



**CONSCIOUS  
FOOD SYSTEMS  
ALLIANCE**

**Conscious Food Systems Alliance  
ANNUAL REPORT (2021-22)**

Convened by:



**UN  
DP**

# Conscious Food Systems Alliance Annual Report (2021-22)

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### Context

The Conscious Food Systems Alliance is a movement of food, agriculture, and consciousness practitioners, convened by UNDP, and united around a common goal: to support people from across food and agriculture systems to cultivate the inner capacities that activate systemic change and regeneration. This report provides an overview of the key achievements of the Alliance between August 2021 – August 2022. This report follows the [Emerging Insights Report](#), which provides an overview of activities and progress in the first phase of the initiative (March-July 2021).

### Breathing Room

From October 2021 to March 2022, a group of 27 [core partners](#) committed to a 6-month process in an intentional space called ‘[The Breathing Room](#)’ where core partners connected deeply with themselves and one another to co-design the Conscious Food Systems Alliance.

The Breathing Room consisted of a series of twelve core and connecting sessions in which partners experimented with new ways of being and doing to generate a series of collective outputs for the establishment and flourishing of the Alliance. As the co-creation journey evolved, additional sessions were needed to complete the scope of work and the Breathing Room was extended until June. Key highlights from the Breathing Room include:

- Connecting sessions offering consciousness practices in ‘Mindful Eating Tangerine Meditation’ led by Brother Phap Lai, from [Plum Village](#) and ‘Partners’ constellations offered by [Dr. Thomas Bruhn](#), from Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS).
- Establishing regular ‘Working Groups’, with participation from the wider network of CoFSA partners, on specific key areas such as the CoFSA Manifesto, Rationale for Action report, Global Network of Local Hubs and Community Space.

- Through the Breathing Room a number of emergent partnerships and collaborations between CoFSA members were initiated (see 'Activities Under Development').

Following the 6-month engagement in the Breathing Room, bilateral Feedback & Learning interviews were held with the members to reflect on the process and gather insights to inform the next stage and direction of the Alliance (see Lessons Learnt).

## Key Achievements

- Building a core group of committed partners through 'The Breathing Room' and working groups.
- Producing CoFSA foundational publications: the CoFSA Manifesto, Rationale for Action report, Theoretical Foundations report and Case Study Collection ([here](#)), as well as blogs and articles (see Appendix).
- Building an emerging [Global Network of Local Hubs](#), with over 20 organisations offering on-the-ground conscious food learning programmes, and holding initial Collaborative Learning & Action sessions to facilitate an equitable exchange of knowledge and experience across centres.
- Generating a 'Portfolio of CoFSA Interventions' in co-creational sessions to form partnerships and create innovative solutions towards conscious food systems.
- Piloting CoFSA through a Compassion Training for UNDP Paraguay Country Office: [Compassion Institute](#) training "Caring From the Inside Out: Foundations of Self and Collective Care (CFIO)" delivered to the staff of the UNDP Paraguay Country Office (CO) online over six weeks from October - November 2021. The course helped to increase learners' self-awareness around their experiences of burnout and their connection to purpose and joy in work, and to equip them with mindfulness and compassion-based skills and tools to support personal resilience.
- Growing the Alliance to over 150+ informal members from across the food system and from a range of consciousness backgrounds, and establishing an active [LinkedIn group](#) where interested stakeholders can discover CoFSA, connect with other members and learn about each other's work, share resources and events.
- Holding a range of events and sessions to deepen our collective practice and promote awareness of conscious food systems (see Appendix).
- Developing the CoFSA visual identity, including the creation of the logo, branding.
- Developing the CoFSA website (to be launched in Q4 2022) and newsletters for the community updates.
- Identification of CoFSA core values, as well as principles of cultivating inner capacities, which emphasise the need for **context-specific and culturally relevant interventions, founded on respect and equity, as well as awareness of power dynamics**. These interventions should be supported by a **diversity of evidence and knowledge**.

## Activities Under Development

Through the Breathing Room and wider activities of the Alliance, a number of partnerships and collaborations between CoFSA members have begun to flourish, these include:

- Conscious Food Curriculum: Terms of Reference finalised for a training programme to introduce participants to consciousness-based approaches and practices offered by CoFSA; start building the inner capacities needed for transformation of the food systems; and to initiate participants to reflect on and explore how to bring these approaches into their work and/or prototype in their organizations.
- Mindful Design Lab - Conscious Investment & Food Systems: a collaboration led by [Circles for Conscious Change](#) to convene a diverse set of facilitating partners to co-design and implement a journey for select philanthropists and investors who are working in the realm of global food security. The purpose of the Mindful Design Lab is to embody and enact a more conscious approach to social change leveraging inner work and multi-sector collaboration for effective systems change.
- Brazil Hub: A dynamic group of COFSA partners is emerging in Brazil which includes [Instituto Maniva](#) (Rio de Janeiro), [Instituto Kairos](#) (San Paulo), [WFP](#) and [UNIFESP](#), on several projects which involve the application of consciousness approaches to support farmers' well-being, as well as conscious food education in public schools.
- Conscious Food and Farming Retreat led by Plum Village: development of a global online retreat for agri-food stakeholders, focused on healing our relationship with food through mindful eating practices, as well as mindful agriculture and cooking.
- Technical assistance to UNDP Country Offices in Peru and Costa Rica in order to integrate consciousness approaches into UNDP food systems related operations and programmes at country and regional levels to enhance the effectiveness and impact of external solutions.
- Initial discussions around a common [research agenda](#) on “Consciousness, culture and Food Systems transformation at local level” led by the [Centre for Earth Ethics](#) in partnership with Schumacher College, LUCSUS, Listening Inspires, and European Center of Excellence on Sustainable Development (CERDI).
- Engagement of Indigenous representatives: Terms of Reference developed for the role of an Indigenous Peoples Engagement Advisor in CoFSA to guide CoFSA engagement with Indigenous Peoples and to build long-term relationships grounded on respect, reciprocity, consent, trust and accountability.

## Lessons Learnt

This section provides a summary of lessons learnt from this phase of the Conscious Food Systems Alliance.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of CoFSA evolved, in large part through the collaborative process of creating the Rationale for Action report and supporting materials, which involved a 6-month co-creation in a dedicated Working Group, as well as an extensive Peer Review process. In particular, the process clarified the following aspects of the CoFSA vision and approach:

- Focus on the cultivation of inner capacities for regenerative food systems, and to a lesser extent the role of consciousness approaches for this and a variety of consciousness practices, rather than on a narrow set of contemplative practices as highlighted in the initial Concept Note.
- Emphasis on the cultivation of inner capacities as a complementary approach to unlock food systems transformation through integration with existing solutions.
- ‘Consciousness’ has many meanings in different cultures and contexts! All approaches and practices leveraged in conscious food interventions must be culturally relevant, tailored to the specific needs and context, and locally-led, harnessing local resources and traditional wisdom, as much as possible.

### Co-creation processes

The co-creation process, in particular the Breathing Room and Working Groups, highlighted a number of key learnings for CoFSA:

- The Alliance needs to accommodate a diversity of interests and needs, across a diversity of members, such as for research, prototyping, dialogues and learning, and peer support. It should, therefore, enable a diversity of agile engagement pathways which allow members to contribute in the most appropriate ways for them, according to their interests, needs and commitments.
- The Working Groups were a more generative space for collaboration and connection, whereas the Breathing Room was a more effective model for feedback and collective sense-making.
- There is a careful balance to be found between creating a participatory co-creation process, and ensuring participation is manageable with other commitments. Members should contribute and participate only as much as is feasible and constructive for themselves and their organisation.
- The Alliance needs to actively engage with and strengthen participation of stakeholders from a diversity of geographies, particularly the Global South, and parts of the food system, in particular food practitioners, farmers and producers, as well as companies and governments.

- Creating space for connection between members, as a foundation for forming deep and transformative partnerships, is critical and further activities to facilitate connection should be established.

## Governance

In the initial phases of CoFSA, UNDP led the convening of partners and the strategic direction and workplan of the Alliance. UNDP took decisions, in alignment with partner inputs, to drive forward the establishment of the Alliance. Moving forward, it will be important to establish a new governance model in which power and decision-making is shared with members.

The role of UNDP will be as a Secretariat, and the workplan of the Secretariat will be directed by a group of core members called the “Inner Council”.

UNDP will participate in the Alliance both as the Secretariat, driving the workplan as determined by the council, and as a member, leading the implementation of its own conscious food interventions, sharing learnings, etc.

## Interventions

The purpose of the Alliance is to create a space for stakeholders, committed to the creation of conscious food systems, to connect, collaborate, apply, reflect and learn together.

At this stage, as the Alliance has not secured funding to support members activities, interventions will be member-led with support from the Secretariat to connect partners, guide on initial generation of ideas, and create spaces for shared learning. The Secretariat can offer technical support to members on a cost-recovery basis while funds are being raised for this.

## Priorities for the Next Phase

*(September 2022- August 2023)*

The next phase will focus on activating the implementation of CoFSA activities:

- Launch the CoFSA Community Digital Platform
- Launch CoFSA membership and governance system
- Develop and implement Trainings & Interventions
- Hold CoFSA Global Annual Event
- Scale-up strategy
- Fundraising

## Appendix

### I. Practice Sessions & Events

The Alliance held a range of events and sessions to deepen our collective practice and promote awareness of conscious food systems, these include:

- [Weekly meditations with Satish Kumar](#) for Farmers, Food Producers, Soil Lovers and all those working towards a Better Food System around the world, in partnership with Schumacher college, ORFC, and Land Workers Alliance.
- Workshop on the role of storytelling and of mobilising Indigenous Peoples' knowledge in supporting regeneration and resilience among populations affected by disasters - hosted by [Sarah Queblatin](#) and [Laureline Simon Krichewsky](#) during the [#LearningPlanet](#) festival. [YouTube Video](#).
- CoFSA Workshop on “Deepening Practices for Non-Indigenous People to Interrupt Unconscious Colonial Mindsets” led by Dr Sharon Stein, University of British Columbia (15th April).
- “Earth Day Event: Listening to the Earth in times of crisis” in partnership with Listening Inspires and 4SD (22nd April) (recording [here](#)).
- Course on Cognitive Flexibility and Innovation delivered by Ben Elers from Unconscious Innovation in collaboration with the Green Commodities Community, followed by individual coaching sessions.
- “Facilitating Trust for Collaboration: Deep Listening Micropractice”, in collaboration with the Green Commodities Community (22nd June) (recording [here](#)).

### II. Blogs & Articles

- UNDP published blogs on “[Reflections on a Conscious Food System](#)” (October 2021) and “[Beyond Sustainability - Evolving to Conscious Food Systems: How the Conscious Food Systems Alliance Can Help Us to Reframe our Thinking](#)” (June 2022).
- Storytelling project led by Tero magazine in partnership with CoFSA members, such as publication of an article on “[Why We Should Value Food](#)” with Indigenous Elder from Cameroon, Joshua Konkankoh.
- ‘[CoFSA Reflection on COP26](#)’ to showcase the pioneering work of CoFSA partners offering support to policy makers at COP26 in Glasgow, including - [Plum Village](#), [Inner Green Deal Initiative](#), [One Resilient Earth](#), [Green Releaf Initiative](#), [Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies](#), and Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS).

