

Global Working group on Water & Food

Building water responsible food systems, together

Water is key to food security

Our food systems are highly sensitive to water scarcity, water pollution and floods as well as to the continuous changing physical and geopolitical situation, while agriculture is the main consumer of water. Although water has been recognized as an enabler for transformations of food systems, water is not yet pivotal in the design of food systems. There seems to be a disconnect between the water world and actors in the food systems. For instance only 30% of the countries that designed a national food system transformation pathway mentioned water and only 15% addresses this clearly (FAO, 2023). This water blindness in the food domain needs to change.



Towards water responsible food systems

The side event Make Water Pivotal in Food Systems at the UN Water Conference in March 2023 in New York has brought actors together that would like to define actions that drive transformational change towards water and food security. It is a unique partnership of primary producers, knowledge institutes, private sector, government, international organizations and financial institutions. They established the Global Working Group on Water & Food, as they realized the need for a new approach. The Food Systems approach provides an excellent entry point to link food with water taking account of climate change and energy.

Global Working Group on Water & Food

The aim of the Global Working Group on Water & Food is to stimulate actor actions towards water responsible food systems and link water and food more strongly across sectors and actors. Contextual and co-designed action pathways (based on minimizing trade-offs and enhancing climate resilience and environmental sustainability) will be sought for moving forward with SDG2, SDG6, SDG7, SDG12 and SDG13 simultaneously. These pathways will be transformed into evidence-based actions and collective responsibilities (of producers, traders consumers, governments, financial institutions etc.) the coming 3 to 5 years.

Actions perspectives

- Apply the Food Systems approach to improve the resilience of water and food systems so that they can cope with shocks
- Make local implications for water of global trade (and trade restrictions) visible
- Co-develop action pathways for water allocation to enhance water and food security
- Create awareness among companies in the food industry on their water responsibility in the primary products of the agricultural value chains
- Assess impacts of water insecurity on national food security and healthy diets and food system actors
- Create consumer awareness of the impact of our diets on water and that food waste is water wastage

Output

- Create a policy paper with policy actionable recommendations to improve the role of water in food systems
- Develop an action and knowledge agenda

The Global Working Group aims to

- Act as a critical thinktank at the forefront of setting the agenda on water responsible food systems
- Advocate for improving the role of water in food systems.
- Consolidate evidence and create new evidence: develop a knowledge agenda
- Provide insight into the trade-offs in multiple values of water
- Provide an awareness platform for the role of water in food systems among actors
- Create strong partnerships for new developments

Stepping stones

- Rome Water Dialogues November 2022
- UN Water Conference NY March 2023
- UNFSS +2 Stocktaking Rome July 2023
- Stockholm Water Week August 2023
- Working Group Wageningen Sept 2023
- COP28 Dubai December 2023
- World Water Forum Bali May 2024



The Global Working Group on Water & Food is initiated by Wageningen University & Research and is currently further developed together with many partners. For more information, please contact:

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