



Strengthening Science-to-Action Collaboration to Transform Food Systems in a Rapidly Changing Climate

Hosted by the Food and Climate Systems Transformation (FACT) Alliance
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
September 27-29, 2022

Climate change and our global food system are interacting in ways that are driving political and economic instability and threatening our future food security. Current approaches to solving the complex challenges pervading food systems are insufficient. Important and cutting-edge analysis is taking place at universities and research centers, but it does not always find its way into the hands of decision makers.

The [FACT Alliance](#) was launched at COP 26 as a global network to connect researchers, the private sector, NGOs, farming communities, and governments around a clear mission: to drive research and innovation and inform better decision making for healthy, resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems in a rapidly changing climate. Led by the MIT's Abdul Latif Jameel Water and Food Systems Lab (J-WAFS), the FACT Alliance currently counts 20 leading research institutions and stakeholder organizations among its members.

The FACT Alliance is hosting a three-day workshop at MIT, from 27-29 September 2022, that will catalyze action for food systems transformation through the strengthening of researcher-stakeholder collaboration. The goals of the workshop are to:

- 1) Build an ambitious global coalition of organizations committed to developing a Food and Climate Systems Roadmap for achieving healthy, resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems;
- 2) Convene food systems and climate leaders and researchers to identify approaches for ensuring that research is actionable *and* reaches the people who can act on it;
- 3) Establish the role of the FACT Alliance as an effective transdisciplinary, applied science global food-climate research network; and
- 4) Develop an action agenda for collaborative, transdisciplinary research that will support efforts to develop a Food and Climate Systems Roadmap.

Food systems are the collective result of decisions made across countless farms, communities, businesses, government agencies, unions, and NGOs, at all scales and for every geographic region of the world. There is growing momentum for tangible action to transform our food systems to be more healthy, sustainable, and resilient to multiple climate and geopolitical shocks. National and local governments, corporations, development organizations, and NGOs are making increasingly ambitious commitments, and new networks are forming to identify priorities and support action. At the same time, pathways to achieving many of these commitments are unclear, and many of the new networks forming are operating independently of each other.

Scientific research has a central role in developing and scaling food systems solutions. Ideally, state-of-the-art scientific insights should inform decision making. In turn, the challenges decision makers face should inspire more research. Yet at present, this virtuous circle is incomplete. Research is often misaligned with stakeholder needs, and the lack of relevant science that is readily accessible to policymakers, businesses, and other stakeholders hinders opportunities for evidence-informed decision making. Moreover, researchers often lack insight into the needs of private, public, and non-profit decision makers. This points to the critical need for collaboration across scientific disciplines and between researchers and decision makers to support food-systems-wide transformations.

This event will bring together globally recognized leaders to build new relationships, and strengthen existing ones, and forge a new path forward for tangible action. Facilitated dynamic discussions will explore specific areas with the greatest potential for impact and those where critical knowledge gaps are hindering progress. These include: governance, transparency and traceability in food trade, new markets, emissions mitigation, achieving healthy and equitable food systems, and resilience to multiple climate and global shocks (e.g. conflict, breadbasket failures, and supply chain failures).



Workshop Scope and Structure

The workshop will be inclusive and participatory and designed for deep listening. We aim to engage both stakeholders and researchers in jointly identifying opportunities for advancing food systems transformations. The agenda will provide time to learn about existing stakeholder and research efforts and explore how research can better support practitioners and decision makers. Sessions will also aim to identify critical knowledge gaps and communication challenges that are hindering action and researcher-stakeholder collaborative approaches for addressing them.

Sessions will be based around core food system focus areas: 1) diets, nutrition, and health; 2) environment and climate; and 3) livelihoods, poverty, and equity. Plenary presentations by leading experts from policy, business, food production, and civil society will introduce each focus area with a provocative charge to the group and will be followed by panel discussions with researchers and breakout sessions. We will ask stakeholders to share how their work is advancing sustainable food systems transformation and what they view as the most important knowledge gaps and other issues hindering effective action. Facilitated interactive sessions will enable stakeholders and leading researchers to engage and share perspectives about the current state of the science and how to catalyze scientific research to support action. Discussions will include cross-cutting themes such as: governance and policy, sustainability and resilience, and innovation approaches.

We are structuring the workshop format to provide ample opportunity for exploration of common interests and relationship building. The workshop will provide a unique opportunity for stakeholders and scientists to come together and collaboratively identify a path forward for evidence-based food systems transformation. We hope you can join us!