The 2nd FOOD 2030 High Level Event in Plovdiv (14 - 15 June 2018) provided the following recommendations for successful food systems transformation. These have important implications for the FOOD 2030 research and innovation policy framework and its four priorities of nutrition, climate, circularity, and innovative communities driven by open science, research breakthroughs, innovation and investment, and international cooperation. The next steps for FOOD 2030 is to take on board the Plovdiv conclusions and integrate them into the core FOOD 2030 objectives of mobilizing new initiatives to secure R&I funding, and investment beyond EU-instruments.

How to transform our food systems:
- Address the huge challenges and the disruptive scenarios required to transform our food systems through a shared European vision and a comprehensive multi-objective EU food systems policy backed by Research & Innovation (R&I) to deliver co-benefits.
- Make the EU a global frontrunner in food system transformation through International R&I cooperation and particularly with neighbouring regions like the Mediterranean or Africa.
- Use this cooperation to ensure diverse global consistency in areas like mitigating climate change, or in linking trade and sustainable development.
- Design a responsible and systemic R&I policy, which convenes and connects the many actors and partners, inclusive of citizens, farmers, private actors (both "big industry" as well as SMEs), governments, NGO and philanthropic organisations.
- Improve communication and alignment between the large number of international, national, private, and EU food R&I initiatives to better share experience, address research gaps, and co-create benefits.
- Mobilise FOOD 2030 stakeholders to make use of all available instruments and processes to foster and build on R&I for the transformation of our food systems throughout Europe and beyond.
- Provide the R&I critical mass, infrastructures, and policies to help realise the unique opportunity the EU has in leading the global development of smart and sustainable food systems.

How to make our food systems diverse:
- Develop a more pluralistic and diverse EU R&I programme and portfolio with equal opportunities for all players.
- Identify and develop business strategies in both private and public sectors that favour culturally relevant products and raw material diversification over standardized mass production and the race to lower prices.
- Understand the mechanisms and role of diversity and how it can be encouraged. Explore and apply diversity across all related policies in terms of raw materials, diets, policies, communication, new business models, processing and production, and use of resources, etc.

How to improve food system competitiveness:
- Provide human capital, well-functioning institutions, markets, strategic infrastructure (e.g. transport, ICT, energy), and a sound yet innovative financial sector to address climate change and help meet sustainability targets.
- Provide an integrated approach and a financial structure, which covers demonstration activities, prototyping, working capital, early stage investments, appropriate business models and downstream services.
- Invest heavily in education and training along the innovation value chain.
- Foster entrepreneurship and unlock the potential of very small European companies to foster diversity and job creation in European rural, coastal and urban areas.
- Boost regional and place-based innovation hubs using digital technologies, tools to increase knowledge flows, co-operation and co-creation between different actors.
- Provide a better definition of "food industry competiveness" to incorporate other factors besides "price".

How to make our food systems resilient:
- Find ways to integrate and channel technical, social and institutional innovation to address resilience issues.
- Support concrete scale-specific projects and actions targeting resilience and delivering on the SDGs.
- Rethink and design R&I programs and new research questions needed to reorient our food systems to withstand and recover from shocks (e.g. sea level rise, changing temperatures, and pest migration).
- Create means, networks and organisational/governance structures to attract new actors, sectors and disciplines to work together and implement inter- and trans-disciplinary research.
- Cultivate more knowledge on sustainable pathways, demonstrate and share resilience success stories.
- Close the knowledge and awareness gap between consumers and science providers, as well as decision/policy makers.
- Ensure equal communication and transparency for all types of technical or organisational innovations.

Research and Innovation

How to make of food systems more responsible:
- View food system transformation as a critical strategic lever for change and as a dedicated comprehensive European policy direction.
- Accommodate inter and trans-disciplinary approaches with new actors and disciplines, in particular better embedding the social sciences and humanities.
- Ensure the deployment of advanced and innovative risk assessment tools to deliver health-centric solutions, improve food safety and traceability systems, fight food fraud, anticipate and prevent incidents.
- Promote FOOD 2030 as a recognized responsible platform to help gather different actors, to initiate and coordinate expert groups and studies in key areas that need transformation, as well as to communicate and engage with different stakeholders at multiple levels (international to local).
- Provide a multi-objective framing and evidence base for coherent EU food and nutrition policy (reform) to achieve co-benefits and to be supported by the requisite education and communication, R&I policy, overseen by a strong governance framework.

How to make our food systems more inclusive:
- Find ways to integrate and innovate across various R&I disciplines such as economics, finance, arts and social sciences, ecology, education, health, digital sciences, and connect with traditional knowledge and communities.
- Frame such connections within multiple-objective, inter and trans-disciplinary mission-type approaches that lead to deployable innovation-driven and societally relevant solutions and co-benefits.
- Catalyse place-based actions and solutions in cities and regions offering integration and innovation capacity.
- Unlock and dissolve asymmetries to allow true stakeholder engagement across cultures and different innovation streams, behaviours and tensions.
- Provide open spaces and living labs for collective intelligence, information and participation, transparency and accountability, mediation or arbitration, trade-offs and progress towards convergence.
- Integrate technical innovation alongside social and organisational innovation to address systemic problems and challenges throughout the food system.

How to make our food systems sustainable:
- Support FOOD 2030 R&I through a multi-objective, cross-scale, inter and trans-disciplinary, societally relevant, systemic, and integrated multi-actor vision and action plan.
- Address SDGs with a mission-type approach that meets human needs, respects the planetary boundaries, and can bridge gaps between theoretical constructs and specific regionally based projects.
- Provide evidence-based correlation between healthy diets and environmental sustainability.
- Connect agricultural production with food manufacturing and consumer health, through a reverse engineering and open innovation approach.
- Provide a better understanding of food system complexity, determine co-benefits, effective levers of change and how to mitigate trade-offs.

How to better align R&I:
- Increase inclusivity with various groups such as citizens, farmers, private actors, governments, NGOs, people in rural areas, minorities, the poor and disadvantaged.
- Improve balance within Europe where 90% of certain R&I funds are still being spent on the older EU-15 Member states.
- Align at the different levels of Global/European/National/Regional/Local, public/private, and across the various disciplines. Increase the organization and support in the last stages of innovation in order to bring good ideas to the market.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of R&I so that it is meeting expectations and delivering impact.
- Reward researchers by other criteria than the number of publications they produce, for example, by the degree of inter and trans-disciplinary research they carry out.
- Improve trust in R&I through more transparency, cooperation and involvement of citizens at the early stages of development of new techniques and products.

How to foster place-based solutions:
- Help cities and local authorities create innovation platforms and urban networks to induce knowledge sharing, and exchange of experiences, citizen science, and co-creation.
- Use FOOD 2030 to build the evidence-base and exchange knowledge across place-based urban-rural initiatives to develop and deploy urban and regional food system policies.
- Foster the strengthening of governance structures to assist in creating cohesive place-based actions such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.
- Fund real multi-actor collaborative actions, public and private, which can foster the exchanges of knowledge in specific spaces and fora.