



**Solutions from the Land**  
**Senior Advisors/Farmer Envoys – Activities Update**  
**July 10, 2020**

**1. Updates/New Developments**

***A. SDG Progress – High-Level Political Forum***

Over the week of July 6<sup>th</sup>, the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), the United Nations (UN) body overseeing the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), held a series of progress reporting virtual meetings. SfL Board member Melinda Kimble, a senior advisor at the UN Foundation, sat in on the session on SDG 2, which commits to “end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”; she was also able to review segments of other plenary topics during the first day of discussion. The [HLPF Background Note](#) set the stage for a discussion that emphasized SfL’s point that food security, good nutrition and sustainable agriculture lay the foundation for achieving all SDGs. Of particular importance and weight was the statement that “business as usual, including upscaling unsustainable current practices, is not an option and food systems need to be re-thought in a radical manner.”

Melinda observed that the theme “accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development” was superseded by a focus on “how the COVID pandemic was a further obstacle to progress on the SDGs,” and the pandemic’s inequitable impact on poorer and more vulnerable countries and groups within and among countries. Summaries of the UNSG’s Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) highlight how even limited progress has been stymied or even reversed. Documented reductions in child mortality are likely to be undermined by inability to maintain immunizations, malaria control and micronutrient support for children 5 and under in many regions. Stunting among children, which reduces functionality for individuals, is a particular problem in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South East Asia (SEA), also seen in conflict zones (Syria, Yemen) have this problem as well.

Speakers noted that household food security is more than just calorie counts – the quality and variety of food in the diet is also important, and this means farmers need support for diversified production. Speakers underscored the obvious links between improving local produce and market access for smallholders.

African and Asian speakers underscored the need to further develop regional markets with less focus on global trade. The need to raise incomes of smallholders was also noted. Several speakers suggested “fair prices” for farmers rather than maintaining subsidies for urban dwellers, while

several NGOs raised concerns about industrial agriculture and genetically modified crops. Farmer income was seen as issue which crosses over with SDG 8's emphasis on decent work and economic growth.

In introducing the discussion, Jomo Sundaram, former FAO Assistant DG and former ASG in New York in Department of Economic and Social Affairs moderated and highlighted the need to think broadly about hunger, sustainability and environmental issues that impact any country's ability to ensure agricultural sustainability. He also stressed that the many developing country farmers comprise more than 60% of the labor force in SSA and SEA. Unlike in developed countries, these people will remain in the ag sector. More importantly, most subsistence agriculture as well as household food security is managed by women.

All these elements demand a rethinking and transformation of our food systems. Various speakers emphasized how the new focus on agroecology should improve land management. A move to protect agricultural lands – ensuring longer term productivity, minimizing environmental impacts and guaranteeing land rights to smallholders – comprises an integrated package. This approach, per Costa Rica and some others, should underpin the agenda of the 2021 Food Systems Summit.

Several speakers highlighted the need to build more resilience into food systems to mitigate climate change, preserve biodiversity and protect forest and grassland watersheds. To implement these approaches will require data and research as well as mobilizing more finance for ag credit and extension in developing countries. The question of SDG finance is a growing concern as resources are perceived to have shifted to fight the pandemic.

### ***B. Food Systems Summit***

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, in collaboration with the UN's Rome-based Agencies, will convene the Food Systems Summit in 2021, as a critical contribution to the Decade of Action to deliver the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The Summit will raise global awareness to understand the food systems challenges we must solve, build a global conversation on the way in which we produce, process, and consume food, and galvanize global actions and commitments to change our food systems to provide safe, nutritious food for all within our planetary boundaries. As part of this effort, the UN Secretary General has recently announced the [Food Systems Summit Advisory Board and Scientific Group](#). Ambassador Kip Tom will be representing the United States on the advisory committee. *It would be helpful to know if any panel members have connections with any others on the committee for the purposes of further engagement.*

In early July, FAO announced that the 2020 Committee on Food Security annual meeting was moving to a virtual World Food Week event set for Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, followed by a full plenary session, tentatively set for February 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in Rome, pending approval by the FAO governing council. SfL is submitting a proposal to organize a [side event](#) at one or both sessions where we will spotlight climate smart agriculture systems and practices farmers are using to deliver high-value solutions to improve food and nutrition security while simultaneously enhancing health and livelihoods, improving the environment, enhancing biodiversity and delivering high value

terrestrial solutions to climate change. Focusing on outcomes, our farmer and rancher presenters will showcase how they are harnessing innovation and technology, coupled with conservation and agroecology systems and practices to meet the SDGs.

This side event will target a diverse range of stakeholders actively seeking to shape the way agriculture is performed across the planet including farmers with a special emphasis on women and youth, value chain partners, civil society, government and agencies that could benefit from solution pathways that achieve multiple objectives. By sharing knowledge and real-world experiences and outcomes, the panel members and participants can learn from each other, converge and forge consensus on pragmatic, proven and innovative agricultural solutions that benefit producers, the public and the planet.

On June 25<sup>th</sup>, the new HLPE Report No.15: “[Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030](#)” was launched, with contributions from bodies including SfL made to the Executive Summary. Subject both to final confirmation by the CFS Bureau and FAO, the report is likely to be part of a virtual 3-hour plenary CFS Event scheduled to take place on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

### *C. Reorganization of FAO*

FAO is currently implementing the most significant reorganization since its founding, with the fundamental objective is to bring FAO as close as possible to its members. The reorganization entails a strengthened decentralized structure; a management system with increased delegation of authority; and an environment that encourages creativity and initiative. As part of this effort, FAO is developing a new strategy for engagement with the private sector. To ensure that the strategy is fit for purpose, FAO is hosting a series of virtual meetings and a 3-part online consultation during the between July 2<sup>nd</sup> and July 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss how FAO and the private sector can work together in accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals.

The chair of the meetings will be the newly appointed FAO Deputy Director General Beth Bechdol, an SfL ally who has in the past been very open to engaging with the private sector. SfL was able to engage with her at a Private Service Mechanism (PSM) meeting in June as well as in side calls leading up to the event to reemphasize the message that agriculture and innovation will be sources of solutions in the FAO’s work going forward.

### *D. UNFCCC – Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture*

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is currently developing its first-ever agricultural work program, the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA). Over the past three years SfL and the North America Climate Smart Agriculture (NACSAA) platform have made and defended five sets of recommendations (described in detail below) in KJWA workshops to date. SfL and NACSAA representatives have also participated in the last three COPs and UNFCCC intercessional convenings to give agriculture a much-needed seat at the table and advocate for shared [guiding principles](#) and policy/program recommendations.

Each COP/Intercessional has centered around discussion of a set of topics for which NACSAA has provided recommendations carrying key messages, as follows:

<b>NACSAA Submission Topic</b>	<b>Key Points</b>
<a href="#">“Modalities for implementation of the outcomes of the five in-session workshops on issues related to agriculture and other future topics that may arise from this work”</a>	Include non-member stakeholder opinions in KJWA; integrate research and best practices from diverse sources including farmers; allow observer participation in workshops.
<a href="#">“Methods and approaches for assessing adaptation/resilience” and “Improved soil carbon, health, fertility, and integrated systems”</a>	A vulnerability and <a href="#">resilience</a> assessment is the first step to assessing adaptive management strategies. After it is complete, the ag sector should embrace carbon drawdown through established practices.
<a href="#">“Improved nutrient use and manure management”</a>	Animal conversion of high-value protein for human diets from low-value landscapes is key to food security. Carbon- and nutrient-conscious use of manure via 4R management offers ecosystem co-benefits.
<a href="#">“Improved livestock management systems” and “Socioeconomic and food security dimensions of climate change”</a>	With policy support, livestock operations can optimize for low emissions, climate resilience <i>and</i> production. For ag to support urban and rural society with food and livelihoods, the economic survival of farmers is paramount.
<a href="#">NACSAA’s 2020 Guiding Principles for KJWA</a>	Science should be respected; all tools should be used as there is no “silver bullet” solution.

### Next Steps for KJWA and UNFCCC

While negotiations have been delayed by COVID, KJWA work is moving forward as planned.

- The next intercessional workshop (SB 52) on the April 2020 submissions (integrated livestock systems and the socioeconomic elements of climate smart agriculture) has been postponed until a date TBD in 2021. SfL/NACSAA will participate in the workshop and any events leading up to it with the message that the pandemic spotlights the need for more emphasis and alignment with food system security initiatives; focus on synergies and co-benefits; and the need to adopt “business unusual” strategies including innovation.
- One more submission is due on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 on “future topics not listed” and KJWA progress, with a last workshop to construct a final report.
- Still to be developed are recommendations for how implementation can be enabled including the roles of government, business, civil society and most importantly farmers.

Beyond UNFCCC, the future of agriculture and food system reform are focal points of discussion in other UN system platforms, including (among others) FAO, the Committee on Food Security and the World Food Systems Summit set for September 2021.

### *E. Other Platforms at Work*

The HLPF progress reporting above underscored that the Food Systems Summit must be transformative as business-as-usual cannot ensure Agenda 2030 will be implemented. However, there is significant disagreement on the form that this “business unusual” path forward will take. The HLPF discussion followed a common trend observed in UN platforms by including notes that climate smart agriculture (CSA) will be an element, but that COVID 19 has highlighted many social inequities that must be addressed to achieve both SDG 2 and the broader 2030 effort.

This has manifested in a palpable barrier to overcome as Summit planning continues: a prevailing culture of member skepticism about global trade and the perception that existing agricultural technology and modern agribusiness companies has devalued smallholder farmers. This viewpoint is promoted by well-funded existing alliances of groups including environmental, nutrition and animal welfare groups with a strong UN and international presence, as well as aligned member states. These broader issues will need to be addressed and the success of next year's summit will depend on how the COVID emergency unfolds and impacts all these countries, as well as the general response to a message championing greater farmer input and the case for innovation.

## 2. SDGs White Paper

### A. *Draft Framework*

With Advisor and Ambassador support, SfL continues to construct a white paper on ways to enable agriculture landscapes to deliver multiple solutions to SDGs. Since the last update, team Co-Chairs have processed the feedback provided to date on the flow of the report and have produced a [Version V5.0 Framework](#), which the drafting team will be using to construct our paper. *The team very much appreciates all of the input that has been provided and looks forward to receiving additional thoughts and perspectives as we move forward.*

### B. *Draft Preamble*

*The Co-Chairs have completed the report's stage-setting [Preamble](#) and welcome further feedback.*

### C. *Content*

Key points for formulation of the paper will be writing with a farmer voice – i.e. what they need, what they are experiencing, and how they are innovating to meet these challenges. The report must offer specific pathways farmers can relate to and embrace/put to work, as well as practical and pragmatic action steps farmers can and will be motivated to implement. The report will also incorporate case study examples of real farmers/ranchers, reinforced with video testimonials of producers showcasing their work, challenges and accomplishments, to describe innovative and integrated land management system/practices that produce multiple outcomes/benefits.

Recent additions to the planned report content include more emphasis on the role of technology and innovation and its availability, access and acceptability; barriers/enablers to scale; and the potential of terrestrial solutions for food system change. Healthy diets, fair value chains and food and waste loss will be noted in the report as “building blocks” without deep exploration, as these are not SfL's area of focus. *Further inputs into report content are requested.*

### D. *Timeline for Completion*

The projected schedule for this effort has shifted as work has continued. While the previous goal was to have a first draft constructed by July 15<sup>th</sup>, after recalibration of the timeline, August 10<sup>th</sup>

has been established as the new target date for a V1.0 draft, with a final report ready to be released right after Labor Day ahead of the multiple UN virtual meetings that will be taking place this fall.

### *E. Case Studies*

The team is actively searching for in-kind resources, e.g. photo material or video footage, quantifiable data, and candidates for sustainable agriculture case studies illustrating the diversity of Sfl farmers' core recommendations. Both U.S. national and international candidates should be included. *Sfl staff member [Cara Urban](#) will follow up with the group shortly to solicit potential candidates that might be included.*

## **3. Potential Partners**

### *A. Organizations*

See [here](#) for a brief review of Food System Transformation Initiatives/Players/Platforms.

### *B. Potential Donors*

Sfl has developed an initial [work plan](#) to share with donors. *Your assistance in identifying funding partners who may be interested in agricultural solutions to SDGs would be much appreciated.*

## **4. Next Steps**

Next steps not yet covered will be discussed at the upcoming meeting on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. ET. The Zoom meeting link for this update is available [here](#). *The Sfl team looks forward to further feedback on these updates!*