

NAEGA Statement on the United Nations Food Systems Summit 06/09/2021

A crosscutting effort within the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and other fora addressing the future of food is needed that identifies and advocates for consumer-focused commercial responses that place the interests of people first. The effort must be built upon the pillars of international trade, international investment, and secure systems.

The UN report: *Making trade work for the environment, prosperity and resilience* provides some valuable direction (www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/unereport2018_e.pdf).ⁱ Successful future food systems must be resilient. Ecosystem resilience is the inherent ability to absorb various disturbances and reorganize while undergoing state changes to maintain critical functions. To achieve global food security, resilient trade ecosystems are essential to achieving environmental sustainability, supporting innovation, and managing critical limited resources like water.ⁱⁱ

Resilient trade within food systems results through symbiotic relationships across value chains, starting with local production that often connects smallholders to domestic markets and ultimately the world for products derived from agriculture. Effective responsiveness to change and robustness of these diverse symbiotic relationships is very evident as the world responds in real time to the COVID19 pandemic. Restricting markets by inhibiting trade and investment, by not providing for security in logistics and through politically motivated measures such as pursuing unsustainable or uneconomic domestic self-sufficiency strategies have consistently resulted in reduced availability and affordability of nutrition, waste, poor environmental outcomes, and even political conflict. Local, national, regional, and international markets are critical to providing returns to labor and investment that in turn support innovative, responsive, reliable, and responsible food supplies.

Ensuring a trade supportive and least trade distortive environment to allow for consumer access is a core food system principle. Fundamental to this principle are actions that:

1. Place people first by educating and incentivizing (including enhancements to welfare and mobility) workforce and leadership.
2. Ensure the preservation of a competitive commercial environment that brings the consumer closer to an understanding of production and markets.
3. Enhance and maintain physical and cyber security throughout the value and logistics chain.
4. Accommodate international movement of labor and capital to support innovation and investment in necessary infrastructure and technique.
5. Provide for transparency and accountability in official and commercial practice.
6. Protect and incentivize the creation and maintenance of intellectual property.
7. Avoid unsustainable and uneconomical government strategies that distort market signals and are counter-productive to increasing food security.

NAEGA is identifying, communicating, advocating and providing services to achieve these objectives. We welcome partners and support.

ⁱⁱ Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life. The UN notes that over the coming decades, a changing climate, growing global population, rising food prices, and environmental stressors will have significant yet uncertain impacts on food security. Adaptation strategies and policy responses to global change, including options for handling water allocation, land use patterns, food trade, postharvest food processing, and food prices and safety will evolve. Food Systems that contribute to Food Security may be closely aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 3.