

Smallholder farmers demand a voice ahead of crucial UN Food Systems Summit meeting

Ahead of UN gathering to review progress towards more sustainable food systems, farmers appeal for greater recognition as agents of change.

LITTLE ROCK, AR, UNITED STATES, July 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Smallholder farmers have called for greater inclusion within national strategies for food systems transformation ahead of a key United Nations meeting.

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*Iris Núñez, dairy producer
and community leader in
Honduras*

UN Member state representatives will gather in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia next week to review progress towards more sustainable and equitable food systems, four years after the inaugural UN Food Systems Summit.

Food systems continue to struggle to sustainably meet the needs of the global population. More than [700 million people](#) faced hunger in 2023, while food systems contribute around [a third](#) of global emissions and 80 per

cent of global deforestation.

The Summit’s stocktaking meeting will feature ministerial roundtables and high-level panels to review national commitments and progress.

But farmers have issued a call for greater representation and recognition as the frontline of food systems transformation.

Smallholder farmers operating on two hectares or less produce around a third of the world’s food, and as much as 80 per cent in some countries. Smallholders are also disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change yet are highly engaged in agroecology and regenerative practices. In a [survey](#) of forest and farm producer organizations in six countries, the three most dominant values were environmental sustainability, economic wealth, and social respect.

Shewaye Fentae is a smallholder poultry farmer from Weyetu village in the Borchha district, Sidama, Ethiopia.

“The price of poultry feed continues to rise, now exceeding 6,000 birrs — approximately \$44 — per 100 kilograms,” she said. “Without access to affordable feed and better opportunities to sell our eggs, the progress we’ve made is at serious risk,” she said.

“Through improved poultry management practices, better hygiene, and participation in farmer training, I continue to learn, collaborate with others in my community, and look forward to exploring ways to increase my income by keeping my chickens healthy with better hygiene and housing. That’s how we survive.

“What I and others like me need is reliable and affordable inputs, as well as access to fair markets to sell the eggs we harvest. We need leaders at the UN Food Systems Summit to understand the gaps that hold us back.”

The appeal from farmers comes after a recent Global Food Systems Summit in Honduras, organized by nonprofit Heifer International, which featured farmers from Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and the US.

Iris Núñez, a leading dairy producer and community leader in Honduras, was the driving force behind a producer-owner company that brought together more than 100 farmers to collect milk and improve market access.

“Climate change has made everything more difficult,” Iris said. “Extended droughts dry out our crops; floods destroy our pastures. We’ve lost livestock to hurricanes Mitch, Eta, and Iota. I remember evacuating my animals in a truck, paying to feed them far from home - an expensive but necessary choice.

“Despite these challenges, we persevere. We’ve introduced improved pasture varieties and continue to adapt. But we are still facing systemic barriers: high costs of feed and medicine, poor infrastructure, and lack of market support.

“My hope is for the state to recognize the needs of farmers at the UN Food Systems Summit and commit to improving the infrastructure and support we need. We need investment in education to inspire future generations to value and innovate in the agricultural sector.”

Tulsi Thapa, President of the Bihani Social Entrepreneurs Women’s Cooperative in Nepal, added: “Progress starts with agriculture—and farmer-friendly cooperatives are key to driving it. When women farmers have access to resources, markets, and decision-making power, entire communities are transformed. However, to truly scale this impact, global food systems must recognize and invest in grassroots leadership.”

Following its recent summit, Heifer International launched its “In Farmers Hands” food system campaign to champion investments in farmers as leaders, innovators, and guardians of the

land.

“During Heifer’s recent week-long summit, we emphasized the importance of listening—truly listening—to the voices of farmers,” said Surita Sandosham, President and Chief Executive Officer of Heifer International.

“We heard from farmers that to be effective partners in transforming food systems, we must respect ancestral practices, provide training and capacity building, and walk alongside them in this journey. These are important lessons for the UN Food Systems Summit stocktaking.”

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