Multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensuring national food security against global threats

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Abstract. *In this paper we analyse the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) in addressing food security against global threats. We present the empirical findings from own independent questionnaire of 195 respondents across 52 countries, as held in September 2024, with insights into stakeholder perceptions of global threats, evaluation of MSPs and understanding of the stakeholders' role in agri-food systems transformation. We conclude that MSPs are important for ensuring food security and agri-food systems transformation in line with the SDG agenda and against global threats.*
Keywords: *food security, agri-food systems transformation, global threats, MSPs, SDGs.*

To begin with, the use of multi-stakeholder approach to ensuring national food security against global threats has been a trend since the onset of 21st century. The foundations of global food security system (supporting national food security via international mechanisms and institutions) were laid down after the WWII, including in particular, the establishment of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1945, the decisions of World Food Conference (1974), the establishment of the World Food Council in 1975, the conclusions of World Food Summit (1996). But a major focus for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and establishing global partnership for development has been confirmed at the Millenium Declaration (2000). Since 2015 the Millenium Development Goals transformed into the Sustainable Development Goals, clearly indicating the aims of Zero Hunger (SDG2) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG17).

As of now the adverse effects of global threats impede the perspectives of achieving these ambitious targets till 2030. The reality is that food systems shocks have become more frequent and severe due to increased number of socio-political (armed conflicts), climatic (extreme weather) and economic events. As analysed by Pryiatelchuk O., Novak O., the threats affecting food security fall into 3 categories: 1) systemic threats (affect almost all types of economic activity); 2) threats destabilizing the process of food supply influencing production, import, logistics, market exchange and consumption; 3) threats to food security dimensions [1]. And these days due to interconnectedness and interdependence of national economies, global threats inflict synchronous disruptions across other regions and

sectors with recent examples being Covid-19 and Russia's war against Ukraine. Therefore, there is a strong need for innovation and transformation of existing food security system and here multi-stakeholder approach can play a leading role.

Pattberg, P., & Widerberg, O. argue that the multi-stakeholder partnerships in implementing sustainable development actions emerged during the 1990s with adoption of Agenda 21 at 1992 Earth Summit [2]. According to HLPE multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP) are "any collaborative arrangement among stakeholders from two or more different spheres of society (public sector, private sector and/or civil society), pooling their resources together, sharing risks and responsibilities in order to solve a common issue, to handle a conflict, to elaborate a shared vision, to realize a common objective, to manage a common resource and/or to ensure the protection, production or delivery of an outcome of collective and/or public interest" [3]. Therefore, MSPs act as a compliment to the efforts of national governments and international organisations to combat food security against global threats and are undertaken on voluntary basis through cooperation of different stakeholders.
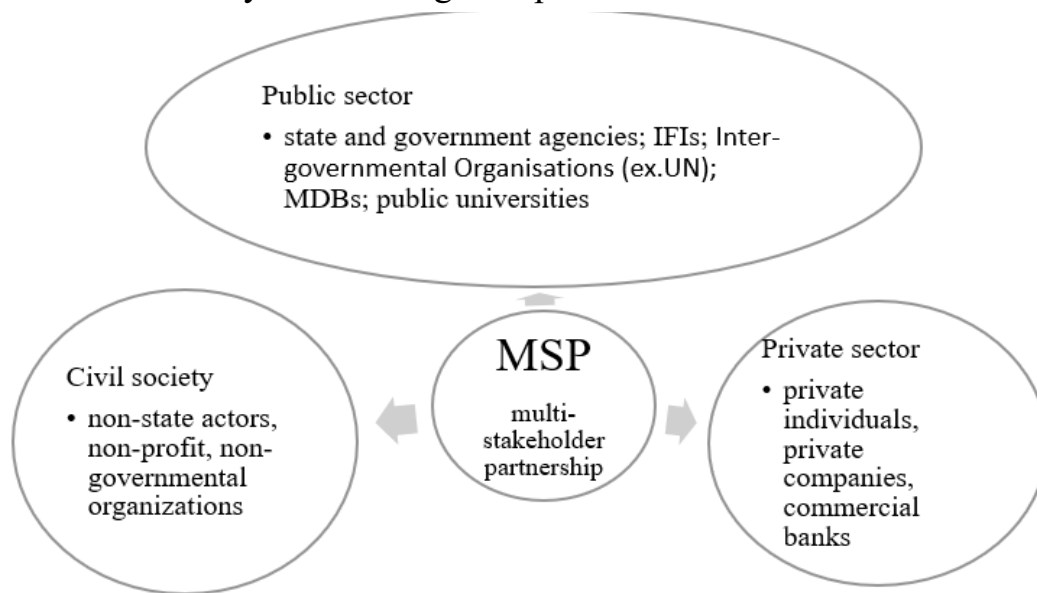
Fig. 1. MSPs definition

Source: made by author on the basis of [3].

HLPE experts divide the qualities that shape MSPs' performance into 3 broad categories: I.Result-related qualities: effectiveness, impact and capacity to mobilize resources; II.Process-related qualities: inclusiveness, accountability, transparency, reflexivity and efficiency; III.Enabling criteria – policy and legislation, governance system and coordination. Jane Nelson in Harvard Kennedy School research on partnerships for sustainable development proposes to classify partnership ecosystem for food and agriculture into 3 groups [4]: (1) Industry-level, precompetitive collective action; (2) Commodity-specific alliances (some industry- led, some MSPs); (3) System-level, MSPs.

Fig. 2. MSPs classification

Source: made by author on the basis [4-6].

To research the potential of MSPs in transforming food systems and supporting food security against global threats, we collected questionnaire data in September 2024 and received 195 responses from the representatives of 52 countries. Here we aim to analyse the responses to 4 questions (Q12, Q32, Q33, Q34) provided by respondents who classified themselves under 6 professional areas categories – Associations, Civil society (NGOs), Government, International organizations, Private sector and Researchers and Scientists.
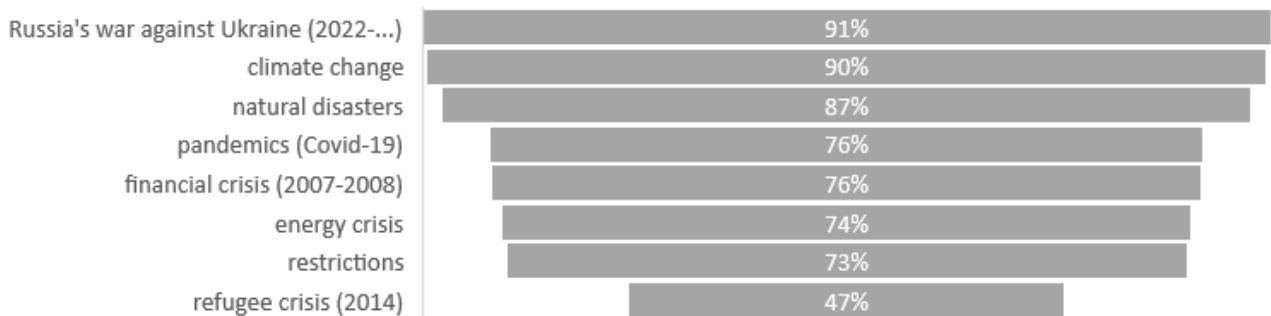

Fig. 3. Results of Q12: Global threats to food security

Source: made by author.

The highest share of respondents – 91% agreed that Russia's war against Ukraine is a global threat to food security. As war goes on, it continues to have a destabilizing effect for Ukraine's agriculture sector, global food supplies and the resulting global food. Climate change (90%) and natural disasters (87%) ranked 2nd and 3rd place. The respondents largely agree with defining Covid-19 (76%), financial crisis of 2007-2008 (76%), energy crisis (74%) and trade restrictions (73%) as global food security threats. Whereas the refugee crisis of 2014 (47%) did not pass the 50% barrier.

In the MSP context, we can confirm the active involvement in providing immediate response to above mentioned global threats. In 2010 Global Agriculture and Food Security

Programme (GAFSP) – an international Financial Intermediary Fund administered by the World Bank – was established as a direct response to the 2007–08 **food and financial crises**. Since 2011 Global Food Security Cluster has become operational (29 countries, as of 2025) to coordinate food security responses in humanitarian crises– including those that result from **armed conflict** and **natural disasters**. In April 2020, the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT Accelerator) has a become a major platform for providing equitable access to **COVID-19** tests, treatments, and vaccines. A more recent example is CSA-MSP (2022): Climate Smart Agriculture Multistakeholder platform in Uganda as a means of fostering collaboration, improving development agenda, and influencing sector transformation towards CSA objectives.
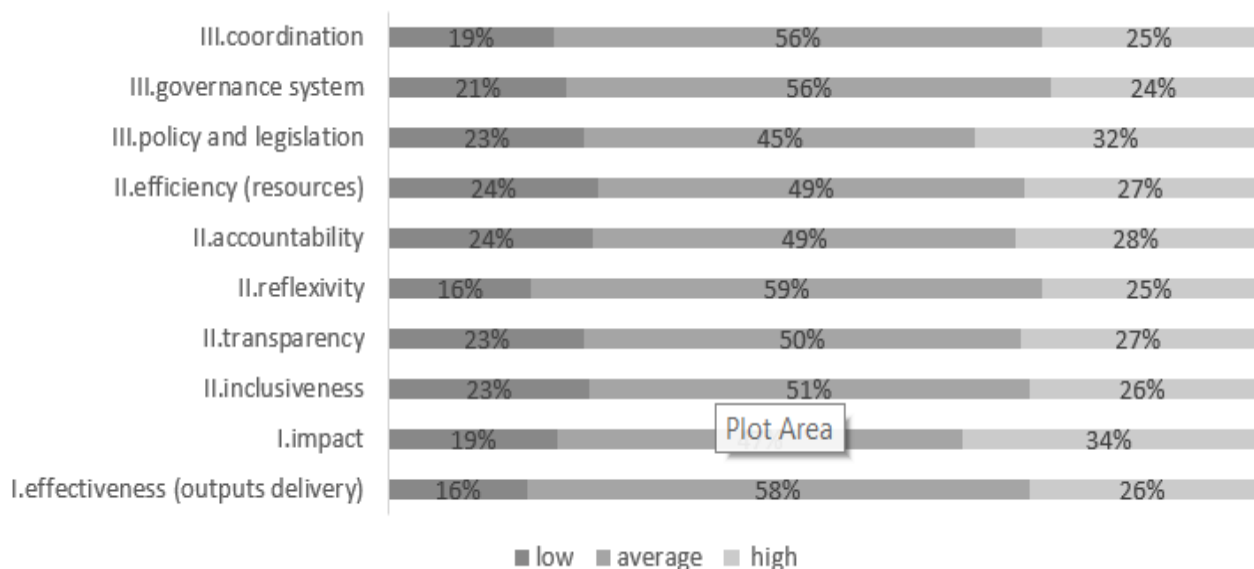

	low	average	high
III.coordination	19%	56%	25%
III.governance system	21%	56%	24%
III.policy and legislation	23%	45%	32%
II.efficiency (resources)	24%	49%	27%
II.accountability	24%	49%	28%
II.reflexivity	16%	59%	25%
II.transparency	23%	50%	27%
II.inclusiveness	23%	51%	26%
I.impact	19%		34%
I.effectiveness (outputs delivery)	16%	58%	26%

Fig. 4. Q32: Evaluation of existing MSP

Source: made by author.

When assessing the adequacy of existing MSPs towards strengthening food security at national level, 34% of participants express confidence in high **impact** of MSPs towards solving global issues. 32% of respondents access highly **policy and legislation** pillar of MSPs. 59% and 58% of respondents assess **reflexivity** (i.e. ability to adjust) and **effectiveness** (i.e.outputs delivery) of MSPs at the average level, with lowest percentage of low ratings. **Efficiency of resources** and **accountability** is mostly rated average (49%), with nearly equal splits between low (24%) and high (27% and 28% respectively). **Transparency** and **inclusiveness** demonstrate balanced assessment with 50% and 51% of respondents leaning toward average with moderate high ratings. Majority of respondents 56% view **coordination** and **governance system** as average; only a quarter see coordination (25%) and governance system (24%) at high level. Please note that capacity to mobilize resources parameter was omitted in the questionnaire.
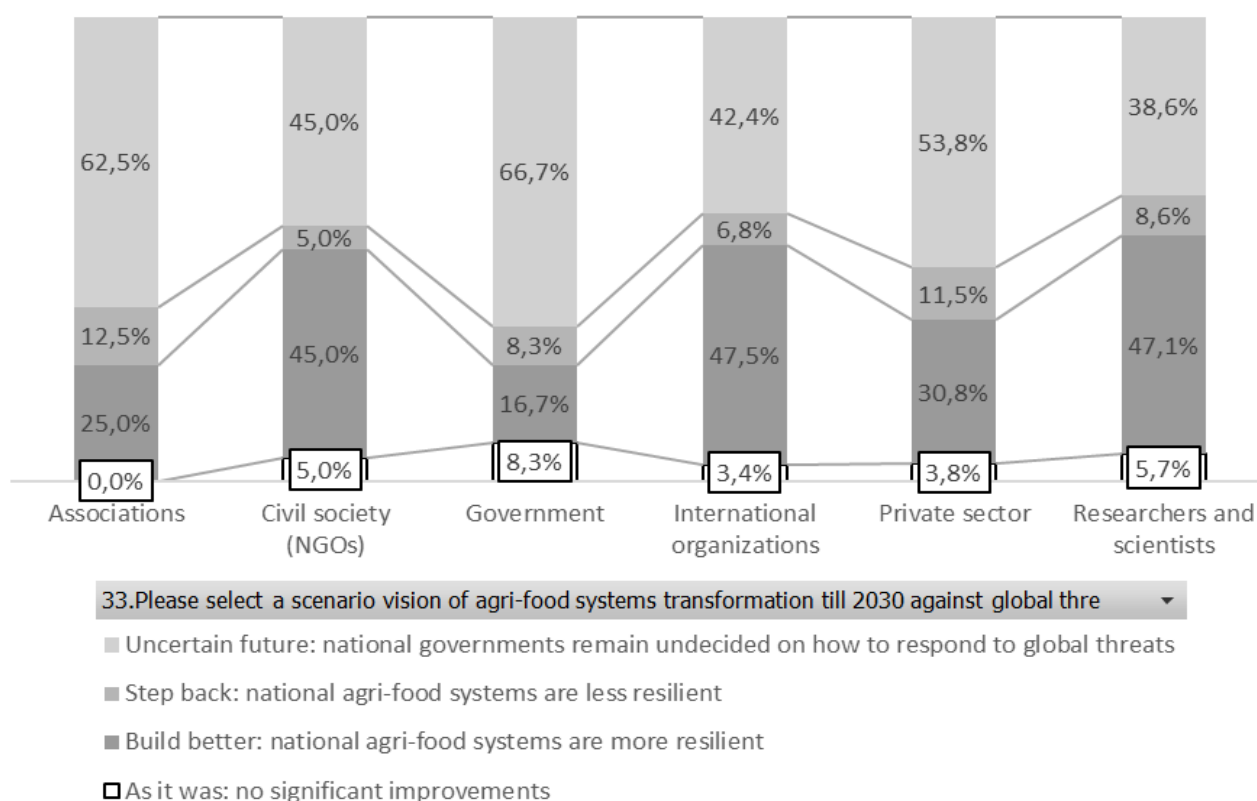
Fig. 5. Q33: Scenario vision of agri-food systems
transformation till 2030 against global threats response
Source: made by author.

International organizations (47,5%) and **Researchers and scientists** (47,1%) are quite optimistic on future food security developments and remain confident that national food systems will become more resilient under *Scenario 3 (Build better)*. **Civil society** (45%) professionals have equal distribution of answers amongst *Scenario 2 (Uncertain future)* and *Scenario 3 (Build better)*.

The vast majority of **Government** (66,7%), **Associations** (62,5%) and **Private sector** (52%) representatives express their doubts on ensuring national food security against global threats in future. They opted for *Scenario 2 (Uncertain future)* that indicates uncertainty of national governments to respond to global threats.

In parallel, **Associations** (12,5%) representatives demonstrate the highest level of pessimism towards government capacity to maintain food security against global threats, amongst 6 professional area categories, as indicated by *Scenario 1 (Step back)*. Meanwhile, **Government** (8,3%) professionals show the largest level of confidence in food security situation and countries capacity to respond to global threats remaining at the same level, as reflected in *Scenario 4 (As it was)*.

Overall, 66% of respondents believe in the potential of private and public sector. They have demonstrated the largest share of confidence in private sector (38%) as a stakeholder to contribute to agri-food systems transformation. Government (27%) ranks at second place and International organizations and Civil society (NGOs) rank at 3rd place with equal confidence of 10%.
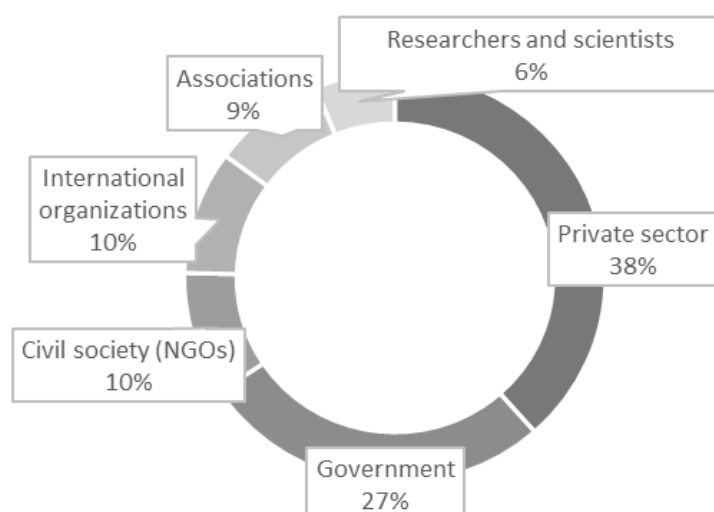
Fig. 6. Q34: Stakeholders potential for agri-food systems transformation
Source: made by author.

To conclude, these days it has become evident that new approaches are required to maintain food security against global threats. And within the context of SDGs agenda, a mechanism of multi-stakeholder partnerships can become an effective mechanism – at industry, commodity-specific and system levels, thus, conforming its important role in agri-food systems transformation.

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