



Comments to the Department of State Bureau of International Organization Affairs Stakeholder Listening Session re: the September 2021 UN Food Systems Summit

Submitted September 8, 2021

Executive Summary

The National Milk Producers Federation and the U.S. Dairy Export Council deeply appreciate the extensive and high quality work the Administration has invested in preparing for and leading U.S. engagement on the UN Food Systems Summit. The U.S. dairy industry has been extremely active in the sustainability arena, having made ample strides already toward producing dairy in an increasingly sustainable way and establishing goals on further improvements in the years to come. Below we provide an overview of some of those efforts.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide some targeted recommendations of high relevance to the dairy sector as the U.S. government finalizes its preparations for the Summit and the work to come thereafter.

Introduction

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and the U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) thank the Department of State, along with the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development, for the opportunity to provide written comments and participate in the September 3rd listening session in preparation for the September 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (FSS).

NMPF develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. NMPF provides a forum through which dairy farmers and their cooperatives formulate policy on national issues that affect milk production and marketing. NMPF's contribution to this policy is aimed at advancing the economic interests of dairy farmers, thus assuring the nation's consumers an adequate supply of pure, wholesome, and nutritious milk and dairy products.

USDEC is a non-profit, independent membership organization that represents the global trade interests of U.S. dairy producers, proprietary processors and cooperatives, ingredient suppliers and export traders. Dairy Management Inc. founded USDEC in 1995 and, through the dairy checkoff program, is the organization's primary funder.

Comments on preparation for the FSS

The National Milk Producers Federation and the U.S. Dairy Export Council applaud U.S. participation in the FSS preparations thus far, including the recently released paper "Background on the U.S. Approach to the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit."

We welcome and appreciate, in particular, the strong U.S. leadership shown during and before the July Pre-Summit ministerial meeting in Rome. The Pre-Summit ministerial made significant advances, and we thank the Administration and the U.S. delegation for clearly demonstrating its commitment to accelerating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; advancing modern, innovative, science- and evidence-based solutions; and building diverse, healthy diets as core to sustainable food systems, including by stepping up investments in agricultural innovation.

We strongly support the Administration in these shared objectives and in advancing the principles elaborated in the U.S. background paper, including through the Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate and other

coalitions in which the United States is engaged. We look forward to learning more about how U.S. dairy producers can support and participate in these coalitions and other work to advance positive FSS outcomes.

Dairy products are a leading source of critical nutrients for Americans and people around the world, and the U.S. dairy industry has long led the way with contributions to all three elements of sustainability as defined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization - social, economic, and environmental.

For example, through the Net Zero Initiative (NZI) launched in 2020, the U.S. dairy industry is accelerating voluntary action on dairy farms to reduce environmental impacts by making sustainable practices and technologies more accessible and affordable to U.S. dairy farms of all sizes and geographies. This is achievable through research, on-farm pilots, development of manure-based products and ecosystem markets, and other farmer technical support and opportunities.

The primary expected outcomes include 1) the collective U.S. dairy industry advances to net zero carbon emissions and significant improvements in water use and quality, 2) in addition to nutrient-dense foods and beverages, dairy farms provide products and services that enable other industries and communities to be more sustainable, and 3) farmers are able to realize the untapped value on-farm, making the system of continuous improvement self-sustaining.

The Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Program is U.S. dairy's industry wide, on-farm social responsibility program that provides assurances that U.S. dairy farmers are global leaders in animal care (UN SDG 9 and 12), antibiotic stewardship (UN SDG 9 and 12), biosecurity (UN SDG 9 and 12), environmental stewardship (UN SDG 13, 14, and 15), and workforce development (UN SDG 8 and 12), all as part of a One Health approach. FARM is the world's first dairy welfare standard to meet the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Specification requirements as set by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). The FARM Animal Care pillar boasts participation from 99% of U.S. domestic milk production and includes more than 31,000 dairy farm participants from more than 130 cooperatives and processors in 49 of the 50 U.S. states.

Numerous dietary guidelines in the United States and globally recommend consumption of dairy as a leading source of critical nutrients, particularly for women, children, and aging and vulnerable populations. Research continues to demonstrate milk, cheese, yogurt and other dairy products' vital contributions to intakes of critical nutrients, at the same time as dairy farmers make continuous improvements to conserve natural resources. Our commitments will build on progress that enables U.S. dairy farms to have the world's lowest dairy GHG emissions per liter of milk produced.¹

For these reasons, NMPF and USDEC reiterate our gratitude for the United States' comprehensive leadership, interagency coordination, and work with other countries and stakeholders throughout the Summit process to date. We encourage continued U.S. leadership to ensure that FSS outcomes and future food systems work to support the role of agricultural innovation; promote the benefits of rules-based international trade; reflect existing international consensus and commitments; recognize that all production systems should seek to minimize environmental impact without sacrificing overall diet quality and diversity; and allow for flexibility to address national, cultural, personal, and other circumstances.

We would like to offer a few specific recommendations as the U.S. works to finalize its preparations for the Summit and the workstreams to flow from that event in the future:

- **Clearly communicate and promote the positive role that sustainable livestock production can play in global food systems. To that end we propose 5 key steps:**

¹ <https://dairysustainabilityframework.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Climate-Change-and-the-Global-Dairy-Cattle-Sector.pdf>



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- In U.S. head of delegation remarks at the FSS, we ask that the Administration explicitly reference the positive role that livestock and animal sourced foods can play in meeting the world’s nutritional and sustainability needs into the future. This point would be fully in keeping with the Administration’s promotion of diverse diets and multiple pathways to achieving progress on the sustainability targets.

We appreciate and support the more general statements made at the Pre-Summit, yet encourage a direct affirmation of the role that livestock and animal-sourced foods play in the future of the food system alongside crop production and plant-based foods. Such a statement recognizes that both production systems are essential parts of American agriculture while making clear that ambitious progress is needed from all sectors to reduce environmental impact. This will send a strong message to the world and to the more than 2 million American farmers of all sizes and geographies that the United States supports an inclusive and ambitious path towards more sustainable food systems.

- Actively and publicly support the proposed “Global Sustainable Livestock Coalition” proposed by the World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Alliance Bioversity/CIAT and Soil4Climate with the support of several private sector groups representing global livestock sectors. We understand an opportunity exists for the United States to exercise leadership in defining the work of the coalition between the Summit and the February 2022 Meeting of the FAO Subcommittee on Livestock. This would allow the United States to ensure the coalition is appropriately ambitious yet practical and reflects U.S. values, such as utilizing a transparent, science and evidence-based approach. This leadership opportunity only exists, however, if the United States is willing to move quickly and join other like-minded countries in support of the coalition ahead of and during the September 23 Summit.
- Work with other like-minded countries to oppose the creation of any coalition of action specific to livestock or otherwise that would seek to dramatically curtail production and consumption of animal sourced foods, rather than embracing greater innovation and efficiencies to reduce the environmental impact of livestock sector around the globe. This specifically includes any coalition or outside efforts seeking to establish a narrative that the Summit’s goals, Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement are only achievable through the reduction in production and consumption of animal sourced foods.
- Work with other like-minded countries to urge the UN Secretary General to avoid use of the phrase “just transition” in his FSS remarks and report. This phrase, which has been corrupted in the context of the Summit by the efforts of an anti-animal activist group, implies support for the concept of dramatic reductions in the consumption of animal-sourced foods². If the goal is to convey the need for the equitable transitions toward a more sustainable future, we recommend the U.S. urge UN leadership to be specific by utilizing the terms “equitable” or “fair”.
- Modify the title of the new coalition of action the United States is supporting to explicitly reference crops and livestock: “Coalition on Sustainable **Crop and Livestock** Productivity Growth for Food Security and Resource Conservation”. With this shift, the United States could make clear that all foods and all farmers have a place in the sustainable vision the United States seeks to foster.

- **Promote a role for school milk as a key component of the school meals coalition for action.**

² <https://50by40.org/a-just-transition-within-livestock-production>

- For decades school milk has been a critical element of the many highly successful U.S. school meals programs, helping provide valuable nutrition in a highly palatable format to tens of millions of school children across the country. Numerous other countries also have school milk programs³; examples include South Korea, Sri Lanka, Burundi, Kenya, Japan, Peru, India and elsewhere. School milk is typically locally sourced which can provide a nice complement to the mainstay components of the meal that, in some development contexts may be sourced from donors outside the target country. We strongly encourage working with other coalition partners to foster the inclusion of school milk programs or school milk as part of this expanded school meals initiative.
- **Actively work to shape UN Leadership comments and the FSS report.**
 - Continue to work with like-minded countries to shape the contents of the UN leadership's remarks at the Summit and their characterization of the Summit's outcomes to help drive alignment with the U.S. Approach to the Food Systems Summit.⁴ This includes ensuring that any action areas, coalitions of action, game changing ideas or other materials included in the Summit's compendium are well vetted and reviewed transparently against this U.S. Approach.
- **Actively work to shape the Post Summit workstream resulting from the FSS and steer that process toward the Rome-based agricultural agencies as they possess the strongest grounding in these areas.**
 - This should include making use of the expertise contained within the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Although not considered one of the three Rome-based agencies, CFS maintains a multistakeholder, transparent process that has demonstrated its ability to manage complex and polarizing issues in a manner that prioritizes science-based policymaking.

We offer our support for continued work to advance FSS outcomes that advance the Sustainable Development Goals, improve food security, and advance all aspects of sustainability in the United States and around the world.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our thoughts on these vitally important matters. We thank the Department of State, as well as the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development, for seeking public input on issues related to the FSS, and we look forward to continued dialogue.

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³ <https://fil-idf.org/dairys-global-impact/school-milk-knowledge-hub/>

⁴ <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Background-on-US-approach-2021-UN-Food-Systems-Summit.pdf>