

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Friday, 16 April 2021 13:00 GMT +01:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Access to Nutrition: How can we make nutritious food affordable for all?
CONVENED BY	Nick Chisholm (University College Cork), Solange Cullen (University College Cork), Patrice Lucid (Irish Forum for International Agricultural Development - IFIAD)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/11388/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Ireland, No borders

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

191

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

60 Male

131 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

5 Local Non-Governmental Organization

27 International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

57 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

14 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

10 United Nations

1 International financial institution

3 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

74 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

The event was organised and convened through a consultative process that fully subscribed to the principles of engagement outlined in the convenor's manual. The main model of engagement was a panel of keynote speakers to encourage discussion. The speakers were selected to provide perspectives from different levels and so that their presentations would complement each other: the programme included a global overview of the extent of the affordability challenge, three case studies from NGOs working on the ground in Sub-Saharan Africa (Liberia, Malawi, Niger and Zambia), and a forward-looking focus on the options to address affordability through the Action Track process of the UN Food Systems Summit. Attendees were invited through diverse channels to ensure that the audience was diverse and represented a broad spectrum of disciplines and sectors (multi-sectoral inclusivity). The speakers and audience were treated with respect and given the space to voice their comments and questions. The dialogue complemented research and practice currently being done to advance Action Track 1. The event was organised as a collaboration between University College Cork (UCC) and the Irish Forum for International Agricultural Development (IFIAD) to ensure a broad reach and encourage a diverse audience to contribute and interact in thought-provoking ideas and solutions.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The Dialogue participants understood the urgency of addressing the challenge of the affordability of nutritious food through the evidence presented and discussion. Participants actively participated in discussions around solutions. The facilitator of the dialogue was chosen based on their experience and knowledge of the topic. Each speaker and participant were respectful of the topic, comments and other cultures. The complexity of the affordability challenge was recognised throughout the event and addressed from both global and community-level perspectives, and in the presentation in relation to solutions emerging from the Action Track 1 process. The speakers committed to continue their work and the conversation surrounding solutions through collaboration after the event. The webinar brought together a range of participants from different sectors and stakeholder groups: the mix between science/academia and development practitioners at different levels (UN, Government, international and local NGOs) provided a valuable platform for exchange between the most current research and evidence and current practices in the field. This allowed for an exchange of knowledge and ideas and a discussion about the best way forward.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

Familiarise with the principles of engagement prior to organising a dialogue. When planning on inviting participants identify channels that will ensure a diverse pool of disciplines and stakeholder groups, this will make the event and the discussion more inclusive and interesting. Food systems include everyone, and it is important to create a virtual space where individuals and groups can access up to date research and current practices on the subject. Prepare a platform on which to share resources relevant to the topic. From a practical reporting perspective, ask for information (e.g. sector, organisation/stakeholder group) in the registration process enabling simple analysis of participants to be conducted.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

Yes

No

The dialogue was the second of a three-part online series. It was organised as a webinar to ensure as many participants as possible could access the event. The online nature of the event allowed for participants from around the world to take part. The registration information showed that there were participants from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe. The keynote speakers chosen represented a diverse body of work including a global overview of the extent of the problem of unaffordability of nutritious food, and case studies from Liberia, Malawi, Niger and Zambia, that brought an audience from many countries and also allowed for interesting cross-country comparisons of the extent to which poor households are unable to afford nutritious food. The dialogue was structured as a presentation of work done by five keynote speakers; between every section there was time given to the audience to raise question or comment. The dialogue was facilitated by a stakeholder with experience in the area. The facilitator fielded questions for each speaker and allowed time for responses from one or all the speakers. Throughout the presentations there were ongoing discussions between the audience and other speakers in the online dialogue box which was available for everyone. The dialogue box served not only to raise questions but also allowed audience members to share resources of their own work and experience to the large number of participants, this ensured that all participants' voices were heard. The online format turned out to have advantages compared to a "conventional" physical meeting, in that it allowed for wider participation both of speakers and of the audience. The Q&A and "Chat" functions allowed for questions to be put to speakers while all participants simultaneously posted information on their own initiatives/actions.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The aim of the webinar was to identify ways of addressing the problem of widespread lack of access to nutritious foods due to lack of affordability. This is a major challenge for the global food system: recent research has estimated about 3 billion people globally cannot afford a healthy diet. This has huge implications for achieving SDG2, and is a major focus of Action Track 1 (AT1) of the UN Food Systems Summit. The webinar provided an overview of the global extent of the challenge: this was presented by Anna Herforth, one of the lead analysts of the global extent of unaffordability of nutritious food. This was followed by case study evidence from projects and analyses involving Irish and other NGOs in Liberia, Malawi, Niger and Zambia. This evidence was based on using the Cost of the Diet methodology to calculate the least-cost nutritious diet and identify the number of households unable to afford this diet. An overview of different explanations of the problem of unaffordability, and solutions emerging within the Action Track 1 process, was then provided by Corinna Hawkes, lead of the Access to Food pillar of AT1.

Please note that we have also included in this feedback some findings from the first webinar held in the series, which was conducted before the events were officially registered as Dialogues. The first webinar addressed the issue of Food Systems and COVID-19: Irish development organisations' role in building back better.

ACTION TRACKS

- Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- Finance
- Innovation
- Human rights
- Women & Youth Empowerment
- Policy
- Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

Key Messages

- Currently 3 billion people can't afford the least-cost healthy diet recommended by national Governments
- Actions are needed in social protection and in agricultural investments to improve access to nutritious food; social protection transfers need to increase
- The cost of nutritious foods should be reduced by diversification and connection, not by externalising the true cost of food
- Some community-level solutions can help address affordability and access, including home garden production of nutritious food, nutrition-sensitive aquaculture, developing recipes based on locally available foods, improving infrastructure and market access
- The perceived low value of some nutritious and lower-cost foods needs to be challenged
- The food environment needs to be changed to incentivise healthy foods and disincentivise wide availability of highly processed unhealthy foods, including working through corporate governance mechanisms
- We need to work on multiple game-changing actions collectively to bring about a fundamental shift in how food systems operate and achieve co-benefits across food system outcomes.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

The Challenge

How can nutritious diets be affordable for all? What is the current situation? Anna Herforth presented findings from her recent global overview study. Using the World Bank's 2017 International Comparison Program (ICP) dataset, the study estimated that 3 billion people globally can't afford to purchase the least-cost form of healthy diets recommended by national governments. On average it costs \$3.68 per day to meet dietary recommendations (which differ by country): healthy diets cost far more than the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day.

World Bank data estimate that the poorest people in Low Income countries spend an average of 63% of income on food. Based on comparing the cost of diet with 63% of incomes, 1.3 billion people in South Asia, 829 million in Sub-Saharan Africa and 556 million in E. and SE Asia can't afford a healthy diet.

More diverse diets cost more: staples and oils comprise just 16% of the cost of a healthy diet, but fruit and veg cost 40% and protein foods plus dairy comprise 44%. Therefore low-income consumers find it impossible to achieve healthy diets based on current cost structures.

What can we conclude from this analysis? First, there are implications for poverty lines: these are clearly set too low and need to be adjusted to allow for the cost of a nutritious diet. Second, agriculture and rural development programmes need to prioritise reducing the cost of vegetables and fruits, and protein-rich foods including dairy, in ways which improve livelihoods and the environment. Third, social protection programmes need to be re-designed to have a stronger focus on nutrition, possibly including assistance for home-based production of nutritious foods.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

Building back better from COVID-19 - Irish Development Organisations Role in building back better.

- Building Back Better from COVID-19: 2021 presents a window of opportunity for 'transformational change' towards reaching the SDGs. In doing this we must ensure that we reach the furthest behind first, and take a 'food systems approach'. Policy responses to COVID-19 must also be gender sensitive if we are to 'build back better'. One tool identified is the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) which is a practical guide for transforming gender and unequal power relations in value chains.

- Inequality is a key consideration in building back better from COVID-19. For example, IFPRI research from Ethiopia demonstrates that the poorest households were disproportionately affected by the income and nutritional impacts of COVID-19 compared to Middle and Higher Income Households.

- Irish development organisations have a role to play in building back better. In particular there is a need to support resilient systems, emphasise local and collaborative approaches and ensure the voices of the marginalised are heard through inclusive and democratic processes. Donors can support this role through flexible financing, for example, Irish Aid flexible funding was effective in enabling development partners such as Trocaire and Concern to respond to the immediate impacts of COVID-19.

- On tackling malnutrition, we must look at all aspects of the food systems, including WASH, Health, social protection and livelihoods; this came out strongly from IFPRI and IDS research.

- Social protection systems have been adaptive to COVID-19, and safeguarded the most vulnerable. Positive examples shared were the PSNP Ethiopia, Cash Safety-net Transfers in Haiti and Bangladesh (Concern). Advocacy and oversight of social protection systems is also necessary to ensure government transfers are sufficient to allow beneficiaries access a Minimum Expenditure Basket (Concern programme in Kenya). In the longer term, countries need to be supported to develop shock responsive social protection systems

- In order to understand food economies in food insecure environments, it's important to know how households meet their food needs. Tools identified were the Household Hunger Scale(UCC), and The Livelihood based Coping Strategy Index (LbCSI) which uses 'coping strategies' as an indicator for stress regarding access to food (Trocaire).

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KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Women & Youth Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade-offs
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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

Examples from Liberia, Niger, Malawi and Zambia

Case studies conducted by different NGOs using the Cost of the Diet methodology highlighted some of the affordability issues in different contexts.

A study undertaken in Liberia by Concern Worldwide in three livelihood zones found that most poor and very poor households would need to spend more than 100% of their annual income to achieve a nutritious diet. The price of fish has a significant impact on affordability. Seasonal price fluctuations, currency depreciation/import dependency and production constraints also influence affordability. Potential solutions include a focus on community-level food demonstrations, home-garden production, nutrition-sensitive aquaculture and snail-rearing, promoting recipes incorporating nutritious local foods, and increased use of micronutrient powders.

Save the Children (UK) pioneered the Cost of Diet and Household Economy approaches. SCF presented recent work in Malawi and Niger combining both approaches to explore the impact of covid-19 on diet affordability. The likely causes of impact are restricted movement, curfews, market disruptions, disruption of livelihoods, border closures, and food price increases. In Niger (Zinder District) grains comprised about 50% of the cost of a nutritious diet. Prices and affordability increased in January-February 2021 compared with the previous year: in February 2021 the affordability of a nutritious diet was 129% of the income of very poor households. In Malawi's Chilwa Lake Zone the cost of a nutritious diet was 250% above average incomes of very poor households. The second wave of covid 19 was contributing to a worsening of affordability and increased malnutrition in both countries.

SHA presented findings of work on affordability by Self Help Africa in their Local Development Programme implemented in two remote Districts of the Northern Province of Zambia, with high prevalent stunting rates (about 50%). The cost of an energy-only diet was estimated at 58% of average income, but the minimum cost of a nutritious diet was 14 – 18 times more expensive than the energy-only diet – far out of reach of most households. Factors influencing affordability included limited availability of vegetables in the cold season, the high cost of sources of Vitamin B12 (mostly animal-source foods), poor infrastructure and remote location, and food preferences - millet is considered a food of poor people although it is a better sources of micronutrients than maize.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

What Actions can be used to improve Affordability?

Corinna Hawkes presented five propositions about the nature of the affordability problem, and potential solutions emerging in the Action Track 1 process of the Food Systems Summit.

Problem 1 is low and variable incomes of poor households: rational management of such incomes drives households to choose staples and cheap, often less healthy options. Potential solutions include women-led enterprise for neglected crops, nutritious social safety nets and school food programmes.

Problem 2 is that nutritious foods that people want to eat are more expensive. Potential solutions include investment in infrastructure for nutritious foods and expansion of food at work actions.

Problem 3 is that there may be low-cost nutritious foods available which are perceived as having low value, (e.g. millets). Potential game-changing solutions include developing an innovation platform for SME manufacturers of convenient nutritious foods.

Problem 4 is the perception that nutritious foods are more costly when they may not be. A potential solution is public awareness campaigns with commercial knowhow.

Problem 5 is the wide availability of appealing “ultra-processed” sugary drinks and snacks, fried street foods, oils and sugar, which people are willing to pay for even when they may be more expensive than more nutritious alternatives. Potential solutions include clearly defining “unhealthy food”, a package of food environment policies, and disincentives for unhealthy food marketing.

Bringing these game-changing solutions together to achieve systems change will achieve greater collective impact. This involves changing the “rules of the game” to provide an environment which enables a nutritious food economy.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There were no strong areas of divergence but there was clear recognition of the potential trade-offs between affordability and other economic, social and environmental issues. In particular it was recognised that affordability should not be achieved at the expense of poor social conditions (low wages, low remuneration to producers), poor environmental conditions (excessive land clearance, over-use of chemical inputs, intensive animal production), or adverse economic conditions (trade protectionism).

Digitalisation - there was divergence on the issue of digitalisation. While some participants welcomed the opportunities for digital technology to create more efficient food systems, other participants considered that digitalisation could widen the inequality gap. There was consensus that we must ensure that digitalisation is inclusive of smallholders. Some potential game-changing innovations identified included e.g. digital communications for market prices.

Systems - Ensuring Resilient Systems are critical for food, health, social protection etc. However, a potential trade-off was identified between designing 'very lean' systems, and having systems that are efficient but also have capacity to flex, adapt and respond in a time of crisis.

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