# **OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM**



DIALOGUE DATE	Friday, 16 April 2021 19:00 GMT -04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Food Systems, A Multi-Disciplinary Examination
Convened by	Galen Fountain. The Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/1226/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	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**



#### NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

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

## **2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT**

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

The Principles were included in course materials relating to this Dialogue and made a part of all discussions incorporated into the Dialogue's execution.

#### HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Each of the Principles was made part of the Dialogue's execution as described above.

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

## **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 Dialogue convened at the University of Virginia was an interdisciplinary examination of food systems involving several schools and departments from across the university having special relevance to this subject. This approach was to bring diverse perspectives to the "decision" table and to avoid problems of multiple policy and programmatic silos. This Dialogue accepts that there is value to all people having access to a sustainable, healthy, and sufficient diet, including individuals directly engaged in the food value chain at all levels. While this Dialogue includes a determined domestic focus, it is intended that U.S. policies should contribute to international stability food security and the goals described above. The design of this Dialogue was the work product of students at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy.

The Dialogue's discussion on the topic of sustainable consumption was framed around three workstreams of food environments, food demand, and food waste. The discussion was based on topics of food availability, accessibility, and inequity; food affordability and insecurity; and the consumption and production of unhealthy food and its effects on public health and the environment. The first major theme that emerged from the discussion was the socioeconomic and geographic inequities that exacerbate barriers to healthy food consumption and sustainability. The second major theme was the multidisciplinary scope of the problem, where food consumption policies must be addressed from the lens of public health, urban planning, and social welfare. Finally, bottom-up, community-led approaches in food consumption program implementation will be crucial to increase food security, affordability, and food autonomy in the long run.

The discussion surrounding nature positive production focused on practices that promote reduced impact of agriculture on the environment while ensuring sufficient food production. While more research is needed, our preliminary discussion found a need to provide farmers with financial incentives (such as tax breaks or payment for ecosystem services) to change their unsustainable monoculture agriculture practices. A move towards more nature positive production will involve multiple objectives.

To promote equitable livelihoods, it was necessary to explore communities' ability to create local access to a varied diet. It was recognized there are many complex and intersecting challenges to advance equitable livelihoods. However, the Dialogue chose to focus on domestic issues, particularly the living wage and low access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Ensuring healthy and nutritious food is available to all in times of crisis requires preemptively building resilience and efficiently responding to shocks when they occur. Enhanced resilience requires advancement in consumption, production, and livelihoods. This requires a focus on environmental, economic, health, and equity to build food system resiliency against shocks. The discussion included how methods used to improve resilience can be transferred to other countries and how U.S. foreign policy can improve international food stability.

Though focused domestically, the findings and actions presented below will contribute to international stability and food security by representing key root causes of global food instability. By focusing on economic factors through the living wage and cultural factors through community engaged gardens, we home in on intervening at critical points that impact the multiple parts of the food system.

#### **ACTION TRACKS KEYWORDS** Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and 1 Finance Policy nutritious food for all Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable Innovation Data & Evidence consumption patterns Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive Human rights Governance production Women & Youth Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods Trade-offs Empowerment Action Track 5: Build resilience to Environment vulnerabilities, shocks and stress and Climate

### MAIN FINDINGS

The forces that shape food systems are interconnected. Sustainable consumption is complicated by wealth inequities and healthier options vary along socioeconomic lines. Similarly, food deserts (an issue of distance, access, and affordability) contribute to rampant American malnutrition and obesity, and are most often found in areas serving minority, low-income, and rural households. Healthy food is underproduced and is not cost-effective in the short term as compared to unhealthy options.

The affordability disparity is highlighted by highly processed food diets versus those with more fruits, vegetables, and healthier proteins. The Dialogue highlighted the need for bottom-up approaches and by affording those affected a say in necessary changes. This includes discussing how food should be incorporated in urban planning, such as considering the primary modes of transportation a locality uses, geographic barriers, and zoning plans. Improved quality in food pantries and incentives for cheaper pricing and wider selection of healthy options in grocery stores (and improved profitability) can improve consumption patterns in America. Finally, food justice should be deliberately incorporated into sustainable consumption and urban planning as it relates to food policy.

The Lancet Commission's six planetary boundaries best describe nature-positive production. The boundaries are climate change, biodiversity loss, land system change, freshwater use, and nitrogen and phosphorus flows. It is significantly difficult to consider these boundaries separately, as they often affect or are dependent on one another. Promoting soil health and carbons sequestration through regenerative practices can address these boundaries. Infortunately, economic, and political lock-ins incentivize chemical-dependent, high-yield, monoculture agricultural practices, further complicate these issues. Therefore, major reform must include additional research on agricultural methods that balance both the financial and environmental goals of farmers and a general deconstruction of the economic and political lock-ins that continue to promote current American agricultural. Factors to consider include:

- · Planetary boundaries as interconnected elements.
- · Promotion of soil health and stability through regenerative practices.
- Intensive rather than extensive agricultural growth.
- · Incorporation of indigenous knowledge in farm policy.
- Inclusive policymaking.
  Incentives for farmer investment in nature-positive methods through tax credits and payment for ecosystem services.
  Concentration within agricultural and small farm operations access to finance.
- · Public buy-in and involvement of multiple stakeholders.
- Data collection and education.
- Reduced food waste and loss at all levels of the food supply chain.
- Regional and local initiatives as incubators for national-level change.

Equitable livelihoods require a broad systemic change to increase food access to all individuals. This change will take time and immediate ameliorating action is needed. A raised minimum wage will combat food insecurity among low-income individuals and families and recognize the value of workers within our food system.

Empowering local creativity through community gardens will reduce food inequities. Communities that take ownership of their access to fresh fruits and vegetables will provide those with low access to nutritious food the agency to produce their own food and meet their needs. Sharing ideas for interventions in equitable food access and reduce challenges to innovation and creativity posed by siloization.

Climate change, environmental, conflict, and economic shocks threaten to disrupt the food system resulting in a lack of affordable, nutritious food which is exacerbated by racial and socioeconomic inequality. The lack of healthy food impacts community resilience to shocks, such as pandemics, through nutrition-related non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes, for which Americans of color are impacted at disproportionate rates.

Poor health harms resilience to face future shocks, as does climate change through rising global temperature and environmental shocks which disrupt the food system. There is a lack of preventative systems of early warning to environmental shocks or sufficient planning and prudent response when they occur. Gaps also exist in responding to shocks due to breakdowns in social networks, as illustrated by school closures due to COVID-19 and the aftermath of major hurricanes, such as Katrina. Furthermore, the current lack of racial and ethnic diversity within the agricultural system translates to a lack of new ideas, perspectives, and experiences, which holds back progress and innovation in resilience building.

#### **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

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

Food social safety nets should aim to address persistent inequities in food access for low-income, minority, and rural households, as well as improve consumption patterns. Programs should serve people living in food deserts and other nutrition-deficit localities. Two improvements include providing food with a higher nutritional value in food pantries and lowering the qualification threshold to food pantries to improve access.

Means-tested food programs such as SNAP and WIC do not provide sufficient money for people to consume a healthy, adequate diet. SNAP and WIC need increased federal funding. Additionally, these two programs should increase participant benefits to match the costs of a healthy, adequate diet and can incentivize participants to spend their money on healthier food. This would help households eat in a healthier, more sustainable manner. For instance, providing people with an extra thirty cents on every dollar that they spend on specifically designated healthier food items has been shown to improve healthy consumption patterns. Other program improvements could include lowering the barriers to access the program itself, such as decreasing the volume of application paperwork, simplifying the language used on the application, and conducting widespread program outreach to help enroll eligible households.

We suggest that, in addition to improving existing programs, new non-means-tested nutrition programs be created to address the access gap for healthy food. Regardless of income level, most Americans are malnourished. An example of such a program is a food bank (with healthy food) in schools. This food bank would not be means-tested, which would help reduce malnutrition among students of various socioeconomic backgrounds. States should also increase the budget for school lunch and breakfast programs. These should be offered and accessible even when school is not in-session, such as over summer and winter breaks, and students should be allowed to take food away from the programs to be consumed (at home or at school or to share with their family members). Finally, school food programs can be more effective in their implementation by engaging in a bottom-up approach, such as by including students and parents in the food selection process, bringing students to farms, allowing students to "try out" various new food, and generally making the nutritional standards more appetizing and appealing to children.

One element of building resilience to shocks would include a legislative response, namely merging the SNAP and WIC programs in the United States to improve nutrition and health. A concerted focus on nutrition outcomes will help build resilience to future shocks through improved health. Congress would need to enact this legislative change. Policymakers would measure progress by tracking rates of food insecurity and childhood obesity, and other nutrition-related health outcomes. Potential challenges to this outcome include political buy-in and funding constraints.

It should be noted that food-related social safety nets also apply to the production of food, as have been a central theme in U.S. farm legislation for nearly a century. But consistent with the objective of this recommendation, modifications should include:

• Incentives that encourage farmers to produce food with nature positive methods to help reduce the cost of these changing practices on the consumer.

• Farmers markets participation (especially for small-scale farmers) incentives to improve access to nutritious food for all consumers.

ACTION TRACKS		KEYWORDS		
1	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all	Finance		Policy
1	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns	Innovation		Data & Evidence
1	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production	Human rights		Governance
	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/5

This issue approaches healthy consumption from an equity lens, highlighting social determinants across socioeconomic lines. Establishing a living wage and increasing worker dignity can increase food affordability and autonomy of workers. Local governments should ensure that individuals who work in community gardens/other agricultural spaces that produce fruits and vegetables are compensated through a higher, living minimum wage and allow them to purchase the food they help to produce at a highly subsidized rate. Because these individuals are often low-income, this can help increase the affordability of healthier food across socioeconomic lines.

In a market-based economy, insufficient income will reduce consumption. When it comes to food, that can lead to food insecurity and/or malnutrition. To reduce food insecurity due to affordability barriers, we recommend increasing the minimum wage to a living wage rate. Increased income will improve food access by bringing the minimum standard of living to a sustainable level. This will help all low-income, food insecure individuals and families obtain sufficient, healthy nutrition and demonstrate that we value the food systems employees.

There are many paths to securing a living wage for low-income Americans and workers along the food value chain. In the ideal case, this would be implemented through a federal legislative mandate to raise the national minimum wage to at least \$15 an hour. The key stakeholders here are clearly the members of Congress, the President, and the political actors likely to want to influence the congressional debate, including constituents and the business lobbies. However, given the current political landscape, efforts should also be made to promote state and local minimum wage mandates, which would require input from the corresponding governmental stakeholders.

Government at all levels could provide incentives (especially those involved in the food system) to increase their minimum wages through tax breaks, subsidies, and other programs. These efforts could be supported by public campaigns (including local community organizers) and unionization efforts. Our Dialogue found that implementing a living wage should be just one part in overall efforts to increase food worker dignity. Others include updating worker safety regulations, increasing enforcement, and public campaigns that acknowledge the value and importance of this work.

A living wage's impact could be evaluated by wage rates and employment of the bottom of the income distribution, and particularly for those who work in the food value chain. Demand for benefits like SNAP and WIC would assess how food insecurity has changed as a result.

We recognize the significant implementation challenges. Definition of a living wage is perhaps the most fundamental of these challenges. Others include how to address regional differences in the cost of living and impacts of inflation. Efforts to increase the minimum wage through legislation will face strong political resistance due to claims of harm to businesses and increased unemployment. However, the work of addressing these concerns has already occurred in many localities and the lessons learned in these contexts should inform future action and advocacy.

A living wage will break down economic barriers to food insecurity. It is important to enact more targeted changes in the food system, however, this is a starting point to ensure that low-income households are not food insecure simply because they do not have the money to purchase nutritious food.

**KEYWORDS** 

1	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all	Finance	Policy
1	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns	Innovation	Data & Evidence
	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production	Human rights	Governance
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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/5

Shifting to healthy consumption patterns has vast environmental benefits. Flexitarian and vegetarian diets reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the environmental footprint of food is heavily dependent on how the food is produced. Using increased agricultural land toward fruits and vegetables rather than commodity crops would help the environment and improve agricultural sustainability. This recommendation is divided into three significant parts: short-term goals, long-term goals, and the importance of inclusive policymaking.

The first short-term goal is increased research on nature-positive methods of agricultural production. Data collection among farmers (perhaps through federal policies) including information on soil health, carbon, and pesticide levels should be expanded. Data on measures of farmland health is crucial in crafting federal policies to aid farmer transition to nature positive production.

Another short-term goal is creation of economic incentives for farmers transition to nature-positive practices. These could include carbon sequestration tax credits or other financial incentives. Restrictive tax policy or mandates may only further impair low-income farmers' abilities. Additional research on financially feasible sustainable agricultural practices is needed.

A long-term goal is to dismantle current economic lock-ins for American agriculture practices. One method involves restructuring farm subsidy policies, specifically crop insurance, to be more environmentally friendly and could involve insurance that is not crop-specific but applies to all crops. Another policy approach involves reforming antitrust policies for the nation's largest industrial farms.

Thirdly, a more inclusive process for policies to enhance sustainable and nature-positive food production is needed. All stakeholders, including small farmers, citizens, businesses, scientists, and legislators, must be included to ensure positive and equitable outcomes. In addition, consideration must be given to indigenous practices.

Similarly, Congress should improve finance opportunities and risk management, especially for farmers of color. This could include debt relief, grants, training, education, and other forms of assistance to secure land tenure. This could build resilience through education and training to support farm stability and diversification of food production and consumption through sustainably healthy diets. Improved minority access to credit could be measured by a quantifiable increase in the number of farmers of color in the U.S. These actions need to recognize budgetary challenges.

Additional nature positive specific measures include:

• Increased funding to agricultural extensions and research programs.

o Increased research on soil health

o More research on ability farmland to sequester carbon, carbon sequestration tax credits, and their applicability to farming systems

o<sup>\*</sup> Farming of carbon capture<sup>\*</sup>

• Economic incentives for ecosystem services, to promote nature-positive methods of farming that produce co-benefits of food production, soil regeneration, carbon storage, and biodiversity.

o Cost share programs for investments in new practices

o Payment for ecosystem services through tax credits

o Restructure crop insurance program practices

o Competitive prices for farmers; make the profit from taking land out of production higher than what would have been produced with poor practices

o Antitrust approaches

#### **ACTION TRACKS**

	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all	Finance	Policy
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### OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/5

Food is at the source of human life. While it sustains us and connects us, our food systems are severely distant resulting in a disconnect and reduction in the value we place on food within our value-chain.

In the US, people do not engage in food production and preparation as in countries with lower rates of obesity and diabetes. As in those other countries, Americans should be more involved with food production through community gardens to reduce distance from production to consumption. This includes participation by schools and universities to engage students, since significant lifetime consequences of poor nutrition emerge at a young age, and local governments/organizations should find ways to compensate individuals for working in these gardens. Involving schools and afterschool programs would have the added benefit of teaching children about nutrition.

Community gardens place food agency for improved nutrition in the hands of those who are food insecure or cannot access preferred foods like fresh fruits and vegetables. These efforts draw on existing community and nonprofit institutions and promote ownership and pride in work through cultivation.

Funding sources may be local and state government and it is important to emphasize the need to adequately compensate community members for their efforts and labor in the community garden. At the local level, each community garden can be tailored to the local community in terms of food types, type of engagement, funding mechanisms and access. The community garden will be completely run by community members themselves. An example of success is Cultivate Charlottesville, a local food justice organization in Virginia working towards food equity through community-engaged gardens.

Implementing this approach at a large-scale will take time and a benchmark of quality common to all is needed to ensure gardens meet community needs. A mechanism (such as an annual assessment needed for funding) would ensure that each community garden is performing to a set standard.

This intervention may employ metrics quantifying both food available locally to community members from these community gardens as well as the level of engagement community members exhibit towards those places. The latter will be more challenging to measure but qualitative case studies and focus groups can illuminate any cultural shift that may occur because of the community gardens.

Building up relationships between food system stakeholders is essential in building resilience and inspiring coordinated action to shocks. Community-based programs including community gardens improve access to affordable nutritious food. Organizations and community leaders should cooperate to put gardens in locations that target those most in need of fresh fruits and vegetables. There are also opportunities for nonprofits to partner with local schools to create community gardens. Response networks that supply and transport available food in times of crisis would also help strengthen resilience. These outcomes could be measured by Resilience indicators, such as Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities index (BRIC). Challenges associated with executing this outcome includes potential logistical and coordination difficulties.

Monocultures are more profitable and easier to scale than producing a diverse array of food. Government subsidy or tax incentives for community garden/local grocery stores in food deserts that promote more nutritious vegetables/fruits would decrease our reliance on monocultures and help reduce micronutrient deficiencies.

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ACTIO	N TRACKS	KEYWORDS		
1	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all	Finance	Policy	Policy
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## **OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/5**

Building resilience and responding to shocks will require local, state, and federal governments to work with businesses to successfully continue providing nutritious food to those in need during shocks. One way that governments can care for vulnerable populations during a shock is through establishing early warning systems in cooperation with businesses to know in what regions shocks are most likely to occur based on history. Governments can provide incentives to businesses (such as tax incentives and subsidies) to increase food supply and decrease food costs in certain regions at certain times of the year to create an ease of access equitably. Additionally, if supply starts to quickly fall during a shock, both government and business can coordinate to rapidly increase supply to that region so that shortages are prevented.

There are several challenges that can be associated with cooperation, though. First, businesses are not required to uphold certain measures that they may claim to support in cooperation with governments. Businesses can choose to backout at any time unless they are held accountable for their actions in some sort of manner. Early warning systems may also not be adequately prepared, depending on the severity of the shock. Success can be measured using Resilience indicators, such as the BRIC index. Success can also be viewed by observing the impact of how much food was distributed that may not have been otherwise distributed via the partnership.

While this issue is largely focused on the resilience of a food system, consumption of affordable and nutritious food is heavily influenced by food supply chains. The ability to purchase healthy food options is fragmented across socioeconomic lines, but misaligned incentives within the market structure of food suppliers render healthy consumption a difficult problem to solve without public/private cooperation. Given the overreliance on a lack of diversity in the food supply market and the culture of fast-food dominance in the US food system, public/private partnerships to shift incentives will be a focal point of increasing healthy consumption in the US. Government interventions such as sugar taxes or subsidizing healthy produce could potentially improve incentives to purchase and consume healthy foods but do not address the larger barriers to nutritious consumption.

#### **ACTION TRACKS**

1	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all	Finance	Policy
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## **AREAS OF DIVERGENCE**

#### **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

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