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**SFS** | MED  
Platform



**One planet**  
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Sustainable  
Food Systems



# POLICY executive BRIEF

## Continuing regional collaboration on food systems transformation in the Mediterranean



*This executive brief outlines key achievements of the work of the SFS-MED Platform, a multistakeholder effort launched by CIHEAM, FAO, PRIMA and UfM in the framework of the One Planet Network's Sustainable Food Systems Programme, in the period 2021-2025. This document also presents ideas for potential regional collaboration in the near future, with the objective of engaging further food systems stakeholders, accompanying the alignment of regional, national and local efforts with the broader goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

# 1. CONTEXT

## A PLATFORM FOR MEDITERRANEAN FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

The Platform for Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean ([SFS-MED Platform](#)) is a forum for dialogue and collaboration, which aims at leveraging cross-country and multistakeholder collaboration as a way to advance a sustainable transformation of agrifood systems in the Mediterranean region. Key pillars of the initiative include promoting shared learning around key levers for agrifood systems transformation and facilitating dialogue and technical knowledge exchange among diverse stakeholder groups, including private sector, civil society, research and government.

**Agrifood systems in the Mediterranean region face deeply interconnected and intensifying challenges.** Water scarcity is among the highest in the world and arable land is very limited. Climate change is amplifying pressures, with the Mediterranean warming 20% faster than the global average,<sup>1</sup> intensifying droughts, heatwaves and wildfires and further straining land, water and ecosystems.

Overexploitation of resources, including deforestation and marine resource depletion, is accelerating environmental degradation, eroding the Mediterranean's unique biodiversity, a key foundation of its agrifood systems. At the same time, socio-economic pressures are hindering progress in ending food insecurity and malnutrition, with dietary patterns shifting away from traditional Mediterranean diets towards more processed foods, undermining nutrition and health.

Conflicts, economic disparities and rapid population growth have contributed to a rise in food insecurity in parts of the region.<sup>2</sup> Across the Mediterranean region, women play a key role in agrifood system, so adopting gender transformative approaches becomes an urgent and strategic priority. On top of this, widening rural-urban inequalities, high youth unemployment (particularly in rural areas) and migration pressures further complicate efforts to ensure sustainable livelihoods and equitable access to food.

**Transforming agrifood systems in the Mediterranean is, therefore, an urgent priority to ensure food security, inclusive and equitable economic development and environmental sustainability.** With a population exceeding 578 million and projected to grow,<sup>3</sup> the region must rethink how food is produced, distributed, consumed and disposed of.



A systems approach offers a pathway to address the interconnected challenges agrifood systems are facing, recognizing the dynamic interactions among environmental, social and economic drivers and calling for integrated, cross-sectoral solutions that can deliver multiple co-benefits across all dimensions of agrifood systems.<sup>4</sup> These include leveraging green and circular economy principles, promoting sustainable consumption and production and investing in nature-based solutions and climate-smart innovations.

The region's shared marine resources offer significant potential for a sustainable blue economy,<sup>5</sup> including responsible fisheries

and aquaculture, which can contribute to food security and livelihoods while preserving marine ecosystems.<sup>6</sup>

A systems approach to agrifood systems transformation also emphasizes inclusive governance, data-driven decision-making and sustainable finance to align national strategies with regional cooperation, contributing to progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, transforming agrifood systems is not only a necessity but a strategic opportunity to build decarbonized, equitable and innovative Mediterranean economies.



## 2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2021–2025

### 2.1 Collaboration among key regional organizations (FAO, CIHEAM, PRIMA, UfM) enhanced.

SFS-MED Platform is successfully enhancing collaboration among key regional organizations on critical agrifood systems issues such as sustainability and circularity, data sharing, science diplomacy and synchronizing inclusive transformation strategies within the wider Mediterranean socio-economic and political context. The

Platform also promoted multistakeholder [initiatives on the ground](#) to demonstrate and upscale the viability of sustainable practices in food systems as part of the development and implementation of national pathways for agrifood systems transformation.

### 2.2 Alignment of regional efforts to the global food systems transformation agenda (e.g. UNFSS process) through multistakeholder regional dialogues and cooperation across geographies.

The SFS-MED Platform has so far engaged diverse stakeholders at local, national, regional and global level (reaching out to around 4000 contacts), in participatory cross-sectoral events (a series of independent UNFSS policy dialogues and a series of technical webinars). Along with these, a joint [stocktaking exercise](#) of UNFSS

dialogues in the Mediterranean contributed to outlining food systems transformation levers reflecting the trends, priorities and challenges emerged as common to most countries in the Mediterranean. The key levers identified are shown in Figure 1:



FIGURE 1: Key levers for food systems transformation in the Mediterranean. Source: FAO, CIHEAM and UfM (2021)



## 2.3 Knowledge hub on food systems transformation in the Mediterranean established.

The SFS-MED Platform has successfully established a [repository](#) of inspiring stories from the ground showcasing pathways for food systems transformation in the region focusing on multistakeholder collaboration and innovative ideas. These experiences are drawn from a series of [technical webinars](#) (2022-2025) that have engaged over 1400 participants and have

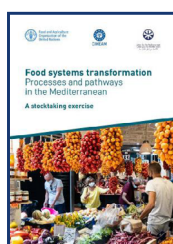
served to share knowledge among a community interested in food systems transformation in the Mediterranean.

The SFS-MED Platform publications consist of a digital product, webinars outcome documents, a stocktaking report of UNFSS dialogues, executive briefs, etc.



**ACCELERATING  
FOOD SYSTEMS  
TRANSFORMATION  
IN THE  
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**FOOD SYSTEMS  
TRANSFORMATION  
PROCESSES AND  
PATHWAYS IN THE  
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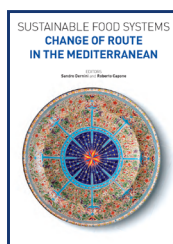
**SUSTAINABLE  
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**PATHWAYS FOR  
AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS  
TRANSFORMATION  
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**SUSTAINABLE FOOD  
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CONFERENCE ON  
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## 2.4 Advocacy and institutional acknowledgement.

The SFS-MED Platform partners engaged in active high-level advocacy for food systems

transformation in the Mediterranean, including through:

- UfM Ministerial Declarations (on [Sustainable Blue Economy](#), on [Environment and Climate Action](#), and on [Research and Innovation](#)), agendas ([GreenerMed Agenda](#)) and roadmaps ([Sustainable Blue Economy Roadmap](#), [R&I Roadmaps](#)), publications and other regional initiatives;
- [CIHEAM Ministerial Meetings](#);
- [FAO's Regional Conference for Near East and North Africa](#); and
- [PRIMA calls for projects focusing on food systems transformation](#).

# 3. POTENTIAL JOINT ACTIONS FOR SFS-MED PARTNERS AND BEYOND

To continue building on these achievements and actively engage agrifood systems stakeholders in the Mediterranean, the SFS-MED platform proposes to advance the following joint actions:

## 3.1 Make the SFS-MED Platform accessible to new stakeholders to ensure multi-level and efficient regional collaboration.

Collaboration on the SFS-MED Platform key areas of cooperation (policy dialogue, research, knowledge sharing and capacity development; technical collaboration; advocacy and awareness raising around food systems transformation) to grow and be extended to technical and financial partners and initiatives at local, nation-

al, regional and international level. This would allow to enrich and widen the knowledge base and inform renewed dialogue on agrifood systems transformation in the region, aiming to leverage the common generated knowledge for scaling up activities on the ground.

## 3.2 Leverage the science-policy interface through enhanced research and innovation, and science diplomacy.

SFS-MED to further accompany policymaking in the region by providing technical inputs and proposals to support evidence-based decision-making. This would materialize through:

- 1.support initiatives to enrich national and regional databases that are accessible to practitioners and policy makers to bring clarity on food systems diagnosis, allow informed change policies and monitor the progress of a transformation strategy while engaging more actors in this science-driven

food systems transformation scheme;

- 2.support to country and regional food systems data analysis through technical studies, webinars and increasing impact through innovative research products focusing on identified levers for food systems transformation; and

- 3.translate SFS-MED partners' generated knowledge into actionable policy recommendations in the form of synthetic policy briefs.







## 3.3 Continue the promotion, advocacy and communication on food systems transformation in the Mediterranean.

The SFS-MED Platform to continue reaching out to diverse agrifood systems stakeholders (including local communities, local and national authorities, media, NGOs, academia, financial institutions, private sector, etc.) for capacity building and advocacy on food systems transformation. This would happen through: co-development of thematic webinars and outcome documents to further share knowledge and latest scientific

expertise on food systems transformation; organization or participation in high-level events; joint digital publications. In addition to this, media engagement could be planned and discussed to potentially contribute to a larger awareness raising among broader audiences, helping the platform amplify the communication channels and reach convergence on the concepts and tools for food systems transformation.

### 3.4 Facilitate regional collaboration around key action areas for food systems transformation in the Mediterranean

Among others, the SFS-MED Platform supports collaboration in the following areas<sup>7</sup> functional to accelerate the shift towards more sustainable, resilient and equitable food systems in the Mediterranean region. This scalable set of areas is part of a wider and dynamic process evolving over time, based on partner organisations' mandates and work programmes.

Area	Action
 Policy coherence	Facilitating the identification of shared priorities at Mediterranean level and providing guidance to countries with a particular emphasis on strengthening policy coherence; integrating the priorities of multiple sectors and diverse sub-national needs when formulating national strategies and plans.
 Leadership, governance and multistakeholder engagement	Enhancing leadership capacities to steer multistakeholder engagement mechanisms that foster trust and commitment based on shared understanding, common priorities and inclusivity.
 Collaborative networks for partnership and shared learning	Regional-level support is essential to activate or expand inclusive networks specific to agrifood systems transformation.
 Data analysis and sharing	Adequate and useful data functions as both the foundation and the outcome of research and innovation projects and strategies. Support is needed to build on existing initiatives for information management and to amplify their reach to wider Mediterranean level, including through science and data as a positive common language across the region.
 Sustainable finance	Promoting financial solutions to be inclusive, accessible, comprehensive and risk-taking, including innovations at small scale.
 Piloting new solutions and proofs of concept	Supporting the translation of innovative ideas into real-world impact through identification of promising projects, innovation awards, etc.



# Endnotes

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