



United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021
Scientific Group <https://sc-fss2021.org/>

Prof. Joachim von Braun
Chair, Scientific Group

Professor for Economic & Technological Change at Bonn University
+49-228-73-1800 jvonbraun@uni-bonn.de <https://sc-fss2021.org/>

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Ms Amina J. Mohammed
The Deputy Secretary-General
Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG)
United Nations

Excellency, Dear Amina Mohammed,

It has been a great honour to have served the UN as the Chairperson of the Scientific Group (ScGroup) for the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021. As we are closing the activities of the ScGroup by the end of this year, I want to report to you about the ScGroup's key outputs, and also point at some issues that would benefit from your continued attention in the follow up to the Summit.

On Friday December 17th, 2021 we held the last meeting of the Scientific Group. In view of many achievements, the Group concluded its task in high spirits. Special Envoy Agnes Kalibata and the Head of the Rome-based Hub Stefanos Fotiou, briefed us comprehensively. We feel positive about the Hub, and appreciate continued engagement of yourself and the SG in the summit follow up.

The Terms of Reference of the ScGroup that you gave us in April 2020 challenged us, but the deliverables you requested were achieved. The [ScGroup](#) constituted a team of twenty-eight food systems scientists -- social scientists, economists and scientists working within the natural and biological sciences, ecology, and food technology – from all parts of the world. From July 2020 through December 2021, the ScGroup held [fourteen meetings](#) (all minutes public) to plan, discuss, and review its submissions to the Summit.

The ScGroup developed a series of original [scientific papers](#), including five studies covering each of the Summit's Action Tracks, as well as others that influenced the debates, such as one on the "true cost" of food, and one on actions for achieving SDG2. A key contribution of the ScGroup is the [paper](#), "Science for the transformation of food systems: Opportunities for the UN Food Systems Summit" with its seven action points for innovations to achieve the food systems transformation needed for 2030 agenda. Journal articles based on

the ScGroup papers prepared for the Summit have appeared in academic journals including in [*nature*](#).

The ScGroup, in liaison with over 40 global research partners, delivered 40 science and evidence-based, policy-focused [research briefs](#). The research partners of the ScGroup included academic and research institutions, policy think-tanks, UN agencies, academies of sciences and private-sector research and advocacy organizations. These briefs underwent peer-review and covered a wide spectrum of food systems related thematic areas. Briefs on [climate change and food systems](#), [indigenous food systems](#), [the role of aquatic foods](#), [livestock and sustainable food systems](#), [water for food systems](#), exemplify the thematic reach of these briefs. A collection of papers from the ScGroup and briefs from its partners has been published as digital Science Reader, [“Science and Innovations for Food Systems Transformation and Summit Actions: Papers by the Scientific Group and its partners in support of the UN Food Systems Summit”](#). This Science Reader for the Summit has been widely used in the Science Compendium of the Summit. Moreover, an open-access book volume is being produced with Springer Publishing in the spring of 2022

One of the challenges you gave us was to mobilize science at scale. The ScGroup recognizes the indispensability of dialogue among scientists, policymakers, and civil society in the process of transformation of food systems. It was with this spirit that a big virtual conference, the [“Science Days”](#), was organized by the ScGroup and hosted by FAO on July 8-9. The event saw the participation of over 2000 attendants from research, policy, civil society, and industry. The discussions focused on opportunities for investments on evidence gaps that must be addressed to successfully transform food systems toward more healthy diets and to enable more inclusive, sustainable and resilient food systems. Partners of the ScGroup held more than [40 side events on July 5-7](#) to present science-based solutions on the key challenges facing global food systems.

I consider it an important achievement that the ScGroup established partnerships with the Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge communities, with farmer representatives, and with science communities in the private sector and start-up communities. Post Summit we recently had further meetings with the Indigenous Peoples’ community and with farmers representatives and engage in a number of national dialogues.

The ScGroup presented science perspectives at the [Pre-Summit](#), and conversed with policymakers and stakeholders. The conversation highlighted innovations within biosciences, digital sciences, and agronomy, those related to ending hunger and provisioning of safe and nutritious food for all and institutional innovations for the sustainability of food systems. The key role of science and innovation for a successful transformation of food systems was brought to the fore at the Summit. I am grateful for the prominent role science could play in the [Summit](#) sessions, and we are pleased how strong the UN Secretary General emphasized the role of science in his *Summary and Statement of Action on the UN Food Systems Summit*. This has further motivated the science community for the follow up to the Summit.

Never before has science had the opportunity through an independent role to contribute in such ways to the agenda of a food summit.

All through the process, the ScGroup engaged with food system stakeholders through social [media platforms](#), a monthly newsletter, and a dedicated [website of the ScGroup, which](#) we will keep alive so that it may continue to serve as a key science resource for food systems transformations.

Our last output is a paper on the role of science in implementation of the Summit actions, with a focus on national level implementation, and a concept for mobilizing the diverse actors in the science landscape in support of government and stakeholder actions (paper is attached).

I consider the Summit a success. There are some important areas that require further attention in the future. I want to mention four of these:

- Strengthening the *capacities* for national level implementation of actions, especially in emerging economies, is essential. This is an area for stakeholders to get together and catalyze the necessary actions. Science bodies can assist.
- Developing a strong *finance* agenda for the investments needed to achieve end of hunger and other key targets is important. This can partly build on finance proposals from the ScGroup and its partners.
- Encouraging institutional innovation and enhanced coordination for improved *science - policy interfaces* serving national level implementation, and global level networked science services. The ScGroup has identified approaches for that.
- Facilitating strong *synergies of food system actions with other key areas*, especially climate policy, Covid-19-, and trade policy; relatedly, the food price inflation is a concern.

In closing, I want to commend you and your team for the successful Food Systems Summit and in particular for inviting the science communities to contribute. I highlight also the excellent cooperation with Special Envoy Agnes Kalibata, always helpful and productive.

Again, it was a great pleasure to work with you.

Best wishes,



Joachim von Braun