



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Food safety, sustainability, and innovation
Farm to Fork Strategy

EXPERT GROUP ON GENERAL FOOD LAW AND SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOD SYSTEMS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON THE PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE MONITORING OF THE FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

19 September 2023, 14H00-16H00

1. WELCOME BY THE COMMISSION

DG SANTE welcomed the participants and opened the meeting of the expert group on general food law and sustainability of food systems dedicated to the preparatory work for the monitoring of the Farm to Fork (F2F) strategy.

The Commission informed the Members of the Expert Group about the state of play of the project initiated by DG SANTE, in collaboration with other DGs. Furthermore, the Commission highlighted that monitoring was explicitly mentioned in the F2F strategy and informed about the challenges to capture all dimensions of sustainability through a limited number of existing indicators.

The Commission also explained that the work on monitoring was an iterative process, and that there is clearly a need for new indicators (for which placeholders are being suggested in the monitoring framework) in order to arrive at a more balanced coverage of different parts of the food system and different aspects of sustainability. The first output of this work will be a dashboard that aims to be as comprehensive and balanced as possible with the currently available indicators, while work can continue in the future to further improve it.

2. PRESENTATION BY THE JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE ON THE ONGOING PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE MONITORING FRAMEWORK OF THE FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) presented an outline of the framework for the monitoring of the F2F Strategy. See presentation.

The JRC explained that the framework is developed on the basis of an integrated food system sustainability model to link the targets and objectives of the F2F Strategy to the Food System (FS) model, across the three sustainability dimensions (environmental, economic, social). The proposed sustainability model will consist of 13 thematic areas and 40 domains. Over 350

existing indicators were collected and documented covering the whole food supply chain (primary production, food processing, food distribution and food consumption) and after evaluation according to their fitness for the purpose, only some of these indicators were selected (as per the presentation). The JRC also proposed 44 placeholders -conceptualising indicators that should be developed in the future. Furthermore, the JRC presented the indicators for the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability that are currently being considered for the dashboard.

The JRC closed the presentation by highlighting that the FS sustainability model and the proposed indicators were based on the outcome of the ongoing discussion within the Commission services and welcomed the contribution from and collaboration with the expert group members from Member States.

3. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND WRAP-UP

Several questions raised by Member States related to the already selected indicators, while suggestions for new indicators were also put forward.

One Member State (MS) proposed that the indicator “farmers income compared to the rest of the economy” should be complementary compared with the relative cost of living at a regional level. The JRC responded that now only national data were taken into consideration, but in the future, it could be an option to extend it to regional level data.

One MS inquired about the scope of the indicator “farmers & fishers’ mental health, wellbeing, and/ or life expectancy”.

The JRC replied that mental health is a challenge in our current society, and it is an area that goes beyond the boundaries of the food system and deep in our social structure, a factor that will be considered.

One MS asked whether there will be any indicator to reflect the reduction of meat consumption. The JRC clarified that there will be an indicator on the “ratio plant to total protein supply” in the domain “sustainable food availability”.

An indicator on the transparency of the footprint of food products was also suggested by a MS.

The JRC confirmed that the domain “food marketing” is included in the component “food distribution” after a request for clarification from a Member State.

Two MSs underlined the need for indicators targeting food safety under the domain “Nutrition and healthy, sustainable diets”.

The Commission clarified that food safety is part of sustainability and highlighted that the initiatives on sustainability are not here to jeopardize food safety. The monitoring framework is an operational (not a legislative) tool to guide the transition to a sustainable food system. The purpose of the monitoring of the F2F Strategy is to develop and use indicators to assess the

progress on aspects that need to be improved in the food systems. EU has achieved a very high level of food safety, where measuring further progress is rather difficult.

One MS asked for the definition of planetary boundaries and the way that the indicators will show progress.

The JRC provided information on the consumption footprint according to which food consumption can be assessed against the planetary boundaries through an adaptation of the Planetary Boundaries (PBs) framework to the Environmental Footprint impact categories.

The JRC also explained that the same approach was considered in the circular economy monitoring framework, where the unit of measure can be changed to "times the planetary boundary". A value below 1 should be ideally achieved to ensure that the impact is within the safe operating space for humanity.

Two MSs requested clarification on the link of this initiative to the FSFS.

The Commission clarified that monitoring is an operational, adaptive, and dynamic tool to assess the progress in the transition to sustainability of food systems, while the FSFS is a legislative framework that aims to establish definitions, principles, and objectives. The FSFS could call for adaptation of the monitoring framework later on and could also establish a link with the monitoring dashboard as regards the mechanism of how new data can be gathered for indicators.

Several MSs expressed some views on the requirements that the dashboard should meet. One Member State emphasized the need for a meaningful dashboard in which all the individual aspects will be weighted/normalised to achieve an overall conclusion on the sustainability of the food system of a specific MS and an overall EU heatmap. One MS asked whether an obligation for the Member States to submit new data will arise because of the initiative.

The JRC replied that the current indicators are based on data already published, open and accessible. Normalisation of data is under way.

One Member State also inquired about the timeline of the publication of the dashboard and the draft from FSFS.

The Commission clarified that there is no legal deadline regarding the timeline for the dashboard. A first version of the dashboard might be presented by Q1 2024, but it will depend on the contributions that will be received from Member States, stakeholders as well as internal discussions. Regarding the FSFS proposal, the Commission highlighted that no specific date for adoption has been set yet and the contributions received from MSs, and stakeholders are currently being analysed.

The Commission closed the meeting by thanking the JRC for the work and the MS for the collaboration and asked for the contribution with written comments from Member States by 3 October (deadline extended **by 10 October 2023**).