OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 12 May 2021 14:00 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Farmers' Perspectives, from Seeds to Food, Reg-II
CONVENED BY	Andrew Mushita, Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT), Zimbabwe
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/11594/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Zimbabwe

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 45

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

	0-18	5	19-30	26	31-50	14	51-65		66-80		80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

21	Male	24	Female	Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

31	Agriculture/crops		Education		Health care
	Fish and aquaculture	2	Communication	3	Nutrition
	Livestock		Food processing	7	National or local government
	Agro-forestry	2	Food retail, markets		Utilities
	Environment and ecology		Food industry		Industrial
	Trade and commerce		Financial Services		Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

2	Small/medium enterprise/artisan		Workers and trade union
	Large national business		Member of Parliament
	Multi-national corporation	2	Local authority
5	Small-scale farmer	10	Government and national institution
	Medium-scale farmer		Regional economic community
	Large-scale farmer	1	United Nations
13	Local Non-Governmental Organization		International financial institution
1	International Non-Governmental Organization	1	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
	Indigenous People		Consumer group
8	Science and academia	3	Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The dialogue was split in a local and regional consultations. This report describes the consolidation of the local insights and recommendations and regional level (en therefore the regional dialogue. However, to describe the organization, this paragraph includes the local dialogue as well: The local and face-to-face dialogues took place amongst farmers (totaling 400) in Mudzi and Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe (UMP) districts of Zimbabwe and through social media discussion groups. For over ten years, these farmers have been members of Farmer Field Schools. Through a facilitated focus group discussion and a brainstorm session, the main objective of the local dialogues was for farmers and local leaders in Zimbabwe to reflect on their experiences and provide recommendations towards achieving seed security for resilient food systems in the next ten years. The dialogue started with a discussion on the objectives of the UNFSS. The regional dialogue series started on 29 April. Farmer representatives from the local dialogues shared their views and recommendations with the regional dialogue participants. This was conducted in a fire-side interview format. The regional dialogues were a combination of face-to-face and virtual meetings and the participants included farmers, government representatives, officials, researchers, extension agents, civil society actors, and policy makers. The multi-stakeholder participants from the regional dialogue shared their valuable perspectives on: (i) the links between seeds and resilient foods systems; (ii) the links between conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity with food and nutrition security for climate change adaptation; and (iii) recommendations to the UN Food Systems Summit in support of smallholder farmers and resilient food systems. A second regional dialogue was conducted on 12 May to further articulate the recommendations from the first dialogue.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

'Act with urgency & Commit to the Summit': The dialogues started with a 'setting of the stage' that included brief key note speeches on the urgency of the topics under discussion and road towards the UNFSS and beyond. 'Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity': The list of participants was multi-stakeholder and the conveners invited underrepresented stakeholder groups to invite peers. Furthermore, this dialogue series builds on the inclusion of a broad group of smallholder farmers, with a special focus on women inclusion in both the local dialogues and as representatives at regional level. 'Complement the work of others': This dialogue series is meant to bring in the seed perspective into the Food Systems paradigm, from a smallholder farmer perspective. In the dialogue, both conveners and participants stressed that this perspective is and should be closely linked to both the formal seed sector and to food systems. Making these links explicit and include these in recommendations was one of the key objectives.

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

- Include everyone that you aim to dialogue about. - Set a purpose beyond the Summit, your dialogues, efforts and actions should not end there. - In case of a series of dialogues: Make sure you share reports and new insights with earlier participants.

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**

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The major focus is the intrinsic link between seeds and food and how to support local farmers in their access and sustainable use of seeds. A transformative agenda for sustainable and equitable food systems needs to go hand in hand with equitable and sustainable seed systems, because “no seeds means no food”. In a continuous cycle, farmers grow food from seeds and farmers get their seeds from their food. Farmers’ innovation has domesticated and continues to enhance and develop plants that form the basis of local to global food systems. Plant genetic resources are the basis for resilience and sustainability of our seed systems.
Even prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, Zimbabwe has been facing the highest levels of acute food insecurity in a decade due to hyperinflation and reduced harvest aggravated by extreme weather events such as drought and excessive rainfall and agricultural pest and diseases. Zimbabwe has also been facing poor health care and nutrition. A large proportion of the population relies on humanitarian assistance to survive. The food crisis is gravely felt at local levels; at the same time remarkable resilience and solutions are also found at the local food systems level. Locally produced food plays an important role in meeting local people’s food and nutrition security, especially in ensuring dietary diversity. In much of Sub-Saharan Africa, small holder farmers provide up to 80% of the domestic food supply. At least half of these farmers are women. Local food systems are largely dependent on Farmer Managed Seeds Systems (FMSS).
A seed system is the constellation of people and networks who utilize plant genetic resources in a chain of activities, which may include the identification, conservation, improvement, development, production, regulation, distribution and marketing of plant materials. Seed systems operate within evolving environments, markets, and cultures. Formal seed systems typically involve public and private institutions. More informally, farmers’ seed systems operate locally and are based on farm-saved seeds. Farmer seed systems are significant for food production: 80% of farmers in Africa rely on farm-saved seeds and the local informal markets.

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

MAIN FINDINGS

A. Locally produced food plays an important role in meeting local people's food security and in ensuring dietary diversity. In much of Sub-Saharan Africa, small holder farmers provide up to 80% of the domestic food supply . At least half of these farmers are women. Local food systems refer to specific geographic and social networks of short value chain of food production, processing, marketing, distribution, consumption and waste management. In Zimbabwe, for example, farmers grow and gather a diversity of crops that are locally adapted to their agro-ecologies, socio-economies and cultural preferences. Local food is grown on farm and in home gardens. Local edible plants are gathered in the wild. Local food systems are often linked to domestic markets where farmers sell and buy food in addition to what they produce locally. Diversity is important for the farmers for diets and resilience. Through a diversity of seeds, farmers get secured access to a diversity of nutritious food. Resilient seeds, or seeds that tolerate e.g., floods, drought and pest and diseases help ensure the availability and access to diverse and nutritious food such as small grains, legumes and vegetables.
B. Local food systems are largely dependent on Farmer Managed Seeds Systems (FMSS). A seed system is the constellation of people and networks who utilize plant genetic resources in a chain of activities, which may include the identification, conservation, improvement, development, production, regulation, distribution and marketing of plant materials. Seed systems operate within evolving environments, markets and cultures. Formal seed systems typically involve public and private institutions. More informally, farmers' seed systems operate locally and are based on farm-saved seeds. Farmer seed systems are significant for food production: 80% of farmers in Africa rely on farm-saved seeds and the local informal markets. Individually and collectively through e.g., Community Seed Banks, farmers manage a diversity of seeds of crops and crop varieties. Farmers manage their seeds through seed management practices such as seed selection, storage, keeping track of seed health and germination, and through multiplication, exchange and local sales. Farmers also conserve and adapt crops through varietal selection, varietal enhancement, and breeding. These activities are done individually and in Farmer Field Schools; and are supported by CSOs, researchers, and extension agents.
C. Seed security is crucial to food security and livelihoods and is part of a community's disaster risk management, especially in the context of climate change. Together with agro-ecological practices, and farmers accessing weather information and collecting weather data themselves, farmers use plant genetic resources as part of their climate adaptation strategies. In Zimbabwe, the farmers are experiencing recurrent droughts and unpredictable rainfall. In response, farmers used drought resistant crops and varieties such as millet, sorghum, and ground nut. Farmers also used crops that mature quicker and at different times so that they can adjust to erratic rainfall. A well-functioning and sustainably managed Community Seed Bank can provide farmers with quality seeds when they need to re-sow, when rainfall is too erratic, or when they lose their seeds from a failed harvest.
D. Farmer Managed Seed Systems are resilient but are also under severe and multiple stresses. In this regard, farmers need continuous access to plant genetic resources. Farmers need policy, legislative, technical and market support from multiple stakeholders. It is important that networks of community seed banks are linked with national and international gene-banks. A network of community seed banks and/or Farmer Field Schools performs more effectively when linked and supported by other farmers, genebanks, plant breeders, and markets. Through the collaboration between farmers, breeders, and policy makers, breeders will gain a better understanding of farmers' needs in crop varieties, while farmers can further adapt to local climatic conditions and markets.
E. A vibrant seed sector is an inclusive sector. Smallholder farmers are critical to food and nutrition security and they play a key role in the farmer managed seeds system. In this regard, the participation and leadership of women needs to be ensured along with men and the youth.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

Recommendation 1: World leaders should recognize farmers' roles and their contribution to local seeds and food systems; and institutionalize their active participation and engagement correspondingly.
● The importance of seeds to food systems needs to be recognised and approached in an integrated manner. Farmers need regular access to a diversity of good quality seeds that are suitable for their local agro-climatic conditions. Seeds are fundamental to the livelihoods of small holder farmers; as crop production starts with seed. "No seeds mean no food". Therefore, seeds are vital for the sustainable and equitable production and consumption of food.
● The challenges faced in local seed systems need to be understood. Farmers appealed for recognition of their views and work through creation of collaborative linkages between farmers, researchers, policy makers, and the seed industry. Farmers highlighted that they need to actively participate in decision making processes which affect their seeds and livelihoods.
● Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) need to be recognised and supported at the technical, policy and legislative, and at the socio-economic levels. In particular, women have roles as custodians of seeds; and they should be part of the leading role in FMSS.
● Young farmers should be engaged and their interests and roles should be enhanced.

At the technical level:
● Plant genetic resources are important for food security. FMSS are continually under stress due to the changing climate. Agro-biodiversity is important in mitigating the adverse effects of, and adapting to climate change. The continued availability and accessibility of both traditional and improved crop varieties is key to present and future improvements in crop productivity.
● Smallholder farmers have a role in conserving and improving seeds through engaging in Participatory Varietal Selection (PVS), Enhancement (PVE) and Breeding (PPB). These are best conducted in Farmer Field Schools with the support of national and internal research and extension services.
● The farmers also stressed the important functions of Community Seed Banks (CSBs), which are a repository of a diversity of good quality seeds that are evaluated and selected by the farmers. In poor production seasons, the seedbank is a fallback strategy for farmers as they can withdraw or borrow seeds for (re)sowing. The community seed bank also needs strong linkages with the national gene bank for mutual support for seeds conservation and use.

At the policy and legislative level:
● The farmers expressed their knowledge of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and the need for national governments to implement Farmers' Rights for the advancement of FMSS and complementarities in the seed sector.
● As the African region seeks to harmonise seed systems, there should be a clear standpoint for recognizing and supporting FMSS. The policy and legislative environment should enable farmers to produce and sell their own seeds and to broaden the genetic base of landraces and improved varieties for resilient food systems.
● The farmers articulated the challenges related to the registration of farmer varieties. The seed registration Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) requirements are too complex, strict, and unrealistic for farmers to meet. There is a need for separate requirements for the registration of farmer varieties.

At the socio-economic level:
● The complementarities between the FMSS, public, and commercial seed sectors need to be enhanced.
● Farmers need access to the seeds markets for buying and selling farmer varieties.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

Recommendation 2: At the policy and legislative levels, farmers and dialogue stakeholders recommend engagement with multiple stakeholders to define the complementarities between the commercial seed systems and farmer managed seed systems (FMSS). The harmonisation of seed policies and laws should recognize and support FMSS as crucial to food and nutrition security in the context of climate change adaptation.

● Broadly define FMSS for the formulation of a policy and legislative framework which recognises farmer seed systems in terms of production, marketing, and distribution under ecologically adaptive conditions; Formulate policy support to enhance FMSS' value chains from access of materials, seeds development and production, farmer friendly registration and quality certification to local marketing; Explore the use of FAO's quality declared seed framework (QDS); Develop guidelines for registration of farmer varieties.

● Legislate and operationalize Farmers' Rights in the context of a rights-based approach; Formulate a stand-alone farmers rights policy and legislation, which incorporates a functional benefit sharing mechanism that includes women as custodians of agricultural biodiversity; Engage the youths in agriculture.

● Apply sui-generis system for recognizing farmer varieties, including uncomplicated and appropriate varietal testing systems for farmers' varieties.

● Create favourable policies for investments in developing local and domestic markets for farmer varieties; Create farmer centric local markets through the value chain; Create farmer centric business models and favourable marketing strategies for small holder farmers, which lead to a policy framework for agriculture inclusive of marketing and trade policy.

● At the policy, legislative and technical levels, institutionalise farmers' active participation and capacity building in decision making and implementation of Farmer Seed Systems, taking into account the diversity of farmers seed perspectives, cultures, gender, economic and social inclusion and knowledge management systems.

● Create more seed networks so that farmers can participate at all levels of engagement on seed issues (national, regional or global).

● Promote Farmer Field Schools (FFS) as a strategy to build and empower communities for experimental learning, agriculture research agenda setting, data collection and analysis by farmers, decision-making and participation related to crop growing conditions in local communities.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

Recommendation 3: At the technical level, farmers and dialogue stakeholders recommend ensuring farmers' seed security, including use of biodiversity as part of anticipatory actions for disaster risk management in the context of climate change.
● Ensure farmers have continuous access to crop diversity through institutionalised linkages with private and public stakeholders.
● Support and invest in the sustainable use of Neglected and Underutilised Species.
● Support the establishment of farmer seed enterprises as a strategy for seed sector development. Identify local seed companies and start building on them to promote and enhance NUS.
● Increase research and investment on small grain processing equipment for smallholder farmers to ease the drudgery involved in processing small grains.
● Consider Community Seed Banks as seed hubs and sources of quality seed. They should also be recognised as centres of knowledge and information management. The Community Seed Banks should be linked with Universities, National Gene Banks and interface with policy makers.
● Promote Farmer Field Schools (FFS) as a strategy to build and empower communities for experimental learning, agriculture research agenda setting, data collection and analysis by farmers, decision-making and participation related to crop growing conditions in local communities.
● Promote agro-ecological approaches that complement the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for sustainable food production, and for the restoration of lost biodiversity, degraded soils, and water management. It should be the economic driver of food and nutrition security based on sustainability, resilience, and increased food production
● Institutionalise farmers' active participation and capacity building in decision making and implementation, taking into account the diversity of farmers seed perspectives, cultures, gender and social inclusion, and knowledge management systems.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There was little divergence in the discussions. Instead, the participants identified possible constraints to their proposed recommendations:
a) Lack of political will among policy makers to expedite the process of the policies that support, recognize and promote the FMSS
b) Lack of resources to a) undertake consultative meetings with stakeholders in the policy development process, b) raise awareness on the importance of policies that recognise and support FMSS, c) provide incentives for creating a favourable environment and d) conduct trainings for farmers on quality seed production.
c) Existing seed laws which do not support the FMSS constrain operationalizing the proposed actions. The time taken for policy change is often very long and this has a potential to slow down the implementation of the recommendations
d) Seed Companies may oppose the development of policies that foster a conducive environment for the FMSS as they may perceive this as a threat to their seed business.
e) Low yields of local farmer seeds. Efforts should be developed at the technical level to improve these using simple methods such as Participatory Variety Enhancement (PVE) and Participatory Variety Development (PVD)
f) Lack of legislative and policy frameworks to promote farmer seed systems. The private sector is closer to the centres of power than those of the proponents of farmer seed systems. Proponents of farmer systems should develop capacities to engage those responsible for policy-making.
g) Advocacy and lobby champions for farmer seed systems are still too few. There is a need to build a critical mass of champions at all levels (field, technical, policy and legislative levels).

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