

Food System Literacy:

An essential skill to navigate food system complexity

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Food systems transformation is now an urgent global agenda

Science: “The urgency of food system transformation is now irrefutable.”

Webb et al., *Nature Food*, 2020

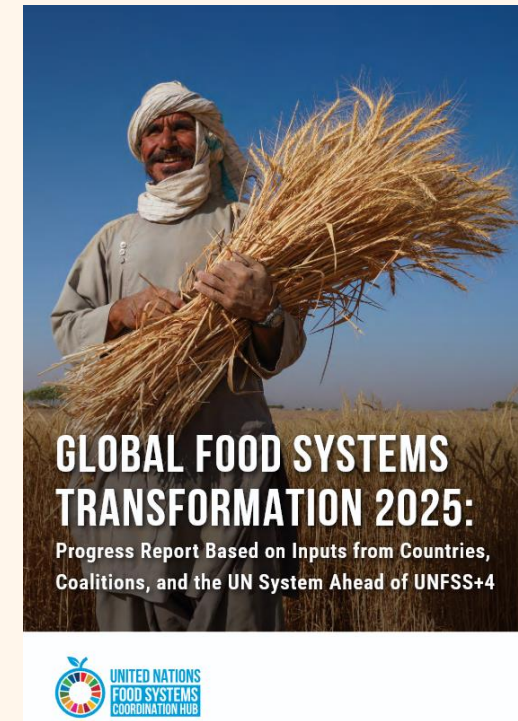
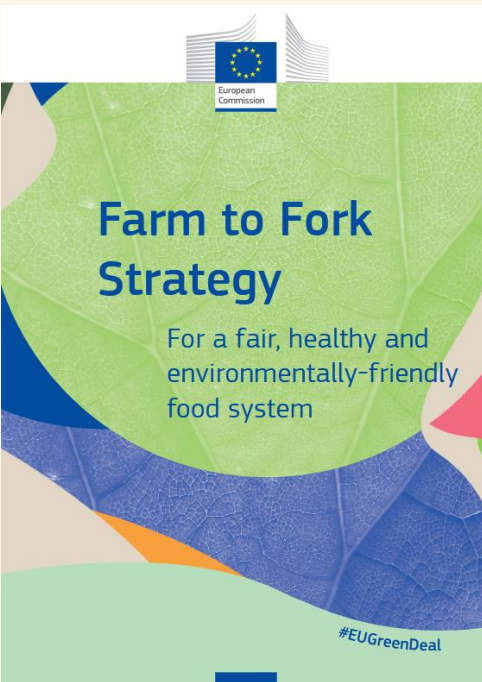
Global policy: The UN Food Systems Summit positioned food systems transformation as necessary for achieving the SDGs by 2030.

United Nations, 2021

Business / economy: The World Economic Forum calls for global food system transformation towards human and planetary health.
World Economic Forum, 2023

The question: who is equipped to act on this agenda?

We know WHAT needs to change



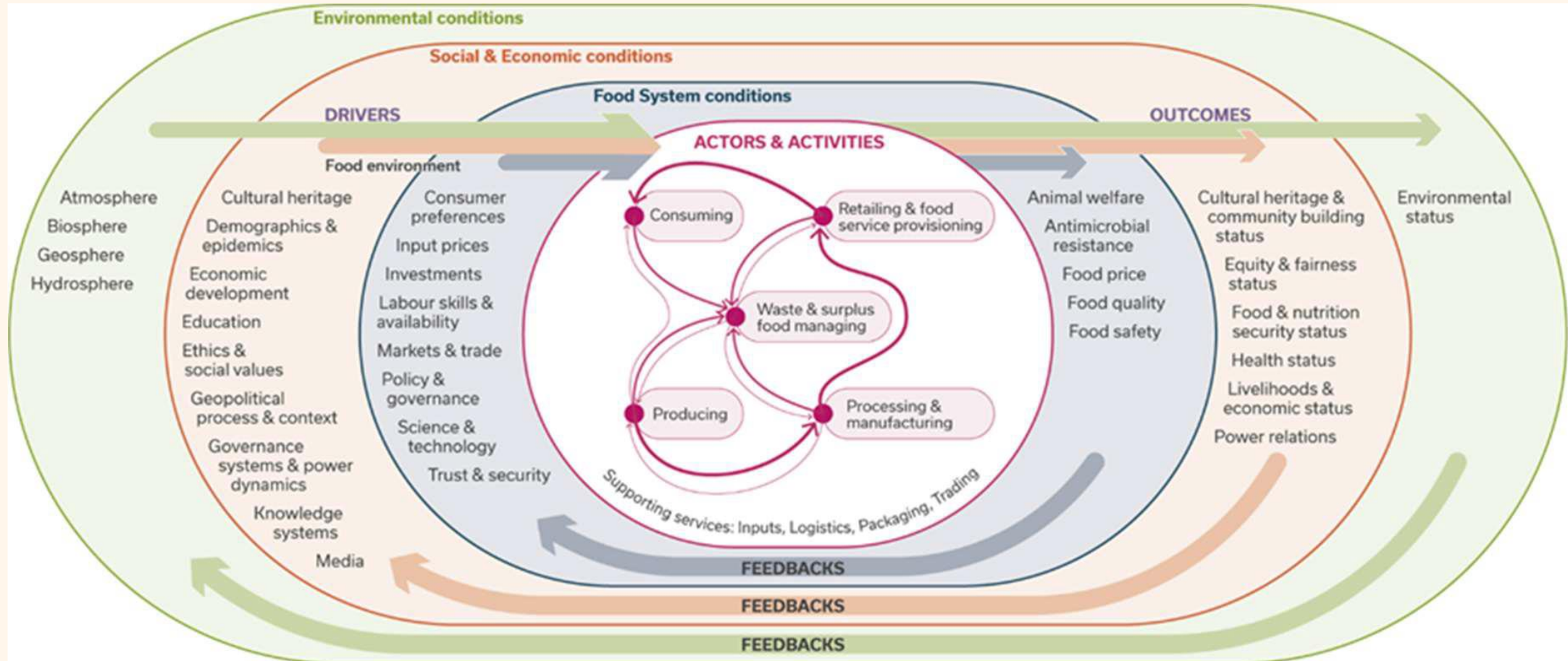


The Problem

Too few people working in and around food systems are sufficiently systems-savvy.

Food systems transformation needs people who can navigate food system dynamics, not just act within narrow domains.

But we recognize the food system is complex



Food Systems Literacy: a working definition

Food systems literacy is the capability to:

- Navigate interconnections, including with living systems
- Recognise one's position and agency
- Act with awareness of wider consequences

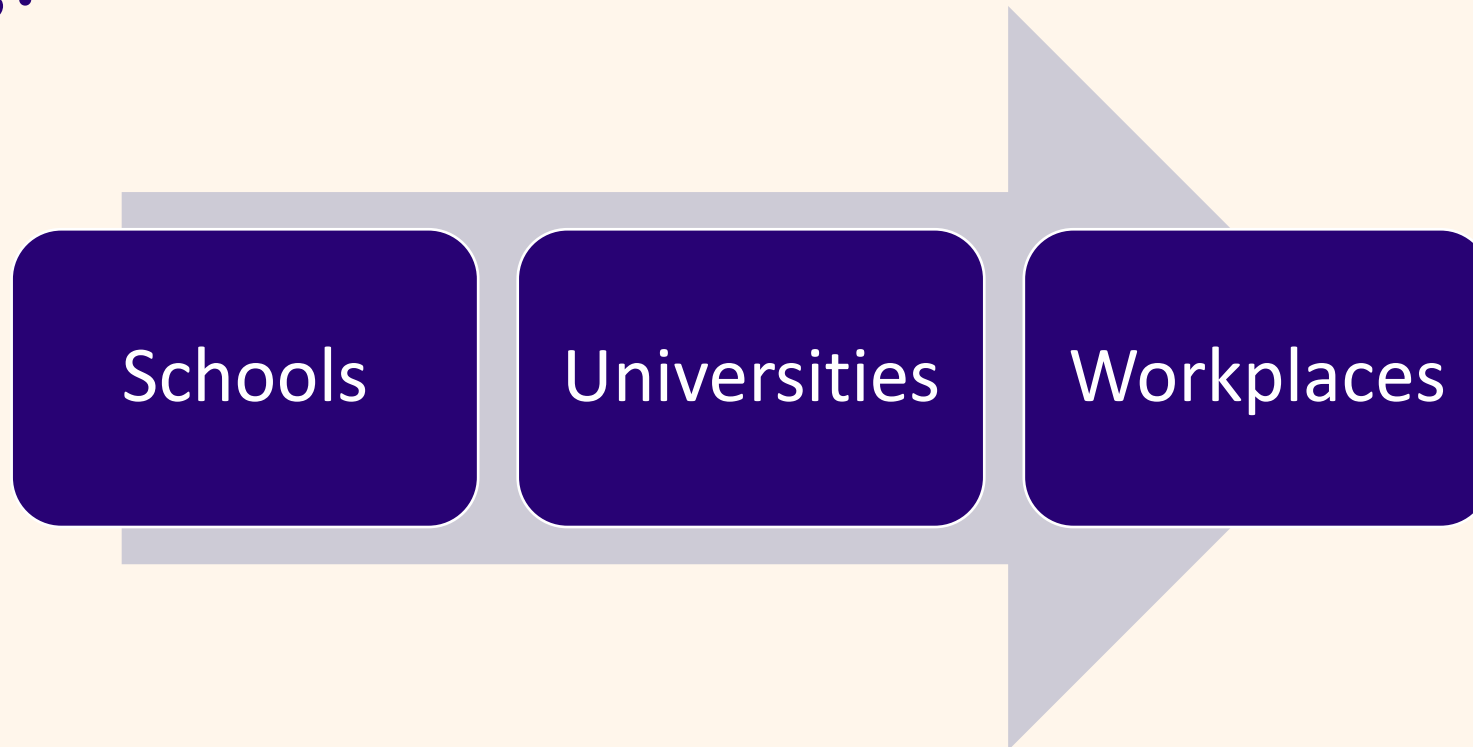
Why food systems literacy matters

Food systems literacy helps people move beyond narrow frames.

- From cost → to value
- From behaviour → to environments
- From productivity → to outcomes
- From efficiency → to resilience
- From evidence → to action

When and where

When and where do we build food systems thinking?



Stage 1: Schools

School: forming worldviews early

- Food as connection
- Food as relationship
- Food as part of living systems
- Food as everyday system



Stage 2: Universities

University: adding a systems layer to disciplinary training

- Interdisciplinary learning
- Systems methods
- Boundary-crossing
- Reflexive practice



Stage 3: Workplace

Workplace: enacting food systems literacy.

People already shape the food system through everyday decisions.

The workplace is not just a setting for applying literacy. It is a site of transformation in its own right.



What FoSSNet can do

FoSSNet can help inspire food systems thinking by promoting food systems literacy across educational and professional stages.

- Who needs food systems literacy?
- At what depth?
- In which settings?
- For what kinds of action?



Closing

We cannot transform what we cannot navigate.

Food systems literacy is part of the infrastructure of transformation.



Food Systems
Science Network



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Thank you!

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