



Re-imagining Future Value Chains

A futures and innovation process to drive development of resilient, regenerative and just agricultural value chains in an increasingly disrupted world

**FORUM
FOR THE
FUTURE**

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AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS ARE IN CRISIS

Global agricultural value chains are already struggling under disrupted logistics, and the effects of COVID have revealed how complex systems we've taken for granted can break down under pressure. Current trends show even greater changes on the horizon that will increasingly strain the context in which these value chains work. Unless we re-think and re-design them, they are likely to buckle and may break.

However, there is not enough understanding on how to make change happen - and where there is activity it is often incremental with a narrow focus (e.g. living wage or logistics). We need to take a more systemic, longer term view.

More change – and challenge – is coming

Changing weather will increasingly impact agricultural production, at the same time as the imperative for climate mitigation necessitates changing land use. Climate disruption will impact costs and security of logistics such as transport; other trends like automation and increased scrutiny in regulation will force value chains to adapt or suffer. Exposed to the inevitable shocks, the “just in time” delivery model - increasingly becoming “just in case” - is unlikely to be able to deliver.

Change is already overdue

Reaching net zero emissions calls for radical mitigation across agricultural value chains. But we need to solve value chain issues not just to ensure reliable supply so business can thrive, but for social and environmental good. Long standing structural inequalities and power dynamics must also be addressed if we are to create an industry that is equitable and fair, and resilient to a significantly altered climatic and social context.



OUR APPROACH

THE FUTURE OF VALUE CHAINS

As the context of global value chains continue to change, rather than a “return to normal” we should be prepared for an inflection of pressure points and continuing disruption. With these trends in view we need to look seriously at alternatives - models which will better prepare all value chain actors, from smallholder farmers to brands and retailers, for the turbulent decades ahead.

The crisis is an opportunity to reinvent value chains to address critical social issues and long-standing inequities, build resilience and adaptive capacity whilst also facilitating critical emission reductions.

We aim to use current and pending disruptions in value chains as an opportunity to move beyond current assumptions to re-imagine how agricultural value chains might work in the emerging future. Bringing together diverse perspectives from the marginalised to the mainstream, this will explore what the future context for agricultural value chains may look like, and alternative models that can enable them to survive and thrive while embedding just and regenerative principles.

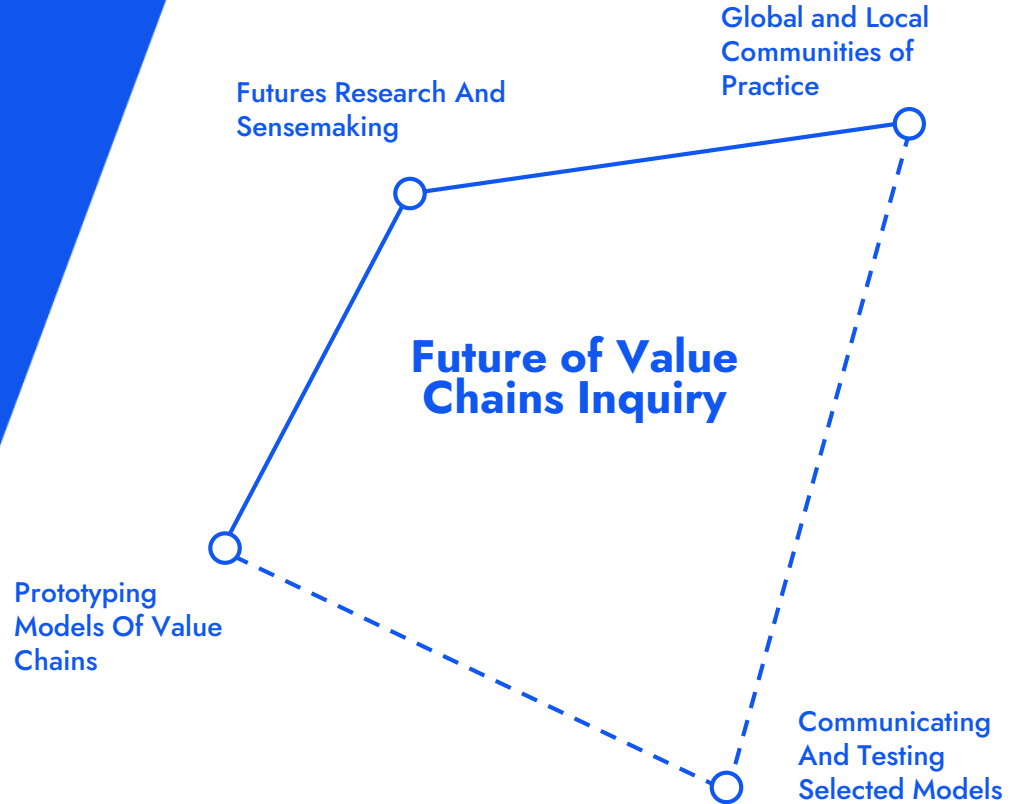
This larger inquiry will act as an umbrella collating the learnings from a series of modules and projects across different sectors, geographies and commodities. Selected commodities will be key to the regions’ economies and livelihoods, have significant environmental and/or social impacts to mitigate, and be facing considerable challenges due to climate change and accompanying factors.

We plan to take the learnings from each module and test them with a global community of supply chain actors. The aim is to better understand the essential aspects of supply chains of the future that can be scaled, what is specifically local, and which models that emerge from the prototyping have most potential to be adapted and scaled.

THE INQUIRY

The inquiry combines elements of futures research, on-the-ground prototyping, and co-learning and innovation across a global community. Futures research will identify the relevant trends and signals that inform regional supply chain prototypes; these will be developed through an innovation process with groups of supply chain actors and other stakeholders. These activities will be consistent across each module and linked by an umbrella futures inquiry organised around thematic areas outlined in slide 6.

The goal of this work to create pilotable models to be taken up by trailblazing businesses.



THE INQUIRY IN DETAIL

Futures research and sensemaking to understand how the current context is changing, the impact of these changes on future value chains and the types of challenges selected value chains will need to operate in.

Prototyping value chain models that could be viable and resilient against future challenges, and selecting some to build a vision for just and regenerative value chains.

Testing and sharing selected models, working with partners to apply them in practice, learning through the process and sharing insights from what we learn.

Global and local communities of practice, linking learning and prototypes from modules, both with one another and a global community of supply chains actors and experts.

The process will include involving all actors across the value chain:

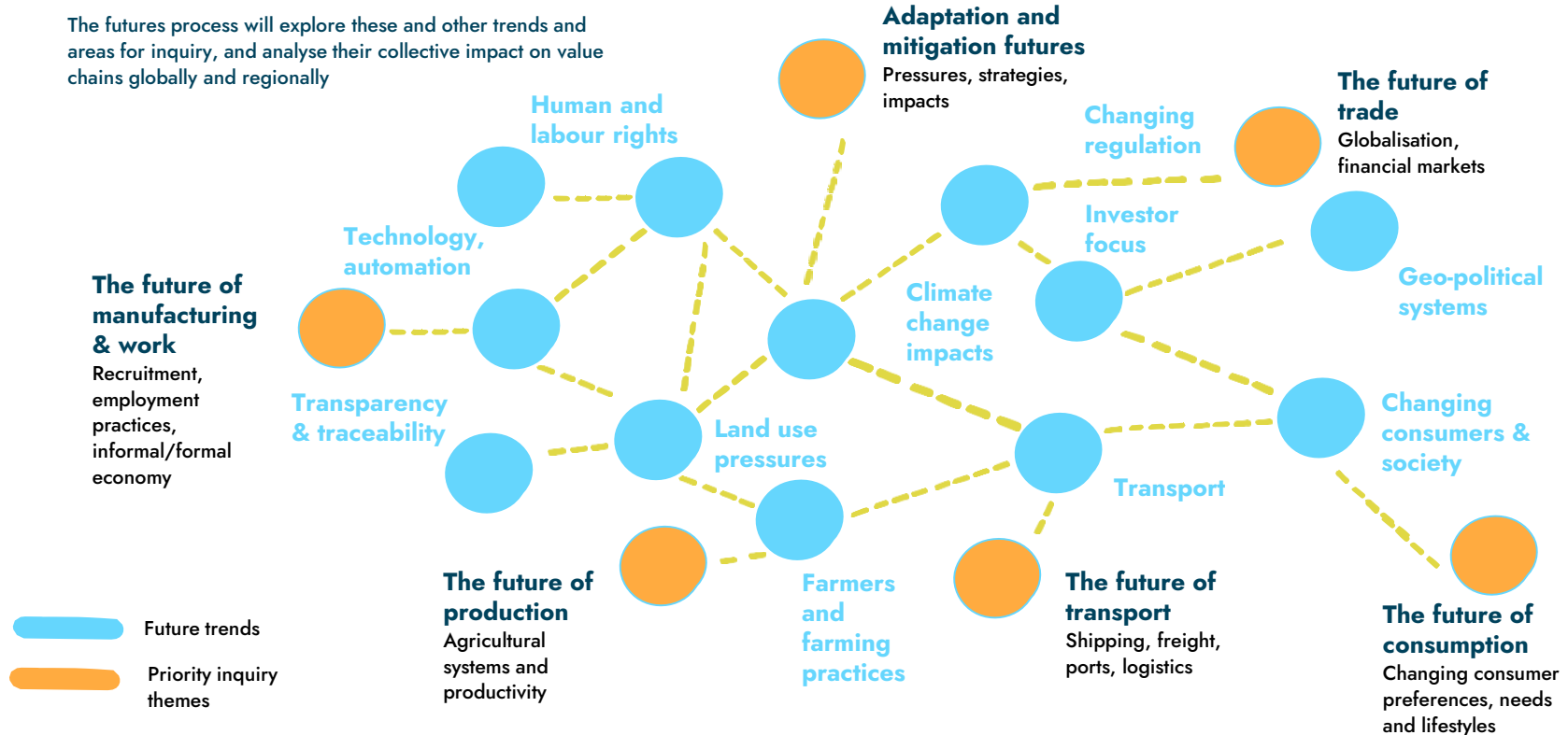
- farmers and producers
- processors and traders
- manufacturers
- brands and retailers
- investors
- consumer groups
- advocacy and NGO organisations
- governments
- innovators

The aim of the inquiry is to:

- **Test and challenge assumptions:** Research the conditions needed for current value chain models to work, and how we expect trends to impact and shape conditions in future
- **Design new value chain models:** Prototype value chain models that reduce emissions, are adaptive to climate change, and offer secure livelihoods that incentivize production and support social stability
- **Look beyond risk mitigation to system change:** Guide all actors across selected agricultural value chains to look beyond managing risk to creating value chains that are fit for the future
- **Build an unusual community of diverse voices** to re-imagine and co-design value chain models
- **Set a new criteria:** Define what characteristics value chains will need to have to function in a very different context that is disrupted and unpredictable, and that can deliver regenerative and just outcomes

FUTURES INQUIRY

The futures process will explore these and other trends and areas for inquiry, and analyse their collective impact on value chains globally and regionally

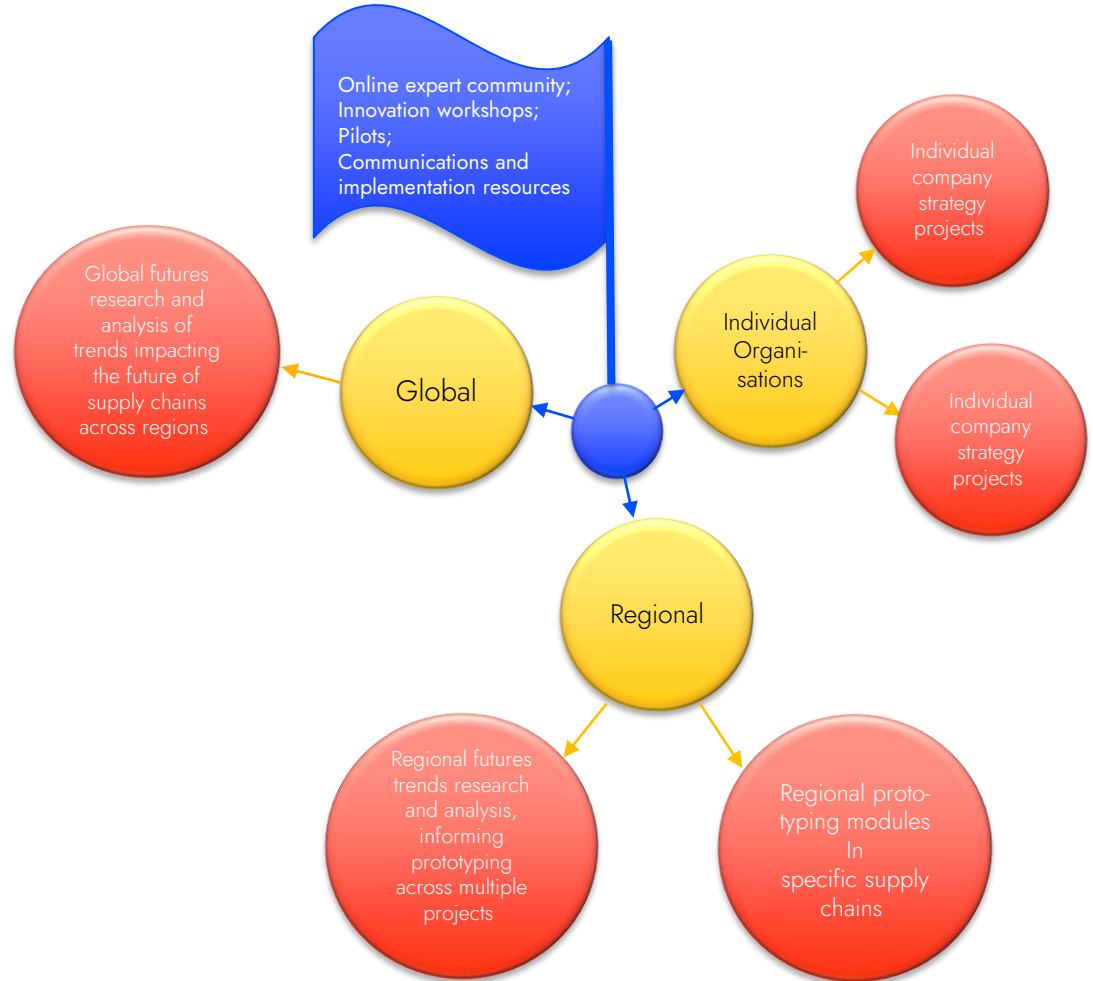


THE APPROACH: REGIONAL MODULES WITHIN A GLOBAL INQUIRY

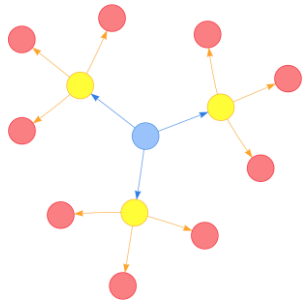
The global inquiry will be informed by a variety of regional modules (either individual company strategies, or collaborative modules in a specific commodity and region) that will create prototypes for their value chains.

Forum is currently in discussions with several partners to develop modules in East Africa, Latin America and the US.

(These are in development and are not definitive indications of our intentions or eventual focus).



Module Approach in Detail



A “module” is an innovation process that can either be conducted by multiple organisations in a particular commodity, or by one organisation working with actors across its supply chain.

Each Module Comprises of:

- Working with partners, co-designing each module based on the goals of the organisation(s) and context of the region and commodity.
- Once the selection of commodity crops and other factors are confirmed, the module will feature futures research to outline significant trends relevant to both global supply chains and the selected commodities in the region.
- This set of futures trends and disruptions is intended to provide a set of future conditions, or “provocations” in which to develop responses and concepts that will represent a prototype for a resilient value chain.
- All of our work is guided by just and regenerative principles - including circularity, zero waste, replenishing environments, empowered and resilient communities and more.
- Full implementation of each module involves a process of conceptualising and rapid prototyping these future value chains for the specific actors and regions involved, giving them a basis with which to innovate and pilot.

Prototyping:

- As with all design, our conception of prototyping sits between conceptualisation and piloting stage, forming a critical stage in which theorisation and reality collide.
- We anticipate each module in this work will feature:
 - A use of provocations in a rapid innovation process with a range of stakeholders to develop value chain concepts
 - Rapid prototyping by using a set of questions to guide the development and inquiry for how these new models can create change
 - Identifying, through this process, a number of stakeholders who will make a commitment to develop and implement them.
- It is central to our approach to involve diverse stakeholders from across the system, particularly those whose voices are seldom heard or included in design or decision making, so that the emerging models reflect the needs of all significant actors.

OUTPUTS

The Future of Value Chains initiative will bring together learning from practical pilots and futures research in a variety of formats and gatherings, both in person and online.

This work will generate resources to help drive adoption of alternative models and support others in implementing it, including:

Resource toolkit

A set of implementation guides to include research summary clips, future “provocations”, recommended value chain models and implementation pathways, and resources for businesses and others to take practical action to reshape their value chains.

Thought leadership via the Futures Centre

Throughout the project, we’ll bring together a diverse group of stakeholders using online fora via Forum’s [Futures Centre](#) to present provocations and engage in both public and closed debates, producing thought leadership content and crowd-sourced feedback on value chain trends, concepts and models.

A future of value chains summit

The project will culminate in a series of gatherings, in person and online, to share learning and spark dialogue on how to implement and accelerate the change.

Pilots to test alternative models

We will work with actors to bring prototyped models into their supply chains, acting as learning partners and conveners, and with a focus on embedding just and regenerative principles into practice.



OUTCOMES

Our aim is to challenge the narrative of current agricultural value chains and enable the emergence of just and regenerative ones, through creating:

A vision for value chains that can help to transform and future proof your own value chains, and the world of agricultural commodities.

Through the collective inquiry, we'll identify a set of value chain models for agricultural commodities, and pathways to implement them, which can be effective and resilient in a rapidly shifting future context. We'll understand how identified options can work in specific regional contexts, and which models have most potential to be adapted to other crops and geographies.

Participating business will have support and insights to use the project outputs to redesign their value chains, or develop strategies to implement the changes stakeholders identify are needed.

Greater understanding of the challenges - and opportunities - of a very different future context.

Assessing and participating in the futures analysis will help organisations understand how the world is changing, some of the critical uncertainties to prepare for, and the range of responses across their organisations that might be required to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

Increased ability of businesses to enable actors across their value chains to adopt regenerative and socially just business practices — including greater awareness and knowledge of the barriers to and opportunities for change.





WHO IS IT FOR, AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- Brands and retailers
- Traders
- Processors and manufacturers
- Farmer organisations
- Governments
- Investors
- NGO and advisory organisations

Working together with a truly diverse community of supply chain actors, you'll:

Understand the emerging future

Explore and make sense of the emerging future context, test assumptions and identify potential risks, opportunities and blind spots in your strategy.

Synthesise different perspectives

Diagnose challenges with all types of stakeholders from across the whole value chain, including those whose voices are too often marginalised or excluded.

Co-develop responses

Collaborate on solutions to current and future value chain challenges, and on what future value chains might need to look like.

Identify viable pathways

towards building regenerative and just value chains amidst increasing disruption.

WHO ARE WE EXPLORING THIS WITH?

We are currently in initial talks with stakeholders in different regions across the globe, including:



A major trading company specialising in wheat, soy and cocoa



An international development bank, exploring potential projects in soy



A major brand with supply chains in coffee, cocoa and other commodities

The project is an opportunity to bring an innovative and unique approach to the value chains which partners are involved in.

At this stage, we are open to partnerships in value chains in major agricultural commodities of key importance to human wellbeing, like wheat, soy or palm oil, as well as cash crops including coffee and cocoa.

The initiative is open to a range of approaches such as working alongside existing, nascent or in-development market mechanisms, for example trade corridors; or taking a regional focus, for instance understanding further the intersection of multiple crops, supply chain actors and communities.



BUILDING AMBITION TO JUST AND REGENERATIVE



VALUE CHAINS THAT DRIVE JUST AND REGENERATIVE OUTCOMES

With our partners, Forum works to accelerate system change across food, energy, health, business and other systems to be just and regenerative. Value chains of agricultural crops are a key intersection point across all these areas.

In 2021, Forum for the Future and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), launched the [Business Transformation Compass](#) - a working definition of what it means for a business to be 'just and regenerative', encouraging business to set this as the guiding ambition, and providing practical guidance on how to get there.

The Future of Value Chains initiative works towards the same aim, but links all the different stakeholders - from producers to traders to marginalised voices, as well as businesses - to create a vision and prototypes for change towards just and regenerative value chain models.

Forum for the Future invites diverse actors across agricultural sectors to re-imagine value chains – from understanding the risks and opportunities in the changing future context, to developing viable alternatives for the agricultural value chains of the future that not only survive but enable the ecosystems and societies they touch to thrive.

WHY FORUM IS WELL PLACED TO DO THIS WORK

Forum for the Future will draw on the **systems change, collaborative approaches and networks** that have powered shifts towards just and regenerative food and farming value chains (e.g. [Tea 2030](#), [Cotton 2040](#), [Growing Our Future](#), and the [Protein Challenge](#)). Each of these initiatives involved prototyping, including:

- [Kenya Tea Swaps](#) on market mechanisms to reduce price volatility and support grower livelihoods
- [Feed Compass](#) framework for supporting decision making to increase uptake of sustainable animal feed in value chains (piloted with M&S, Waitrose and Tulip).

Other prototypes being developed include partnering with a major UK retailer to test ways to enable their farmers to adopt regenerative practices, and how ecosystems services business models can be used in the cotton sector.

We are also leaders in applied futures for sustainability, using trends, visions and scenarios to challenge assumptions about the world and help create practical and visionary solutions to current challenges.

“It’s time for the agriculture industry to re-imagine the status quo and we value Forum for the Future’s insight on building futures thinking into our business strategy”

Sunny Verghese, CEO, Olam International and Chair of WBCSD

THE OFFER

As a non-profit we need the support of partner organisations to fund the development of the core project and are keen to explore how this can create mutual benefit for you.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Opportunities to contribute to the project include at a local or regional level through involvement in a modular activity in a specific value chain, or at the global inquiry level, supporting and participating in futures research, analysis and innovation.

Contact us for details on how to get involved by:

1. Holding an organisational strategy module - a bespoke strategy project in your own supply chain(s). This includes the opportunity to get involved with the global community (option 3);
2. Conducting a collaborative module in a specific supply chain and geography with multiple producers, brands and other actors;
3. Collaborating with a global community in developing insights from futures research and participating in workshops to explore and innovate the value chains models of tomorrow. *(This will follow implementation of modules in 2023).*

“External factors associated with a deteriorating planet - from tougher legal regulations to preventing increased climate migration – are risks to businesses and their associated value chains.

Understanding this is vital to informing where, how and what we will make and sell in years to come. It also informs us where continuous improvement will not be sufficient and how in some cases we will need to completely transform the way we operate.

Our work with Forum for the Future is supporting us on this journey.”

- CSO, Asian Development Bank

INVESTMENT

WHAT IT MIGHT COST TO PARTICIPATE

While costs will vary depending on scope, geography and your organisations' needs, the ranges provided can serve as a guideline.

Currency conversion example:
£30,000 : \$37,500 : €36,000 (@ 06/05/22)



1.

Conducting a collaborative module in a specific supply chain and geography with supply chain stakeholders

An initial scoping process is likely to require approx. **£25,000 investment**; a full project will be defined through the scoping and be financed through contributions from multiple stakeholders. An estimated cost for this is **£250,000** and upwards.

2.

Holding a bespoke organisational strategy module focusing in your own supply chain(s)

A strategy process can be developed around specific needs and questions. Investment will vary depending on scope, but may range from **£35 - £75,000**. This includes the opportunity to participate in the global community for research and innovation.





C2C MARKET PLACE

INVESTMENT (cont.)

3.

Collaborating with a global research and innovation community in developing insights from futures research and participating in workshops to explore and innovate the value chain models of tomorrow

Accessing detailed global and regional futures research, including participating in sensemaking workshops and online curated conversations with participating organisations: estimated investment to range from **£5 - £15,000**, depending on the level of participation.

(This activity will take place following completion of regional modules, estimated timeframe in 2023.)

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AN INVITATION TO

HELP TO SHAPE THE VALUE CHAINS OF THE FUTURE

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Read more about our work at

FORUMFORTHEFUTURE.ORG

Forum for the Future is a leading international sustainability non-profit with offices in London, New York, Singapore and Mumbai.