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Global Food Systems Off Track to Meet 2030 Goals, FSCI Study Finds

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The 2026 Food Systems Countdown analysis reveals that progress is too slow and insufficient to meet 2030 goals, but 2050 could still be achievable, provided actions are consistent and accelerated

The latest study from the Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FSCI) reveals the stark reality of where global food systems transformation stands: For most indicators on health, environment, livelihoods, governance and resilience, a vast majority of countries will not meet the internationally agreed 2030 goals. And for some indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions from food systems, no country in the world is projected to meet the target.

The study, published in Nature Food, represents the most comprehensive performance assessment of food systems to date, covering 197 countries and 44 indicators across five themes: diets, nutrition and health; environment, natural resources and production; livelihoods, poverty and equity; governance; and resilience. For the first time, the study goes beyond tracking trends to assess progress and measure how food systems are actually performing, and how much more needs to improve to meet globally set targets.

The Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FSCI) is a global interdisciplinary research collaboration co-led by Johns Hopkins University, Cornell University, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition.

“What makes this Countdown paper different is that it doesn't just tell countries whether they're moving in the right direction — it tells them how far they still have to go, and against a benchmark that's actually within reach. That distinction between tracking trends and measuring performance is what turns a monitoring exercise into a tool for accountability,” said Bianca Carducci, lead author.

The study finds that, of 30 indicators, only one — mobile phone subscriptions, a proxy for connectedness and resilience — has been met by most countries. For 22 indicators, fewer than one third of countries will meet their global target or benchmark by 2030.

The indicator ‘greenhouse gas emissions from food systems’ has one of the largest gaps, with the global average 75 per

cent away from the target. No country in the world will meet the target at its current pace.

Most regions of the world would need dramatic annual changes to achieve 2030 targets. For example, Africa will require at least a 15 to 20 per cent improvement across 23 indicators every single year, and Asia will have to cut food insecurity by over 63 per cent every year. High-income regions are not exempt. In Europe, 19 indicators remain unattainable by 2030. The analysis also shows that some indicators are moving in the wrong direction, notably civil society participation, governmental accountability, ultra-processed food sales, agricultural water withdrawal, pesticide use and changes in emissions from food systems.

“Accountability for food systems transformation requires accelerated progress — without it, efforts risk becoming performative rather than transformative. We can no longer afford to continue at the present pace,” said Mario Herrero, Professor, Ashley School of Global Development and the Environment, Cornell University.