

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 19 April 2021 13:00 GMT -04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Fostering Collaboration on Food Loss and Waste / Collaboration sur la perte et le gaspillage d'aliments
CONVENED BY	Natasha Kim, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch / Sous-ministre adjointe, Direction générale des politiques stratégiques, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada / Agriculture et agroalimentaire Canada
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/14337/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Canada

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

52

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

Male

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

6 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

2 Large national business

3 Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

1 Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

12 Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

1 Indigenous People

6 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

11 Government and national institution

1 Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

1 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

8 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The Food Policy for Canada, a roadmap to a healthier and more sustainable food system, is built upon extensive multi-stakeholder engagement with a unifying theme of “Everyone at the Table!”. The Principles of Engagement for the Food System Summit are aligned with the Food Policy for Canada’s guiding principles and the approach to stakeholder engagement. Preparation for this member-state Dialogue involved broad consultation across multiple federal government departments at all stages of planning, from conceptualization through to implementation and event management. This encouraged the identification of diverse perspectives across the food system relevant to the topic and inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the invitation list for the Dialogue.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The overall theme of the Dialogue was framed from the perspective of collective and collaborative action on food loss and waste. Discussion group topics were developed following a review of reports from Canadian organizations, approaches used successfully in other countries, and discussion across federal officials from several departments. Participants were assigned to discussion groups to ensure a balanced mix of stakeholder groups across the food system. Government of Canada officials acting as facilitators and note-takers were guided to play a neutral role, neither leading the discussion towards select outcomes nor challenging the ideas raised by participants, but instead asking questions to help participants bring forward their own ideas and perspectives and ensuring that all voices are heard. Special attention was paid to the use of Chatham House Rule to ensure that all participants could share perspectives openly.

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

Adopting the principles of engagement, based on diversity, inclusion, respect and collaboration, are helpful in designing a meaningful Dialogue and ensuring constructive discussions among a diverse set of stakeholders and perspectives.

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

Food loss and waste is a complex, dynamic challenge and all food system actors have a role to play. While many are taking action, stakeholders have identified the need for a more coordinated, cohesive approach in Canada.

There are a multitude of reasons that food loss and waste is generated throughout the food system, including lack of awareness and quantification, operational inefficiencies, relationships between supply chain partners, quality standards, inadequate transportation and storage, inaccurate forecasting and inventory management. A collaborative approach is needed to disrupt the acceptance of food loss and waste and to prevent it at the source wherever possible while avoiding unintended consequences of shifting the problem up- or down-stream in the supply chain.

Where prevention is not feasible, there are missed economic and social opportunities when food is discarded, as well as environmental consequences (e.g. landfill methane emissions). While the development of innovative solutions to recapture the lost value of food loss and waste are being stimulated through the Government of Canada's Food Waste Reduction Challenge, collaborations and partnerships are needed to connect innovators with food supply chain stakeholders to increase awareness and adoption of these solutions.

The objective of this Dialogue was to bring together diverse stakeholders and perspectives to identify specific mechanisms that can foster collaboration on reducing food loss and waste across Canada's food system.

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
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- Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

Participants representing diverse perspective and roles in Canada's food system agreed that food loss and waste is an important food system issue to be addressed. In recognizing the truly systemic nature of the issue, participants reflected that all stakeholders and consumers have a role to play and that collaborative, cross-sectoral approaches are required to effect meaningful change.

It was also noted that there is a complex set of interrelated factors that result in the generation and disposal of food loss and waste. Therefore, multifactorial solutions are required that can be tailored to each stage of the food system – there is no silver bullet solution. In tackling food loss and waste, participants noted the need for a culture change, from farm to fork, that no longer accepts food loss and waste.

Another common theme to emerge is the need to prioritize source reduction efforts to help prevent the generation of food loss and waste. Nevertheless, noting the magnitude of the problem and the inevitability of some forms of food loss and waste, participants noted the opportunity to deploy innovative technologies and processes to utilize food loss and waste as a resource.

Engaging discussions amongst the enthusiastic set of Dialogue participants yielded a number of note-worthy ideas to advance collaboration on food loss and waste reduction, including the development of national reduction targets, a collective strategy/roadmap, a common understanding and measurement framework, public-private partnerships, incentives for the adoption of innovative solutions, and hubs or networks that consolidate efforts around communications, research/data, innovation, and best practices. Their ideas are detailed in the following section under discussion topics/themes.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/5

In discussion groups of up to 10 individuals representing diverse aspects of Canada's food system, participants discussed their perspectives and brainstormed ways to foster collaboration on food loss and waste under four themes: Building Awareness and Motivating Change; Mobilizing Commitment and Collective Action; Empowering Action with Evidence; and Stimulating Innovation and Adoption.

Building Awareness and Motivating Change

Participants reflected the need for a "culture change" from the current acceptance of food loss and waste, both among food supply chain actors as well as households. It was noted that while consumers are often the focus of education campaigns, there is a need to communicate to/empower all stages of supply chain and connect with cross-sectoral partners who can use the "waste".

Participants raised a number of important considerations as well as tactics for more effectively communicating about food loss and waste:

- The importance of transparency for consumers and the opportunity to capitalize on food loss and waste reduction can help food businesses build consumer trust. On the other hand, it was noted that consumers deal with a lot of misinformation and marketing claims, and cautioned against food loss and waste reduction becoming "another misleading marketing claim." The opportunity to use digital mobile technologies, e.g. QR code, could be used to communicate with consumers could be explored.
- Beyond awareness of food loss and waste, there is a need to shift consumer perception and increase acceptance of upcycled food products as healthy and acceptable options. There is a negative perception that surplus edible food is only for "poor people".
- Best Before Date labelling is misunderstood. Consumers and organizations are concerned about food safety concerns and liability, even though these dates are not "a safety mark" but rather a "quality mark". Foods can safely be consumed after the best before date.
- Social media campaigns can raise awareness as well as profile results of food loss and waste reduction efforts. However, using the example of a recent municipal-level household awareness initiative, campaigns can effect short-lived behavioural change, and there is a need to identify means to achieve sustained behavioural change.
- Guidance for households to reduce food waste should be convenient and easy to digest. Positive and funny tips can be an effective tool, as can tailored messaging for youth (e.g. at school).
- Improving consumer food literacy can help consumers use more parts of a plant or animal that are edible and can be delicious. For example, 30 years ago few people in North America ate chicken wings but they are now an accepted/popular food item.
- Improving consumer food skills on how to use their "food waste" can help them avoid waste. For example, using carrot tops in soup.
- Making food waste visible can be an effective tactic, e.g. showing pictures of the volumes of ham, cheese, turkey that are discarded.
- When communicating with food processors, manufacturers and distributors, who are facing small margins, messaging should clearly indicate potential financial and other benefits of reducing food loss (i.e. business case).
- Reframe food loss and waste as a valuable commodity to promoting ways to use it effectively at its highest value rather than lowest. Don't call edible surplus food "food waste."

Participants also discussed the need for mechanisms to better coordinate food loss and waste awareness activities across Canada by organizing the information and communication "universe", and the importance of repeating the same message to address the issue nationally. The development of a centralized hub or 'node' of communication to share information was raised as a potential mechanism to advance collaboration, coordination, and consistency in messaging.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/5

Mobilizing Collective Commitment and Action

Participants reflected that collaborative relationships across the food system and whole-of-chain approaches are needed to align common interests of maximizing value, drive shared responsibility, and address the challenges and barriers to reducing food loss and waste.

An example that was shared is a Canadian whole-of-chain collaboration between Value Chain Management International, farmers, Vineland Growers Cooperative, Vineland Research Innovation Centre, and Loblaws. The project led to reduced waste in the stone fruit supply chain from farm to retail. The case study shows that addressing inefficiencies and improving processes naturally lead to reduced food loss and waste.

It was also noted that increasing collaborative relationships can help ensure that food products get circulated to more areas in Canada. Supporting food banks by redistributing surplus food due to the closure of restaurants and foodservices during the COVID-19 pandemic was raised as a recent successful example. However, it was also noted that the volume of surplus food can quickly overwhelm the infrastructure and resource capacity of community food organizations.

Ideas raised by participants that could foster collaboration on this aspect of food loss and waste reduction include:

- Setting national targets. A (set of) collective reduction target(s) can spur meaningful collaborations to reduce food loss and waste system-wide, rather than shift the problem around within the system. An example raised was the National Zero Waste Council (NZWC)'s strategic goal to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030, noting that some industry groups have adopted this goal. Participants reflected that national reduction targets should align with international targets.
- Developing a national roadmap. This could be informed by conducting a study to look at the existing research, analyze the challenges, and then develop a national roadmap that inclusive to all aspects of the food systems.
- Establishing forum(s) or platform(s) to bring food industry actors together within multi-stakeholder groups to collaborate across various dimension of food loss and waste. Participants raised the convening role of government to this effect, and identified Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's value chain roundtables as an existing platform that could be leveraged.
- Developing an inventory of best practices. It was noted that success stories and key learnings, both domestically and globally, could spur broader uptake and action.
- Establishing an intergovernmental mechanism for food issues in general, that transcend diverse levels and breadth of government, such as agricultural, waste management, environment, social services, and regional/local government components.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/5

Empowering Action Through Evidence

Participants generally agreed that measurement and data on food loss and waste is fundamental to scoping the problem and supporting effective, evidence-based actions to address it. Important gaps and challenges that were raised in the Canadian context include:

- Lack of standard definitions
- Lack of baseline data due to the high cost to collect data
- Inconsistent methodology, with no standardized approaches and/or guidance on methodologies
- Lack of transparency in data and cooperation across the value chain
- Lack of data on volume of food being purchased or consumed by consumers

Ideas raised by participants that could foster collaboration on this aspect of food loss and waste reduction include:

- Developing a common understanding of the problem, including standard definitions and baseline estimates.
- Developing standardized methodology and common tools to improve consistency of approaches used across the value chain. This could incorporate the use of a variety of indicators such as mass and nutrient content.
- Developing a national data strategy or roadmap. To this end, participants raised the example of Provision Coalition's Food Loss and Waste dashboard that could serve as a good model to build on.
- Establishing a national non-profit or a national government unit that could assemble data and knowledge about food waste in Canada, including existing food waste reduction initiatives in Canada, reasons for their success and opportunities for scaling up such efforts. An independent organization could be supported using a public-private partnership (PPP) model.
- Developing a network, hub or other resource that is accessible to everyone to share the research on food loss and waste across the country.
- Partnering with a research council (e.g. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) to offer a knowledge synthesis competition on food loss and waste.
- Enhancing consistency of municipal waste audits. Common food waste audit guide/templates can support comparative analysis across municipalities or provinces. The Ontario Food Collaborative (OFC)'s municipal waste audit guide was shared as an example that is transferable to other audiences as well.
- Exploring a mandatory reporting requirement on food loss and waste to provide more momentum for audit uptake across the country.
- Allocating resources to support municipalities, restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals, schools and other organizations to conduct food waste audits. A national funding program could provide financial and other resources (e.g. consultants/expertise, staff members to run waste audits) for this type of initiative.
- Exploring a "true-cost accounting" approach for food that incorporates externalities, which can reflect the true value of things we currently consider to be "waste" and incentivize prevention or recovery of food as a resource. However, it was noted that this could result in food being more expensive, which could impact risk factors for food insecurity.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/5

Stimulating Innovation and Adoption

Participants reflected on the importance of stimulating innovative solutions, such as through the Government of Canada's Food Waste Reduction Challenge, and the need to create more incentives to support broader adoption of technologies that facilitate reduction of food loss and waste. It was noted that this could be supported by structuring programs to have smaller, faster projects, to emphasize the speed of learning, enable quicker testing of ideas to find solutions that work and get them implemented faster. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) were raised as a potential model to facilitate this approach.

Participants also highlighted innovation with respect to specific food system areas or issue, including:

- **Food rescue technologies** – Innovative food rescue (and other) technologies can help ensure broader distribution of edible food. Participants also raised the connection between innovation and infrastructure, noting that cities and regions are working on redistributing surplus food, but the sheer volume of food exceeds the capacity of existing infrastructure to address. Examples include infrastructure to store frozen meals and mobile infrastructure to redistribute surplus food. Technology can help address gaps, for example by localizing waste processing on site; however, participants also noted the need for additional investment in municipal infrastructure.
- **Digitalization in Supply Chain** – There is an opportunity to increase the use of digital technology in the food supply chain. Examples raised included the use of blockchain for tracking the life-cycle of food items/elements of foods, and developing and adopting better predictive demand/supply models for agriculture. This could be built on platforms that are currently used by many supply chain actors (e.g. GS1 standards) to enhance and align tracking from farm to fork. Digital technology can also help to better organize the sourcing of foods for many retailers that want to work directly with farmers.
- **Supporting Farmers** - Innovation that better identifies the nutritional content of food processing by-products that can be used as animal feed could increase acceptance and use by farmers. There may also be opportunities to connect surplus products at the retail/grocery stage back to farmers to be used as animal feed or other on-farm uses.
- **Preventing Spoilage** – There is still the need to develop and adopt the best technologies that can keep foods fresh and/or extend their shelf life, which currently include plastic packaging. It was noted that while current policy efforts are aimed at banning single-use plastics, there could be the unintended consequence of increasing food loss and waste in certain commodities where appropriate and viable alternatives do not currently exist.
- **Renewable energy** - Exploring opportunities to have the technology to support the generation of renewable energy to underpin the food system could increase energy autonomy and reduce reliance on fossil fuels and carbon footprint food system actors.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/5

Other Topics

Participants also raised some other issues and considerations related to food loss and waste that go beyond the four themes above, that include the following:

- Regulations play an important role in the food system and should be considered when pursuing solutions to food loss and waste. Examples raised include consumer trust in certification processes and the implementation of innovative solutions (e.g. regulatory barriers).
- Promoting local food production in order to shorten supply chains, especially for perishable items, and to make fresh food more accessible to consumers.
- Increasing the cost associated with generating waste can incentivize prevention and recovery. One approach could be for the federal government to encourage more extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs so that the costs are incurred by those responsible for them.
- It was noted that the current valuation approach to food is part of the reason Canada exports raw goods/commodities and imports finished food products, and a more holistic valuation approach (e.g. true-cost accounting) could help change these dynamics and stimulate the growth of Canada's food processing capacity.
- Diversifying commodities/products could serve as a risk management tool for farmers and food businesses. This can help farmers hang on during difficult times, e.g. sudden changes in demand, and potentially avoid unexpected surplus/waste.
- Weather is a big driver of food loss on farms and there are limitations for the food industry because of the perishable nature of the goods produced and their susceptibility to inclement weather. This is a unique feature of food industry that needs to be recognized as a factor driving food loss and waste.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Areas of divergence, gaps, and challenges with specific ideas are noted throughout the Discussion Topic Outcomes above.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Canada's Member State Dialogues**
<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/about-our-department/key-departmental-initiatives/food-policy/leadership-2021-united-nations-food-systems-summit-and-dialogues>
- **Concertations des États membres organisées par le Canada**
<https://agriculture.canada.ca/fr/propos-notre-ministere/initiatives-ministerielles-importantes/politique-alimentaire/leadership-sommet-systemes-alimentaires-nations-unies-2021-concertations>