



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Farm to Fork Strategy

AD HOC MEETING OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON GENERAL FOOD LAW SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOD SYSTEMS ON UPDATES CONCERNING THE FOOD SYSTEM MONITORING FRAMEWORK

13 NOVEMBER 2024

Summary Record

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed the participants and opened the meeting of the Expert Group on the General Food Law and Sustainability of Food Systems dedicated to updates concerning the Food System Monitoring Framework. The project is steered by DG SANTE in close cooperation with other Commission services, including (DG AGRI, MARE and ENV) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC), who has been performing the scientific work. The objective has been to develop a framework that covers the three sustainability dimensions (economic, social, environmental) and the different parts of the food supply chain in a balanced way.

The Commission has made significant progress in developing a monitoring framework that aims to use existing data and indicators that have been selected through a robust scientific methodology. It was highlighted that the project never aimed (and still does not aim) to propose any new data collection or reporting obligations for any actors and it will be iterative, with a first version being updated and improved over time.

A consultation with the Expert Group was carried out in autumn 2023, which attracted many comments, and the JRC has carefully analysed these comments to update the framework. The Commission plans to publish a first version of the dashboard in the coming weeks, accompanied by a technical report documenting its development.

The project is scheduled to continue until autumn 2026, providing further opportunity to reflect and discuss how to improve the monitoring framework. This will be a useful tool for all actors involved in food system policy making and will help to ensure the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the EU farming and food sector within the boundaries of our planet.

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) gave a comprehensive presentation on the [EU Food System Monitoring Framework](#).

JRC informed experts about the developments of the EU Food System Monitoring Framework and the upcoming publication of a first version of the monitoring dashboard and the accompanying technical report. JRC further provided feedback to the comments received in autumn 2023. JRC concluded by presenting the EU Food System Monitoring dashboard.

3. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND WRAP-UP

Questions and comments raised by Member States (MSs)

The approach and methodology used in the monitoring system were discussed among the MSs. A MS inquired as to whether an overarching score or a combined index has been developed at the country level, encompassing the three dimensions of the monitoring system. The JRC responded that a single aggregated sustainability index at the country level has not been proposed due to the high complexity that would entail as regards methodology and weighing different aspects of sustainability. A composite index also poses the challenge of losing granularity which is relevant for some aspects. It was also mentioned that there are reflections on how to capture resilience in a composite indicator. The EU Resilience Dashboard was considered as a source of inspiration, but even that dashboard has not provided indices for overall resilience. The JRC plans to work on resilience in the next phase of the project.

The JRC noted that some established cross-cutting indicators, such as the consumption footprint, already exist for the environmental domain that provide a global sustainability scores aggregated for all components of the food supply chain.

A MS highlighted the need for a clearer explanation of what is the underlying assessment approach and what the main elements of the assessment approach for the sustainability of the EU food system. The JRC replied that the assessment of the indicators had been performed according to a standardised Quality Assessment Framework, which is described in the technical report to be published together with the dashboard. The MS further noted that the concept of food environments is a crucial one from a policy point of view, and inquired whether a food environment policy indicator would be developed. The JRC will undertake this work in the next phase of the project.

One MS inquired about the apparent differences between the monitoring framework currently being presented and the one presented in autumn 2023 and noted that the comments they could put forward on the current framework might differ from those made a year ago. It further inquired about the expectations regarding MS contributions to the monitoring framework. The Commission clarified that the monitoring tool is a technical work, not linked to any legislation nor creating obligation for reporting for MSs. This means that the dashboard will be available for all, and comments are welcome. Cooperation with JRC will continue, and MS will be given further opportunities to contribute in this process.

The timeline for the publication of the dashboard was also discussed. The Commission replied that the dashboard would be published soon, ensuring that everyone has access to the information at the same time.

A MS suggested including food safety in the tool, but the JRC stated that food safety was considered as prerequisite of sustainability. This information can be consulted in other frameworks, where relevant indicators exist.

The JRC further explained that the current tool aims to be comprehensive and cover a range of aspects related to food systems sustainability. Finally, the JRC emphasized that

the monitoring tool should assist in evidence-based policies. This highlights the importance of using data and evidence to inform decision-making and drive positive change in the food systems.

Closing remarks by DG SANTE

Regarding the process for the dashboard, the Chair explained that a new administrative arrangement was in place with the JRC for the maintenance and keeping up to date of the dashboard and that – if deemed necessary - future adjustments could be made. Nevertheless, SANTE considered the outcome as was presented in the slides to satisfy the requirements and the task-specific specifications of the administrative arrangement. The intention would therefore be for the JRC to put the dashboard online soon. Once ready for publication, experts would be informed by email.

The Chair invited the experts to navigate and test the dashboard and to send possible comments to JRC and/or SANTE colleagues. The dashboard will continuously be updated and improved, in terms of content and in terms of technicalities. Therefore, there would be no specific deadline for comments, but MSs could continue to help SANTE and JRC to improve the dashboard.

The Chair thanked JRC and the participants for their constructive contributions and participation and closed the meeting.