

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Thursday, 13 May 2021 11:00 GMT -04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Faith + Food: Healing the Earth, Healing our Bodies
CONVENED BY	Andrew Schwartz, Center for Earth Ethics
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/12784/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Guatemala, Kenya, Malaysia, Norway, United States of America

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

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE



PARTICIPATION BY GENDER



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP



2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

These dialogues are organized by a coalition of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) who agreed upon an internal set of principles. Those principles included respect for one another's beliefs and traditions. Commitment to elevating human rights. Being open to difference. Resolving conflict through mediated dialogue. Amplifying underrepresented voices. We consciously chose speakers committed to community development and principles of justice and equity in their work. We committed to multi-stakeholder inclusivity and highlighting the complexity of problems and the solutions. Our dialogues are globally diverse, bring together multiple stakeholders, have multi-faith representation, feature Indigenous voices throughout, and privilege the voices of front line communities.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

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

We created a hybrid dialogue that took the core elements of multi- stakeholder, global participants and thought provoking questions and scaled it down . Rather than focus on a single action track, we created dialogues for each of the 5 Action Tracks. The scaled down dialogues allowed for robust conversation amongst the participants. We designed them so that there would be opportunities for different points of view, points of divergence and of course emergence. We, in our way, hopefully created a platform for dialogue where people come from different traditions, religious belongings, countries, industries, and ultimately points of view for how the food system needs to transform. There was no disagreement that things must change but the why and how of that change differed for all of the participants. This we believe to be the most important part - that there is no single solution and that any solutions that are created must be culturally and geographically appropriate, and meet people as people rather than as commodities or numbers on a page. True change happens in a society due to shifts in values and worldview. The world is on a precipice of such a shift as more and more are becoming acutely aware of the climate crisis and the impacts of adding another 3 billion people by 2050. Tensions are rising and violence is happening but so too are efforts for collaboration and peacemaking. Our discussion groups are much smaller but we have created spaces for the grassroots to be in conversation with the grasstops. Change can only happen when we listen and learn from one another in spaces that are egalitarian and democratic so we have tried to create such a space in our dialogues.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The focus of this dialogue was an exploration of Action Track 2, Healing the Earth, Healing our Bodies, focusing on shifting to sustainable consumption patterns. The panelists represented broad, diverse voices from the food system: Taiwanese Buddhist physician, Somali Muslim female farming activist, Norwegian Catholic WHO senior strategist, Indigenous grandmother and African-American Reverend. The panelists had a rich dialogue that resulted in three main themes:

The connection between science and faith: although they are traditionally seen at odds, the panelists offered that science and faith reinforce one another and their blending can actually create positive outcomes. Different religious traditions promote certain foods, mainly plant-based, that science is now showing has significant health benefits on a molecular and macro (organ-system) level. Our existence as humans is dependent on the web of life that ultimately provides our food. Faith/Indigenous traditions provide the moral/compassion argument while science provides the physical, tangible data to respecting our role in the natural world and shifting our consumption patterns.

"God is calling on us to make decisions for good [...] to live to our full potential. When the body was created, God did it with the intent to nourish it through fruits and vegetables. Science proves this too. Instead of those two models fighting, we can blend them."

One Health: the current food system has separated the origins of our food from our consumption, where we are not aware of the farmers growing the food, the farmworkers that collect our food and the people who prepare our meals (e.g, processed and packaged foods). We are disconnected from our food and our spiritual connection to it. Indigenous and pastoral communities have long, rich histories of connecting with the land, of connecting their children and grandchildren with love for the land and ultimately spiritually connecting with the food as having its own role to play in our food systems. That role has either a positive or negative impact on our health. When companies focus more on making profits and communities are disconnected from the food, trade-offs are made that compromise the health of the land (e.g, destructive farming practices) and the health of people (e.g, increase in non-communicable diseases)

"Unless we make real changes in the forces we are unleashing as humanity on earth, on its biophysical systems, the interplay of the web of life, it will get out of control and we won't be able to stop runaway changes to continue life and our future on this planet."

Reclaiming the food narrative: food is an integral part to our religious and worldly narratives as human beings. From indigenous and pastoral communities, there was a certain relationship and tradition with food that respected the local environment and planet while maintaining human health. However, with the shift to current food system models, there are a few corporations that control the production, processing and distribution of food, with the main goal of profit maximizing. As a result, policies are reflective of these corporations' interests where scientifically unhealthy food is subsidized and cheaper than healthy foods. The actual consumer has no agency over their food and therefore no meaningful narrative of their relationship to the food they are choosing to consume, which can either be life sustaining or life-robbing.

"The narrative of how we are as a people in terms of our health and wellbeing is linked to the health and wellbeing of the larger world"

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

The dialogue highlighted serious realities and gaps in the current food system. These will be discussed based on the main themes of the dialogue:

The connection between science and faith: one major finding was the lack of awareness of health impacts of food and how our current behaviors impact the larger food system amongst community members and religious faith leaders. For example, in pastoral communities in Kenya, imams (faith leaders) discuss certain aspects of Qur'anic text, like prayers or fasting, but do not discuss more global issues like our relationship to food as beings on this planet. As a result, the community does not see a religious connection to the food or to the science behind it. By involving the imams as stakeholders and educating them on healthy food practices and behaviors, they can see that the Qur'an, which promotes healthy, plant-based foods, is not in conflict with the science behind healthy foods. In the Catholic tradition, there isn't a direct understanding of traditions with their inherent relationship to food as a vessel to God. The story of the Eucharist reflects the story of life in a variety of forms. When you are eating the wafer or drinking wine, you are basically in direct communication with God who is infused in that form. These examples show how religious/faith leaders are key stakeholders in awareness building of healthy food behaviors for communities.

One Health: another major finding was the increasing prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) throughout the world and how they are directly related to food consumption. One important stakeholder is hospital systems. Physician researchers in Taiwan have influenced their healthcare system on the scientific benefits of plant-based diets and have successfully incorporated healthier food options for patients. In indigenous communities, major stakeholders are teachers and school systems. When teachers and school staff were involved in a project to start gardening on the grounds, there was a change in mindset amongst teachers/staff, students and the broader community as to why food was valuable and valuable within their indigenous culture. Not only does the integration of healthier food options improve outcomes in NCDs, like diabetes and heart disease, but the practice of shifting to more plant-based foods has a direct effect on decreasing greenhouse gas emissions that impact climate change. Climate change was discussed as an external factor on the food system that needs to be recognized and addressed.

Reclaiming the food narrative: the other major finding was the need for gratitude and spiritual connection to food and food systems. Although it is important to focus on the commercial interests of food companies and practical methods to introduce plant-based diets, it was discussed amongst all five panelists how food as a sacred entity and gift is missing from current food practices. Without this integral emotional perspective on food, the flaws in the food system will not be solved.

Education and Public Awareness: caught through all of the major findings was the recognition of major communication gaps for healthy eating. One speaker reflected on how being overweight was a sign of success in more rural and pastoral communities whereas being skinny and in shape caused alarm and concerns over poor health. Other speakers reflected on the problems of the overabundance of advertising by major corporations and agribusinesses that flood the market with disinformation that confuses consumers over what is and what isn't healthy. Without regulations or mandates on advertising it is hard to win the information battle being waged on health and consumption.

Access and Subsidization: True to rural, urban, and otherwise economically disadvantaged areas, accessing healthy affordable food is a significant challenge. Many poor communities in developed countries rely on cheap fast food and ultra-processed foods as their primary food sources. These products are cheap due to large subsidies granted to animal protein producers, sugar producers, and grain producers. It makes these foods artificially cheap whereas wholesome healthy organic fruits and vegetables receive no subsidies which force the consumer to pay the whole cost which makes it too expensive for many.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

The connection between science and faith:

Focus on education and awareness-building of local communities. Although the current food system is a global problem, if we focus on local communities and stakeholders, we can improve the health of humanity collectively, one community at a time. Food is such an integral part of our lives, that it is too easy to forget about its details. Having a local focus that connects individuals with their farming practices, food preparation skills and connecting intergenerationally (e.g., children, grandchildren), a more personal relationship develops with the food. Food is seen as a commodity instead of a gift. Progress can be assessed by the relationships made and regular follow-up with different community members to assess their food consumption behaviors. Anticipated challenges are unwillingness to change behavior and inadequately applying theories of change. These models will need to be community-specific that are also cultural competent.

Incorporating religious/faith leaders into discussions: By including religious/faith leaders into discussions about how the faith is consistent with science that is currently catching up with data and research projects, you can reveal that there is no conflict between science and faith. Faith/Indigenous leaders have a way to connect to people on an emotional level. They can help connect people with the moral and compassion argument to respecting food, the planet and natural world that provides that food and ultimately changing consumption patterns. Progress can be assessed through the number of faith/indigenous leaders connected with and the number of sermons/talks given educating on food consumption behaviors. Anticipated challenges are those religious/faith leaders who are resistant to science education.

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KEYWORDS

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Policy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Innovation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Data & Evidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Human rights | <input type="checkbox"/> | Governance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Women & Youth Empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> | Trade-offs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environment and Climate |

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

One Health:

Paris agreement for food: the upcoming UN Food Summit is about mobilizing humanity around building a new narrative around food and bringing in solutions from all sectors (e.g., government, private sector, civil society, faith-based organizations, indigenous communities). However, a Paris agreement for food that consists of benchmarks and policy directives will be needed. This will consist of many dialogue sessions, white papers and generating reports of country-level challenges and solutions to assess progress. Anticipated challenges are political and business will to make meaningful changes in consumption, such as advocating for decreased meat consumption.

Influencing policymakers: there are corporations that are currently profiting off of the food system as it is now. This is through government subsidies awarded to particular food industries, like animal livestock. However, these corporations have greater abilities to lobby and advocate for their business agenda and promotion of their food products. However, local communities need to mobilize and lobby their policymakers to educate them on the realities of these food policies on the ground and in the healthcare system. This includes black/brown and indigenous communities. Progress can be assessed through advocacy training sessions and number of meetings made with policymakers. Anticipated challenges are the financial interests from companies that will influence decision makers.

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			Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

Reclaiming the food narrative:

a) Subsidies for healthy foods: the current food system subsidizes livestock and therefore meat consumption. If fruits and vegetables production was provided with government subsidies, the consumer would not have to pay higher prices for healthier foods. By making the playing field between food options more level and fair, corporations can have less ability to influence the narrative around what food should be and what foods should be promoted. Indigenous communities were the first communities on our lands and have traditions that respect the land and environment while maintaining healthy lives. These voices need to be raised in order to meaningfully improve our food systems. There will be challenges from corporations who benefit from these subsidies.

b) Transitioning to a plant-based diet: The world is consuming insane amounts of animal proteins. The future of food systems can and should maintain a level of meat consumption but one that is significantly pared down. Some communities and cultures, for instance the Gwich'in in Alaska, rely on caribou and other Arctic animals to sustain them during the long winters. They need to eat meat to survive. Someone in Mumbai or NYC or Sao Paulo does not need to eat meat three times a day. Animal proteins, palm oil, and cane sugar are some of the largest drivers of biodiversity loss and the largest contributors to NDCs. To preserve human and planetary health our food systems must transition to be majority plant based that relies on a wide diversity of fruits, vegetables, and grains that are culturally and bioregionally appropriate.

c) Awareness - there is insufficient awareness in the public sphere of the connection between human health and planetary health. For instance, most consumers are unaware of the biodiversity loss associated with animal proteins. In order to change consumption patterns there must be increased education and awareness campaigns to connect environmental destruction and climate change to food systems and human health.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

No major areas of divergence to report

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Center for Earth Ethics Live - Healing our Earth, Healing our Bodies**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXK31YQgP7Y>