would be the case in many countries where there is limited active involvement in facilitating or limiting foreign exchange.
- If policies and instruments facilitate foreign exchange availability, this is seen as **Reinforcing** the goal of increasing consumption of such foods, by increasing their availability and / or affordability.

Question H3.1-3 asks if health / nutrition policies and instruments include mandatory fortification requirements for main staples (in this case, including grains like flour but also oil and / or salt). This question has two ‘Yes’ options:

- If policies include mandatory fortification requirements alone, this is **Reinforcing** of the goal of more nutritious food consumption: adding micronutrients to staple foods through fortification has been shown to increase intakes of those nutrients and help reduce level of micronutrient malnutrition.
- If policies include mandatory fortification requirements but also include measures to support firms to adhere to those requirements, such as training, it is seen as **Highly Reinforcing**. This is because compliance with fortification laws is often a challenge.

There is also a 'No' option (no mandatory fortification requirements), which is seen as neutral to achieving the goal of more nutritious food consumption.

Question A2.2-5 asks if agricultural policies and instruments include objectives of and / or support for increasing or decreasing livestock numbers or growing the scale of livestock sector (beyond increasing the productivity or efficiency of the sector)? It has two 'Yes' options:

- Yes, agricultural policies and instruments include objectives of and / or support for increased livestock numbers, including for ruminants (i.e., cattle, sheep, goats, or buffalo). This is seen as **Highly Conflicting** with the goal of climate change mitigation through food systems, as ruminant production tends to emit particularly high levels of greenhouse gases per unit produced.
- Yes, agricultural policies and instruments include objectives of and / or support for increased livestock numbers, but not including ruminants (e.g., focused on pork or poultry). This is seen as **Conflicting** because such animals emit fewer greenhouse gases per unit than ruminants, but still more than many plant-based foods and certain aquatic animals.

In addition, some policies may be associated with a potential trade-off among different food systems goals – i.e., being reinforcing for the goal being analysed, but conflicting for another goal. These are highlighted in the scoring sheet, where some relevant trade-offs and potential recommendations given. Note the tool does not include all potential trade-offs, just particularly common or salient ones.

Comparing results to prior applications

This manual accompanies the version of the Tool published in July 2025. The Tool underwent iterative revision as part of its development, so the results published in or prior to July 2025 (for Bangladesh, Benin, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania) are not directly comparable to those published afterwards or to the contents of the tool as published. The difference is minor for Module 1, where no questions have changed and only a few answer options have changed, but slightly larger for Module 2, for which the revisions included additions and deletions of questions. Comparisons among applications should thus be done with caution.

If users need access to the prior version of the tool used in these countries, they may request it from GAIN.

Reporting and Interpreting results of Module 2

Once Module 2 is completed, the results can be reported in various ways. For most audiences, a 'stoplight table' is expected to be the most useful summary, as it highlights areas of both strength (green cells) and weaknesses (red cells) in a concise manner, indicating clearly where there may be incoherencies. An example of this is shown in Annex 2. This can be accompanied by narrative text explaining the results and adding more nuance, if desired.

In addition to viewing results at the level of individual questions within submodules, it may be helpful to view summaries that aggregate results at the level of a submodule. See examples of this presentation in Annex 2 and in the country results briefs available at <https://www.gainhealth.org/policy-coherence-toolkit>. An Excel template for aggregating questions' scores into submodule-level scores is available upon request to GAIN.

It is not recommended to sum Module 2 results across all policy areas and goals to create an aggregated country-level score, or to compare one country to another based on their scores. This is both because the wide variations across countries in terms of their contexts and the lack of actionability of an aggregate score.

However the results are presented, it is essential to include recommendations for improvement in policy coherence, as these are what is needed to inform a future policy action agenda. As noted above, while generic recommendations are given in the tool, context-specific recommendations are likely to be more useful.

Validating the results

As noted above, it is strongly recommended that the results be validated by relevant stakeholders prior to being published. The stakeholders involved in the validation should be diverse in terms of their knowledge of food systems policy. Ideally, at least some should not have already served as key informants in the application of the tool, to ensure inclusion of diverse voices. Validation could take the form of sharing the completed tool for review in document form, but in many cases a validation workshop will be more effective, as it allows for discussion and debate among participants.

It is advisable that the validation workshop takes place in person and over one or two days, potentially with break-out groups focused on specific policy areas. This ensures sufficient engagement and time for all the responses to be discussed in detail and adjusted if needed. A shorter online validation workshop is also possible but has been found to be less effective than a longer, in-person one.

Given the length and complexity of Module 2, it is unlikely that all responses can be thoroughly validated within a workshop, unless the workshop takes place over 1-2 days and includes breakout groups that work on different policy areas in parallel. This is advisable, but where it is not possible, it is suggested to focus the validation on questions where there was ambiguity in the policies or disagreement among sources or key informants as to the answer. Policies or goals of particular salience (e.g., a top-priority goal for the country, or a policy area that will soon come up for review) could also be chosen for focus.

Using the results

In most cases, the application of the tool and the validation of the results will be the start of a process – not an endpoint. In addition to sharing the results of the tool in written form (i.e., as reports or briefs), it is recommended to hold consultations or workshops to help stakeholders interpret the results and translate them into an action plan or key policy priorities.

Careful, guided interpretation is critical, as it is not necessarily the case that a result of ‘conflicting’ should be seen as meaning ‘bad’; there are some cases where ‘conflicting’ policies may make sense, if they are supporting another goal and are central for achieving that. For example, putting limitations on fishing may raise prices or reduce availability of fish, potentially limiting access to this nutritious food– but it may be a very sound policy decision, if it plays a key role in protecting those stocks for the long term or in improving ecosystem health. In addition, some policies offer short-term reinforcing benefits to the food system but may have potentially conflicting long-term consequences. In this case, a careful assessment of both short-term and long-term impacts is essential. For example, export restrictions can increase domestic supply of staple foods in the short term, but may decrease producers’ incomes, having negative impacts on hunger reduction in the long term. Moreover, there are often reasons why policy incoherence exists: it may be necessary due to balancing conflicting goals or timespans, as in the cases above, but it might also be due to political economy reasons. For example, where there is a powerful constituency that needs concessions from the government in order to support the government’s agenda, allowing for some incoherencies in policies may be necessary. Finally, any policy change takes time and effort, and it is rarely possible to achieve all the desired changes at once. Stakeholders must be pragmatic in selecting a reasonable number of feasible, high-priority changes to target – which may mean that some areas of incoherence remain.

Improving policy coherence in the presence of political economy dynamics

Bringing about policy change in practice requires navigating political economy dynamics—that is, conflicts and trade-offs across different interest groups that play an important role in the food system. When users and stakeholders and planning how to use the results of the food systems policy coherence diagnostic tool, they may find it useful to analyse these dynamics and identify key bottlenecks and how to address them. Resnick (2024) offers a decision toolkit for doing this.

Thus, the results of the tool should not be seen as a straightforward prescription for change: where areas of potential incoherence are flagged, that represents an opening for deeper examination and discussion by stakeholders, to determine whether it is a feasible and high-priority area for policy improvement. The default ‘potential recommendations’ should

also be interpreted as a starting point. More specific, nuanced, and detailed recommendations will need to be formulated to enable action, and there may be cases where the default recommendation does not make sense within the context.

The tool can be used as a baseline or formative assessment within a policy change process. Results from one country may be compared over time if the tool's application is repeated at several time points, thus making it useable as a monitoring or evaluation tool. However, given the generally slow pace of policy change, it is recommended to wait at least a few years between applications, to be able to detect change. (There may be exceptions when a country is undergoing a significant period of reforms in a short time period, such as with a major regime change).

Concluding Thoughts

The Food Systems Policy Coherence Diagnostic Tool was developed to aid food systems policymakers and those who support the policymaking process to identify areas of coherence and incoherence within their food systems policies. In doing so, it helps to identify ways in which coherence could be improved to craft food-related policies that are better able to achieve health, environmental, social, and economic goals. The aim is to avoid situations where policies designed to improve one outcome unintentionally undermine others and, where possible, to take advantage of synergies across policy areas to achieve better outcomes for all (Parsons and Hawkes 2019).

The tool has some limitations in doing this. In particular, it examines policies as intended and designed, not how they end up being implemented – even though there is often a large gap between intent and achievement, particularly when it comes to equitably reaching all with the benefits of a policy. The goals and policy areas included are not exhaustive, nor are the questions included. The tool focuses exclusively on horizontal (as opposed to vertical) coherence, and it assumes application at the national level in a centralised government system, even though many countries have devolved policymaking on certain food-related topics. It also does not consider how budget allocations align with policies. The use of closed-ended multiple-choice questions simplifies completion and comparison but necessarily limits the nuance that the tool's results can reflect. The tool was developed primarily considering low- and middle-income country contexts, with only a limited application in a high-income country, meaning that some sections may need additional adaptation before being applied in high-income countries. The tool may also require adaptation before being applied in small island developing nations, city-states, and conflict-afflicted countries, as the tool has not yet been applied in such contexts. The application of Module 2 can also be time-consuming.

However, the tool also has strengths, particularly in its systematic approach to examining goals and policies, its relative simplicity in using multiple-choice questions, and its modular nature that provides flexibility in application. The structure of the tool also enables examining both high-level structures and mechanisms that may support coherence (in Module 1) as well as the details of sector-specific policies (in Module 2). The general structure of Module 2 (identifying key goals, then mapping those to policy areas with questions on specific potential areas of conflict) can be adapted and applied to other food systems goals, and the structure of Module 1 could be used to look at issues of vertical coherence.

The creators of the tool look forward to its application elsewhere and welcome any feedback users have on that process – as well as learning about any innovations they have made in applying the tool and analysing and using the results to improve their local food systems.

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Annex 1 – Examples of Completing Module 2

Below are some generic examples of how the results of Module 2, along with their sources and justifications can be succinctly documented.

Agricultural Policy and Instruments

Goal 1.1: Increased Supply of Main Staple Crops				
Q #	Response	Explanation of Response, as needed	Source(s) consulted	Notes for context-specific recommendation
1	Reinforcing	The agricultural policy includes funding for breeding aimed at improving the productivity and salinity tolerance of rice, one of the main staple crops	KII with Interviewee 3 (see list of interviewees in annex); Agricultural Development and Transformation Strategy 2020-2030	While the answer is reinforcing due to the funding for rice breeding and salinity tolerance, the policy/funding could be extended to consider the country's secondary staple, wheat, and/or drought tolerance in rice.
2	Reinforcing	The agricultural policy includes strong support for extension services, agricultural information services, and skills training for staple crop producers. These services are operationalised through government regulations and regional policies. For example, field-based extension workers are mandated to provide hands-on training for staple crop producers, and skills-training programmes are designed to be inclusive of smallholder and marginalised farmers.	Law on Job Creation; Law on Agricultural Extension; Government Regulation on Agricultural Extension Workers; Presidential Decree on Human Resource Development in Agriculture	Given the strong system in place, this is not a priority for reform. However, more attention could be paid by extension services to non-staple crops (covered under questions for goal 3.1)

Health Policy and Instruments

Goal 3.2: Less Unhealthy Food Consumption				
Q #	Response	Explanation of Response, as needed	Source(s) consulted	Notes for context-specific recommendation
1	Conflicting	Health policies do not require removal of trans fats, though industry is encouraged to do so voluntarily	Decree on Transfat Removal; KII with Informant 4	The voluntary provisions have been poorly adopted by industry, and mandatory measures are needed to have an impact. The law to ban trans fats has been debated in Parliament but needs to be prioritised for passage.
3	Reinforcing	While nutrient lists are required on packaged foods, these do not need to be front-of-pack labels.	Law on Food Labelling	Front-of-pack labels specific to the local context should be developed, drawing on examples of those which have been successful elsewhere, and made mandatory.

Annex 2 – Example Outputs from Modules 1 and 2

Module 1 Example Output

The suggested presentation of summary results for Module 1 is a table, an example of which is shown below. Each domain can be scored using the guidance in the scoring rubric (Annex 1 of the 'Modules 1 and 2' document). The scores for each domain can then be summarised using color-codes following a 'stoplight' system: green shading indicates domains with scores of 'high' (i.e., where systems are highly supportive of coherence); yellow 'moderately high' (i.e., moderately supportive of coherence); orange 'moderately low'; and red 'low', indicating systems that are generally not supportive of coherence. The 'analysis and recommendations' column summarises the reasons behind the scoring and recommendations for improvement. This is based on the specific responses to the questions for each domain, though additional expertise and insight of experts or key informants can also be integrated.

Table A1. Structures and Mechanisms in Support of Food System Policy Coherence

Domain	Analysis and Recommendations
Framework Documents	The country's pathways document provides a foundation for food systems transformation including a vision for the future that cuts across multiple domains of the food system. However, it could be strengthened by highlighting existing food system challenges, setting priorities to address them, and including clear plans for targeted interventions.
Political Commitment	Senior leadership has publicly supported this vision, demonstrating high-level political commitment.
Capacity & Implementation	While the country has invested in capacity building of government staff on food systems and has numerous policies and strategies that align with its pathway, it could strengthen several areas of capacity/implementation: • Working to formally adopt or ratify it into mainstream policy, which could strengthen the likelihood of implementation • Developing a more comprehensive action plan for pathway implementation • Ensuring sufficient budget is allocated to support pathway implementation or developing a long-term investment plan to map out an approach that can fund pathway implementation in the long term.
Coordination Structures	• There is no lead institution responsible for food system transformation (cutting across sectoral ministries); stakeholders could consider creating or designating such an institution, to improve coordination. • Stakeholders might consider creating platforms to promote dialogue and coordination within government across sectors on the general topic of food systems and/or specific food systems issues.
Inclusivity, Stakeholder Engagement & Voice	While the country held inclusive dialogues to develop its pathway in the run-up to UNFSS, stakeholders might consider putting in place mechanisms for ongoing consultation of technical/scientific experts on food system policies that cut across different sectors.
Monitoring & Accountability	Stakeholders could consider developing key performance indicators for their national pathway, along with reporting milestones, mechanisms, and responsibilities, such as systems that ensure action on feedback from monitoring. Once those are in place, it will be essential to ensure results of monitoring these indicators are publicly reported. Stakeholders could also consider mechanisms for ensuring monitoring is participatory, that the pathway is subject to regular review, and that there are methods in place for assessing potential impacts of policies on different parts of the food system (i.e., synergies and trade-offs).
Note: Green shading indicates domains where systems are highly supportive of coherence; yellow where they are moderately highly supportive; orange where they are only somewhat supportive, and red where they are generally not supportive	

Module 2 Example Output

There are many different potential ways to present the results of Module 2. For an audience that is expected to be very interested in the detailed results, the results of all questions can be summarised at the level of the policy area, as shown in Table A2 on the next page. As for Module 1, color-coding of cells following a stoplight system can be used to enable the user to quickly understand the results, using dark green for 'highly reinforcing', lighter green for 'reinforcing', yellow for 'neutral', orange or medium red for 'conflicting', and red or dark red for 'highly conflicting'. To avoid the user having to cross-reference another document, the cells can include a brief text summary of the result. An example of this for agriculture policies is shown below. A similar table could be created for each goal, with the columns being policy areas.

Table A2. Coherence of Agriculture Policies with Different Food Systems Goals								
Zero Hunger		Climate & Disaster Resilience		Healthy Diets		Food loss & waste reduction	Adequate wages	Women's empowerment
Increased supply	Lower Prices	Adaptation	Mitigation	More nutritious foods	Less unhealthy foods			
R&D supports staple crops	No guaranteed output prices	R&D on climate-adapted seeds	Output-linked subsidies	R&D on nutritious products	Output subsidies for oilseeds	Farm management to reduce post-harvest losses	Minimum wages for agricultural workers	No input support targeted to women
Extension and training for staple crop farmers	Output subsidies	No R&D on climate-adapted breeds	Fertiliser subsidies	Biofortification support	Input subsidies for oilseeds & sugar crops	Support for storage	Upskilling agricultural workers	No information services targeted to women
No financial services for staple crop farmers	Output price ceilings	Adoption of climate-smart agriculture	Support for integrated soil fertility management	Extension on nutritious products			Post-farm worker upskilling	Extension targeted to women
Support for irrigation expansion	Marketing boards	Irrigation expansion	Support for mechanisation, plus reducing emissions	Subsidised inputs only for staples		Circular economy support	Irrigation expansion	No provisions increasing women's access to finance
Support for input access	No market information systems	Water conservation	Aim to increase ruminant production	Cold chain support		Cold chain support	Mechanisation without reducing risk of labour displacement	No support to design technologies for women farmers
No guaranteed output prices	Crop futures markets	No crop diversification	Support for livestock emissions reduction	No market development for nutritious products		Output subsidies	Land tenure support	
Output subsidies		Index-based weather insurance	R&D for low-emissions crops	Irrigation support specific to nutritious crops		Commodity boards buy to reduce loss		
Output price ceilings		Limited number of crops supported	Expanding production areas	Support for diverse livestock/fish				

In addition to summarising the results in detail at the level of the policy area or goal, results can be summarised across all policy areas and goals. Such a presentation is likely best suited as an initial snapshot of the results or for an audience that is not expected to be interested in very detailed results. An example of this presentation is shown in Table A3, below.

The results are shown in the shading of each cell in the table, following the legend shown below the table. For example, the dark green shading in the first cell (top left) indicates that agriculture policies reviewed are highly coherent with (supporting of) the goal of increasing the supply of main staple crops, which contributes to achieving zero hunger. In contrast, trade policies are shown to be somewhat incoherent with the goal of increasing nutritious food consumption to contribute to healthy diets for all.

Coherence between Nigeria's Policies and Key Food System Goals

		Agriculture	Health	Environment	Trade	Social	Industrial, Economic & Monetary
Zero Hunger	Increased supply of main staples						
	Affordable prices for main staples						
Climate Resilience	Adaptation						
	Climate change mitigation						
Healthy Diets	More nutritious food consumption						
	Less unhealthy food consumption						
	Reduction of Food Loss & Waste						
Decent Work	Adequate wages for food system workers						
	Effective nutrition-sensitive social protection						
	Empowerment of Women & Girls						
LEGEND		Highly Coherent	Somewhat coherent	Neither coherent nor incoherent	Somewhat incoherent	Highly incoherent	Not assessed
Policies reviewed in this sector were very much in line with achieving this goal				Policies reviewed in this sector were generally not in line with achieving this goal			

Equally important to these summary results, however, is providing recommendations and suggestions for prioritisation. This analysis may also note areas for de-prioritisation. For example, there may be areas where the tool results suggest potential incoherence (i.e., a policy that is 'conflicting' with a goal) but where local stakeholders have agreed that the 'incoherence' is not significant in practice or is the result of a well-considered trade-off in supporting another social goal. The recommendations provided in the scoring rubric (Annex 2 of 'Modules 1 & 2' document) can be used as a starting point for such analysis but will need localisation. The trade-offs included in that document can also be included or used to inform the discussion of which areas to prioritise. Such analysis can be presented in a text accompanying the table.

