

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

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| DIALOGUE DATE | Wednesday, 19 May 2021 13:00 GMT -04:00 |
| DIALOGUE TITLE | Sustainable Production for Canadian Food Systems / Durabilité de la production dans les systèmes alimentaires canadiens |
| 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/14357/ |
| 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

50

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

4

19-30

24

31-50

51-65

15

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

14 Male

29 Female

7 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

4 Agriculture/crops

1 Fish and aquaculture

5 Livestock

Agro-forestry

4 Environment and ecology

3 Trade and commerce

8 Education

Communication

3 Food processing

Food retail, markets

4 Food industry

1 Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

2 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

15 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

4 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

1 Large national business

1 Multi-national corporation

1 Small-scale farmer

4 Medium-scale farmer

1 Large-scale farmer

6 Local Non-Governmental Organization

4 International Non-Governmental Organization

2 Indigenous People

7 Science and academia

1 Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

4 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

1 United Nations

International financial institution

2 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

1 Consumer group

10 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

Preparation for this member-state Dialogue involved broad consultation across multiple federal government departments and leveraged results of on-going engagement with other stakeholders on issues of sustainability to help inform 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, collaborative and urgent action on sustainable production across the food system, and how to increase adoption of sustainable practices, as well as participation of the whole supply chain. 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 and respectfully.

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

The objective of this Dialogue was to explore and identify approaches to enhance the sustainability of agricultural and food production across the full value chain in Canada, recognizing the linkages between environmental performance and economic and social resilience.

Canada's Prime Minister has recently committed to increasing Canada's nationally determined contributions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, reducing emission by 40% to 45% below 2005 levels and reaching net zero emissions by 2050. The agriculture sector worldwide, including the Canadian agriculture sector, can be part of the solution to reduce emissions, while increasing and maintaining carbon stores.

Most of Canada's agriculture emissions are from biological processes, including from nutrients being applied to soils, and livestock digestion. Thus, continued innovation, development and adoption of on-farm climate-smart practices and technologies have the potential to improve efficiencies, achieve further reductions, and increase carbon storage. Canada's government has dedicated programs and funding to support the sector in meeting these challenges. In addition, many companies that source agricultural products have made commitments towards reducing the emissions from their supply chains, as well as address other environmental priorities. Participants were asked to consider the challenges at the production level and through the supply chain in order to identify opportunities to improve carbon sequestration and reduce emissions through the food chain, recognizing the complexity and trade-offs that exist.

Numerous examples of sustainability initiatives exist that can help improve environmental outcomes and demonstrate the sustainability of Canada's agriculture and food sector, including both supply chain certification and verification systems. In addition, Canadian provinces have been benchmarking one of Canada's leading environment programs, the Environment Farm Plan (EFP), against the internationally recognized SAI Farm Sustainability Assessment tool. An EFP is voluntary awareness tool and process, whereby producers assess their operations to identify the environmental strengths and risks and develop an action plan to address risk areas. Today, more than 40% of producers have participated in programs to develop their EFP.

The Dialogue examined how to build on existing initiatives to increase carbon sequestration and practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as to enhance and improve participation in Canada's sustainability initiatives, recognizing that these are complex, dynamic challenges and that all food system actors have a role to play. The dialogue focused on ensuring a broad representation of food system players were included in the generation of ideas. It also discussed the complexities, nuances and tradeoffs that cannot be ignored when developing solutions for the 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
- Human rights
- Women & Youth Empowerment
- Policy
- Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

Participants represented diverse perspectives and roles in Canada's food system, but agreed that increasing the sustainability of Canada's food production system is a priority. In doing so, a full food systems perspective is necessary and cannot be focused solely on greenhouse gases or just the production sector, but must reflect consumers and the variety of stakeholders throughout the supply chain. Despite the complexity of the food system at a global level, it was noted that solutions needed to be considered on a regional basis in order to reflect the regional diversity of the country and landscapes and to increase sustainability while minimizing unintended consequences.

It was noted that changes at the farm level can be costly in time and money, and that there is a need to support farmers with financial and non-financial incentives in order to increase adoption of beneficial practices. Governments have a strong role to play in financing transitions to sustainable practices and technologies. However, continued dialogue and engagement amongst partners is an essential component in developing appropriate and integrated policies, programs, targets, and goals.

A strong theme to emerge was the need to fairly, consistently, and transparently measure and report on the performance of the sector through performance metrics and data. Such work would support research priorities through the identification of problem areas, help to direct education and knowledge transfer, as well as track progress on performance.

Communications were raised as an important theme, where it was felt that there is untapped potential to find solutions simply because some groups of people are not in contact. It was noted that opportunities to address food loss have arisen by bringing diverse stakeholders in different sectors together, and can often lead to reduced costs or to new revenue streams. Enhancing communication across the supply chain and with other sectors could lead to additional opportunities.

Education was also a common theme throughout the discussions, where it was noted that the social and economic components need to be included when working with farmers. Peer-to-peer learning is essential and can be very effective, especially when supported with additional education and knowledge transfer initiatives that understand the realities at the producer level. The importance of raising awareness of agricultural and food practices at the consumer level, as well as the complexities and interrelatedness of the food system, were also discussed.

Engaging discussions amongst the enthusiastic set of Dialogue participants yielded a number of note-worthy ideas to advance collaboration on sustainable production, including the development of a national soil health strategy, a Ministry of Food, additional targeted government funding programs to incentivize practice changes at the farm level, communications and education throughout the supply chain, dedicated data and performance metrics, and targeted environmental research supported with decision support tools. Their ideas are detailed in the following section under discussion topics/themes.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/2

In discussion groups of up to 12 individuals representing diverse aspects of Canada's food system, participants discussed their perspectives and brainstormed ways to increase the sustainability of production within Canada's food system. Groups discussed two topics: Maintaining economic resilience while increasing carbon sequestration and reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs); and increasing participation in sustainability initiatives.

Theme 1: What actions need to be taken to ensure Canada's agriculture and food sector remains economically resilient while increasing carbon sequestration and reducing GHG emission contributing towards achieving a net-zero future?

Three key ideas emerged from the discussion of this theme:

- A national soil health strategy is needed in order to focus attention on the health of soils and develop policies to increase soil carbon. It would also include measurement of carbon in a consistent and credible way, as there are currently too many proxies for defining soil health. To do so, there is a need to enhance and support research and knowledge development in order to inform the adoption of improved practices. A soil health strategy could support the development of an ecosystem-based approach to food production, linking crop and livestock production to the ecosystems that are most environmentally appropriate. Consistent soil carbon measurement could also support carbon offset markets and provide an additional benefit for farmers.
- Knowledge transfer and education require increased support, and should be tailored with the social science understanding of the barriers to adoption. Knowledge transfer can also be a two-way conversation that can help identify where more gains can be made to reduce emissions and sequester carbon. Consumers and the general public also require education related to the food system in order to better understand how the food system operates.
- A venture capital fund could be created dedicated to supporting innovation and technologies in agriculture and food. Among other things, it could be built to recognize that the food system is evolving and there are opportunities for new technologies (e.g. vertical farming) and new protein sources (insects, cellular, etc.).

In addition, participants gave significant attention to the need for strong and coherent policies and programming that could drive adoption of practices to reduce greenhouse gases and increase sequestration. The following ideas and considerations were noted.

- Policies and programs to reduce food waste are a huge opportunity to reduce emissions, as well as decrease water and energy use, and need to span the full food value chain. Programs would need to help change consumer stigma around food waste and to change their expectations of perfect food. For producers, programs are needed to help innovate and find uses for food loss.
- Support for local and organic school food programs could help local economies, build soil, provide nutritious food, and would help reduce emissions from transportation.
- Current fertilizer industry programs to make fertilizer use more efficient have a conflict of interest, and consultancy services for crop production should have more independence.
- Public policy needs to be considered over the longer term, not in 5 year segments as happens in Canada now.
- Policies need to reflect flexible and innovative solutions, as well as the different challenges at each level of the food system and different production practices and commodities.
- All three pillars of sustainability need to be considered when designing policies and programs. Environmental goals will not be reached if social and economic considerations are not being addressed at the same time. For example, a sudden and significant increase in the use of technology to produce food could improve environmental outcomes, but could lead to unaffordable food prices.
- A science-based approach is necessary. For example, not everyone wants to eat food that uses genetically modified technology, but government is needed to show what is safe and what is not.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/2

Theme 2: What do we need to do to enhance and improve participation in Canada's sustainability initiatives and leverage this to enhance and take advantage of Canada's sustainable reputation?

Four key areas emerged from the discussion of this theme, related to using data, developing a Ministry of Food, strengthening incentives, and continuing research.

Participants reflected on the need for metrics and data to support demonstrations of progress and to identify areas of weakness, and suggested the development of a "data repository" to collect, store, analyse and share sustainability data related to sustainability claims. With federal leadership, it could be a credible tool that creates improved and clear access to data and underpins decision support tools for producers, processors, retailers and consumers. A "database and query" function could be developed internationally and populated with country-level data, to ensure consistency and to support supply chain members in how to be more sustainable. The need for more data, to understand variability across data, and to use life cycle assessment to drive knowledge and research, and to verify sustainability claims were noted.

Participants raised the concept of creating a dedicated Ministry of Food, as a potential way to improve coordination on agriculture production, fisheries, and health/nutrition issues, while also addressing sustainability and environmental issues at the same time.

Participants noted that sustainability initiatives and adoption of new practices that enhance environmental conditions can impose several barriers to farmers, especially in terms of finances and time. In addition, for many of the practices that increase and enhance public goods, their benefits may not be fully realized by the farms adopting them. Thus, to increase participation, incentives and other supports are needed to provide insurance to farmers and help offset the added time and cost burdens associated with practice change.

The federal government has an important role to play in developing policies and programs that could incentivize or otherwise support practice change. One area of support includes continued research on better practices, for example on more efficient use of nutrients and electrification of farm equipment. Research can also help to adapt global solutions into regionally-appropriate solutions, and drive the development of decision support tools that can facilitate the adoption of beneficial practices.

Participants also identified the following considerations:

- Trade-offs must be explored and addressed, though win-wins exist and can help accelerate momentum. Examples of trade-offs include balancing long term and short term goals and objectives, and export/production targets versus social and environmental targets.
- Producer burden is a concern related to the supply of data to make sustainability claims and to participate in verification and certification systems. Ways to minimize this burden need to be developed, particularly to support participation from small to medium sized producers.
- Canada needs to be more proactive in showcasing its sustainability performance, and governments can help play a leadership role in achieving this. There are also opportunities to export technologies and expertise.
- Innovation across the supply chain is essential, and supporting patentable innovation could be a focus for the federal government. However, this needs to be balanced with some flexibility as being too prescriptive will hamper innovation.
- Farmers need to see business value in order to make changes. Consumer preference can become that business value.
- Consistent communications across the supply chain, with producers, and with consumers is imperative.
- Blue Foods (food from water production such as fish, seafood and sea plants) must be included as an important part of food systems dialogues.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

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

While there was general agreement on the need for policies and programs to support sustainable production, carbon sequestration and emissions reductions, there was disagreement related to the focus and role of different production systems that could be used to accomplish this. While diversity in size and type of production was commonly accepted, there was disagreement as to whether synthetic crop inputs were required or whether organic agriculture could be scaled to meet food needs globally.

There was also disagreement as to whether third party certification helped or hindered, where some felt it could take attention away from government goals related to net zero and lead to too many certifications and mixed messaging to consumers. Others felt certification systems provide an opportunity to drive change and to measure it.

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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>