**UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Call for Inputs:**

**“Food Systems and Human Rights”**

Civil Society Submission: World Benchmarking Alliance

Submitted: 30 June 2021

**Food Systems**

1. **What are the examples of ways in which the challenges facing the global food system are having adverse impacts on human rights broadly, and the right to food specifically?**

The World Benchmarking Alliance’s[[1]](#footnote-2) understanding of how the food systems have adverse impact to the environment is well understood, as well as how important accessible, affordable nutritional food is amidst both a growing level of malnutrition and obesity. The link to how the food systems can adversely impact human rights rose on the global agenda during the Covid-19 pandemic, when there was an increased awareness around the health of the workforce and the amount of people living hand-to-mouth and therefore at high risk of going hungry.

The WBA Food & Agriculture Benchmark[[2]](#footnote-3) will measure 350 agri-food companies on their contribution towards the food system agenda and the SDGs. The benchmark is the first of its kind to take a holistic approach measuring companies from across the value chain on topics relating to environment, nutrition, and **social inclusion**. Social inclusion and the ways people are impacted – whether consumers, producers or workers - account for nearly half of the indicators that we will measure company performance on, giving precedence to the numerous ways the current food system, and the challenges it faces, can be addressed through responsible business practice.

1. **What are the specific obligations of States and responsibilities of businesses in terms of preventing and addressing adverse impacts caused by the unsustainable production or consumption of food?**

The private sector can have a transformational impact on people’s lives, both as a creator of jobs and a producer of goods and services. At the WBA we measure all companies on a core set of social indicators that address responsible business conduct through respecting human rights (e.g. assessing human rights risks, engaging with affected stakeholders), providing decent work (e.g. living wage fundamentals, health & safety) and acting ethically (e.g. responsible tax and lobbying and personal data protection). These indicators will be used to assess companies, regardless of the sector in which they operate, as we believe these are fundamental practices needed to prevent adverse human rights impacts and ensure accountability.

In the food & agriculture system, issues and concerns such as decent livelihoods for all actors along the value chain and land rights come into play, and each industry has a social responsibility to ensure it upholds social inclusion throughout its operations and supply chain. The food-specific indicators assess the critical issues and salient risks for the food sector. These include preventing child & forced labour, paying workers a living wage, health & safety, farmer and fisher productivity and resilience, and protecting the land rights of vulnerable right holders.

**Participation and access to information during the Food Systems Summit**

1. **In what ways have you participated in the Summit (events, dialogues, submission of inputs etc.)? Please describe the nature and content of your participation, if applicable.**

In the last year the WBA has been engaged with Private Sector Working Group and Summit Secretariat, looking at how we can ensure the outcomes of the emerging priority areas for business are measurable by using the benchmark as a review mechanism. Together we **co-hosted a digital dialogue for companies** in scope of our benchmark to hear more about the summit processes, the solution areas and how they could get involved (this dialogue was organized by WBA and did not fall under the Summit program).

Together with Plating Up Progress, a food retailer index in the UK, WBA **submitted a game-changing initiative** to build a toolkit to help CSOs and/or policymakers develop and implement their own national indices to measure the progress of companies towards a sustainable food system. To get further insight on how indices could be applied in national contexts we teamed up with ATNI & GAIN and **held an Independent Food Systems Dialogue** on this subject. We will continue a series of discussions on this throughout the development of the toolkit, including at a **side event during the pre-summit.**

In addition, we have been part of other Food Systems Dialogues, playing a **facilitating role** at the Global Finance Dialogue and #RestoreOurEarth on Earth Day.

We aim to **publish our Food & Agriculture Benchmark at the Summit in September**.

**Outcomes of the Food Systems Summit**

1. **What are your expectations from the Summit’s outcomes following its conclusion in October 2021? How would these outcomes contribute to the full realization of the right to food for all?**

As an accountability-driven organisation that measures businesses performance towards the food system agenda, we are very excited to see the priority solution areas that emerge for companies and coalitions of action. We believe that the only way these outcomes can contribute to the aims of the summit is through an ongoing process in which the outcomes are **measured and reviewed**, alongside supportive dialogues, so that best business practice can be shared and accompanying legislation proposed based on the evidence.

1. **How do you envisage your role in the implementation of the Summit’s outcomes?**

We envision that WBA could play a practical role in the monitoring and evaluation of corporate performance. Specifically for the business declaration and getting companies to take action and commit to continual improvement holistically across their business activities. In addition, we have been in conversation with Action Track 1 and the zero-hunger pledge, exploring a grouping of relevant indictors in our benchmark that could be linked and the WBA diving more deeply into how the private sector can contribute to ending hunger through an analysis report.

We also see a role for WBA in dialogues and convenings that follow the Summit around private sector performance. WBA will not only have a large amount of data on the 350 companies in scope and analysis of the overall landscape but will also work with the companies closely as we develop more iterations of the benchmark and help strengthen private sector leadership on this agenda. We also work with many organsiations as part of our Alliance, to ensure that the data is translated into recommendations and actionable items for investors, civil society, policymakers etc. We believe we can play an intermediary role between the companies and these groups using our data and the outcomes of the summit to have structured dialogues on corporate performance and what companies need to do to get on track on the 2030 agenda.

Additionally, our methodologies are built upon existing research and frameworks so to reflect societal expectations. We will also undergo a review of our methodology following the Summit, so to ensure what we ask of the private sector reflects the outcomes of the Summit.

1. About the World Benchmarking Alliance: <https://www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/mission/>. Contact: Charlotte Reeves, Engagement Manager, creeves@worldbenchmarkingalliance.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For more information on the WBA Food & Agriculture Benchmark and accompanying methodology, please see: <https://www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/food-and-agriculture-benchmark/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)