

CONSCIOUS FOOD SYSTEMS ALLIANCE



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Convened by:



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food connects us with one another, our cultures and our planet. Rather than nourishing our collective health and well-being, however, food systems are at the heart of the social and environmental crises we face¹. Despite significant investment and effort towards transforming food systems, the solutions emphasized so far are not delivering the necessary impact. This impasse **calls us to examine more deeply the root causes of our crises and the structural barriers to transformation.**

Progress is hindered by entrenched power structures that severely limit agency to create change at individual and collective levels. These structures maintain and are themselves maintained by a pervasive cultural **narrative of separation**. This narrative underpins a dominant paradigm of unfettered economic growth, deprioritizes care in policymaking, depresses stakeholder collaboration, and manifests in a widespread inability to think and act systemically.

While these barriers are embedded in structural inequities and the lack of agency of the most marginalized stakeholders, they are also fundamentally rooted in our consciousness, particularly in cultural patterns of disconnection from self, others, and nature. Consciousness refers to our awareness of inner and outer phenomena, which influences the lens through which we see and relate to ourselves, and the world around us: others, nature, and future generations. Cultivating consciousness leads to an increasing circle of identity, care and responsibility²

In the field of sustainability, the importance of deepening consciousness, and cultivating inner capacities – individual and collective awareness,

mindsets, beliefs, values, worldviews, and associated transformative cognitive, emotional and relational qualities and skills - **that support it, is increasingly recognized**³. Accordingly, the latest IPCC reports on climate change mitigation and adaptation highlight for instance the role of “inner transitions” and inner capacities of individuals, organizations, and societies as a lever for accelerating the transition in the context of sustainable development⁴⁵.

Overcoming structural barriers to food systems transformation requires investments in building and cultivating the inner capacities of individuals, groups, and institutions that comprise them. This implies fostering reconnection with nature, others, and self and cultivating specific transformative qualities and skills. **Integrating the cultivation of inner capacities** with ongoing investment in existing external solutions represents an untapped opportunity to unlock food systems transformation. **The Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA)** was created in recognition of this urgent global need.

The Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA) 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.**

CoFSA approaches food systems transformation by working with all relevant stakeholder groups across food systems, including consumers, companies, governments, development agencies, academia, global and local NGOs, local communities, and farmers and food producers,



at three interconnected levels:

- Individual: through trainings, educational programmes, and retreats, as well as coaching activities,
- Group (collective): by building safe, connecting, and transformative spaces and networks for conscious multi-stakeholder dialogues and platforms,
- Institutional: by supporting the cultural transformation of organizations, as well as dedicated public and private policies.⁶

Evidence is growing that certain consciousness approaches and practices can help build these inner capacities. CoFSA applies **consciousness approaches, which integrate the consideration and cultivation of inner capacities into interventions, across all levels. Consciousness approaches can leverage certain practices which actively support the cultivation of inner capacities.** These consciousness practices include a vast range of contemplative mind-

body practices, often rooted in a variety of wisdom-based traditions (e.g. nature connection and mindfulness), as well as **psychological and cognitive-behavioural based practices** (e.g. self-reflection and inquiry practices), **transformative spaces and communication practices** (e.g. deep listening and Non-violent Communication), and transformative education and leadership practices (e.g. experiential learning). CoFSA is committed to working with a diversity of consciousness approaches and practices that support the cultivation of inner capacities, according to their relevance in different cultural contexts, in particular local traditional wisdoms.

CoFSA's principles to cultivating inner capacities emphasizes 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.

Figure 1: The CoFSA Model of Transformation

The Conscious Food Systems Alliance

Cultivating inner capacities for regenerative food systems

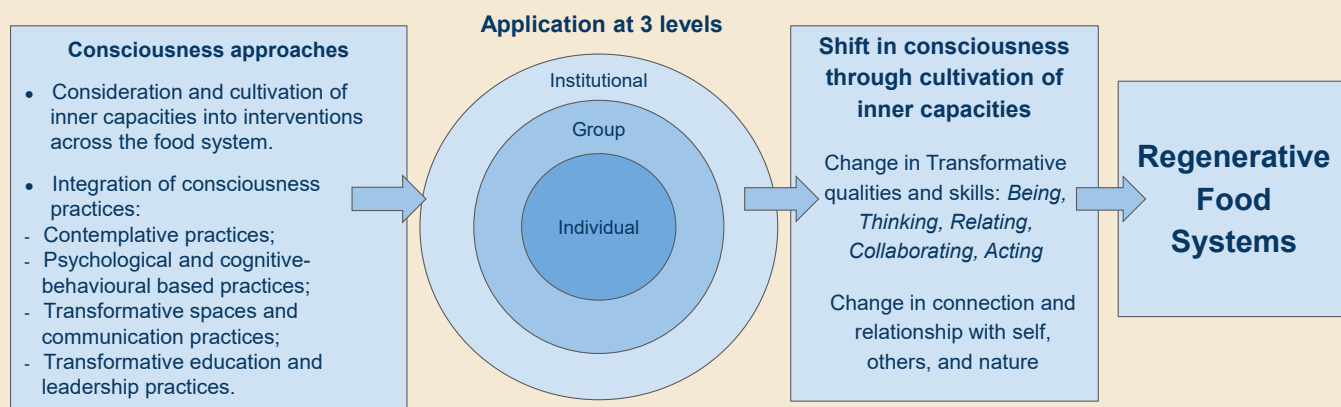


Fig. 1: This linear model over-simplifies the process of change for the sake of clarity. In practice, systems change is a complex process characterized by multiple causations, interactions, feedback loops, and inevitable uncertainty and unpredictability⁷. CoFSA's model draws on the Model of Inner-Outer Transformation⁸ and the Inner Development Goals framework⁷.

1 Shukla J., et al., (2019); FAO and UNEP, (2021); Kopittke P. M. et al., (2019)
 2 Wamsler et al., (2021)
 3 Edwards, (2015); Ericson et al., (2014); Parodi & Tamm, (2018); Wamsler et al., (2021); Woioode et al., (2021)
 4 IPCC Report, Mitigation of Climate Change (2022a). Section 17.2.3
 5 IPCC Report, Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, (2022b)
 6 Wamsler et al. (2021)
 7 Inner Development Goals Initiative (2021)