

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Friday, 21 May 2021 13:00 GMT -04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Resilient Regional Food Systems / Résilience des systèmes alimentaires régionaux
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/14361/
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

51

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

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

1 Large national business

1 Multi-national corporation

7 Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

2 Large-scale farmer

11 Local Non-Governmental Organization

2 International Non-Governmental Organization

4 Indigenous People

8 Science and academia

1 Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

5 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

9 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 to focus on the perspectives of food systems stakeholders at the community and regional level, including planners, community organizers, public health professionals, food producers, distributors, retailers, Indigenous groups and civil society. Participants were assigned to discussion groups based on their regional affiliation, and 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

This dialogue's focus was on exploring strengths and challenges specific to local food systems and share successful models and innovative approaches that can build on the strengths and/or address challenges to achieve more resilient regional food systems.

Dialogue breakout discussions were grouped according to region, to focus on issues or themes particular to the area. At registration, participants selected a general region they identify with, from among the following groups: Atlantic Canada; Central Canada; Western Canada; and Northern Canada. An additional 'National' breakout discussion group, with representation from all regions and both official languages provided the opportunity for participants to identify common themes among regions. In each breakout room, participants were invited to discuss the following questions:

1. What are the key strengths that are unique to this region's food system?
2. What are the key challenges faced by this region's food system?
3. What are some successful models and innovative approaches that can build on those strengths and/or address key challenges in this region?
4. How can we best work together towards a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food system in this region?
5. If we were to identify concrete areas for collective action, what would they be?

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
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MAIN FINDINGS

Discussion outcomes brought to light a broad range of views and perspectives that reflect the diversity of Canada's geography and food systems. Common themes that emerged, from across regions include:

- **Food insecurity** – challenges with food insecurity can manifest differently across Canada. For example, participants from Central Canada noted that growing rates of obesity are linked with incidence of food insecurity; food deserts are increasingly problematic in Atlantic Canada; marketing strategies that promote unhealthy food contribute to poor diets in Western Canada; and in Northern Canada, food affordability and accessibility was raised a primary cause of high rates of food insecurity. The national discussion highlighted poverty as the root cause for food insecurity, and that strategies to make sustainable progress towards reducing food insecurity must include poverty reduction.
- **Infrastructure** – having the right infrastructure in place, as well as funding and regulatory mechanisms to support local economic development and social enterprise are key to building and maintain resilient regional food systems.
- **Local Food** – local food movements demonstrate strong potential to be game-changing solutions, strengthening the local food economy.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/6

In discussion groups of individuals representing diverse actors across Canada's food system, participants discussed their perspectives and brainstormed ways to make progress towards more resilient regional food systems across Canada. The questions identified in Major Focus (above) focused the discussion on: strengths; challenges; successful models; collaboration; and, areas for collective action, that are particular to each region. Five discussion topics have been segregated by region to capture the diverse perspectives shared.

Atlantic Canada

Food system strengths include:

- Wealth of traditional ecological knowledge, supported by the intergenerational sharing of knowledge, First Nations communities' promotion of traditional knowledge, and peer-to-peer sharing;
- Abundance of farmers markets;
- Strong, enduring community connections to agriculture, fisheries, and other natural resource industries; and,
- Accessible governance – openness of senior government officials to meet with stakeholders, from industry to civil society.

Challenges include those directly related to food as well as systemic barriers:

- Food insecurity: Participants agreed that food insecurity, and food deserts in particular (especially among First Nations Communities) are priority challenges, with low income rates being the primary cause of one's access to affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food.
- Infrastructure: Participants agreed that lack of transportation (e.g., lack of public transportation as a barrier to accessibility), cold storage and processing capacity present challenges to the region's food system resilience.
- Climate change: The impact of climate change on wild food systems, and traditional harvesting, was also raised as a barrier to resilience.
- Lack of incentives or regulation: Participants expressed support for policies and regulations that would incentivize consumers and institutions to buy local (e.g., establishing targets for public procurement). Participants also identified regulations governing food inspection to be barriers, expressing concern that the regulatory framework does not adequately respect treaty rights.

Successful models:

- Participants identified that financial and human resources are key to success in developing and sustaining resilient food systems, and that leveraging resources from multiple initiatives could create synergies that yield positive results.
- The following models and initiatives have been implemented in the region: Farmers markets, community gardens, Cape Breton Food Hub, and Community Food Mentors (Food For All NB), which is a food centered model that provides skills training and resources to support food security.

Collaboration – Participants identified the following collaborative initiatives as having the potential to scale up or out, to support a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food system:

- Peer-to-peer networks among community and grassroots organizations;
- Collaborative education, learning and skills development;
- Sharing best practices and adopting successful models developed in other jurisdictions; and,
- Information sharing platforms and virtual networks.

Areas for collective action – Participants also identified a number of areas for continued or increased action, at the government- and organizational-level, as well as across the food system more generally:

- Expanding funding programs that support local food security and infrastructure, to include human resources and other needs identified by communities. The federal government's Local Food Infrastructure Fund was identified as having potential in this area.
- Continuing public education, outreach and networking among organizations and with governments.
- Broad policy and program support for improving the accessibility and affordability of nutritious, culturally appropriate food that is sustainably produced and consumed.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/6

Central Canada

Food system strengths include:

- Diversity across the food system, including environmental, social and economic components of: geography, climate, culture, and production/supply chain.
- Strong community-led supports from funding, to networks and relationship-building initiatives.
- Strong individual and community connections to urban and rural food environments.

Challenges noted include:

- While the production and supply chain is generally diverse, industrial production lacks capacity in the processing and value-added sector. For example, many commodities grown in Ontario are exported to other provinces or outside Canada, for further processing or manufacture. Further, many processors use few local and regional products, having adopted business models that rely on imported goods.
- Lack of connection among farmers, primary producers and communities; particularly in urban areas.
- Increasing urbanization and industrial development of rural agricultural land.
- Public procurement practices that exclude locally-sourced products.
- Individual and family incomes that are insufficient to access nutritious, culturally appropriate food.

Successful models – Participants identified a number of community and government initiatives that lever strengths and address challenges including:

- Lufa greenhouse farm is an initiative that connects rooftop greenhouse farms with local farmers and food makers, in an online marketplace of locally and sustainably produced food baskets. The initiative also partners with local non-profit agencies to increase access to their products for low-income communities.
- Participants noted that community gardens, and the networks that support them (e.g., Sustain Ontario) are prime examples of successful models that support resilient food systems at the local level. In particular, the use of public space for community gardens (e.g., on land surrounding public institutions such as hospitals or schools), can contribute to healthy diets of patients and students.
- The Northern Ontario Indigenous Food Security Collaborative is a community-led initiative that brings Indigenous practitioners, funders and other stakeholders together in an integrated and comprehensive planning and resourcing process focused on strengthening Indigenous food sovereignty and food security. The collaborative is supported by the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security, which supports programs that advance the capacity of people and communities to achieve sustainable food security and have the potential to be replicated or scaled to increase their impact. The Centre's goal is to reduce food insecurity by 50% by 2030.
- The Middlesex-London Food Policy Council was identified as an example of a successful network and participants noted the Council's initiative to reduce food loss and waste including educational tools for students aged 5 – 18 as a best practice.
- Participants identified government policy and programs supporting food literacy as having potential for success. Private Members Bill-216, proposing that the Ontario Education Act be amended to include a food literacy and healthy eating curriculum from grades 1 through 12, was strongly supported in this discussion theme.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/6

[Central Canada continued...]

Collaboration - Participants identified the following collaborative initiatives as having the potential to scale up or out, to support a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food system:

- Regional and community-based food policy groups and councils can foster innovative partnerships and improve connections across the food system to strengthen capacity, resilience sustainability and inclusiveness.
- Participants agreed that expanding public engagement and initiatives to promote food, and food system literacy would contribute to more positive outcomes.
- Municipalities have collaborated with community groups and the agriculture sector, re-assessing by-laws to enable the establishment of farmer's markets and development of urban agriculture and community gardens.

Areas for collective action:

- Participants agreed that governance mechanisms such as policy councils will improve coordination among orders of government, and that public education measures would support collective action among consumers.
- Participants also identified collaboration between local suppliers and institutions (public and private) as areas to strengthen, however specific roles or initiatives were not discussed.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/6

Western Canada

Food system strengths include:

- Diversity in the agriculture and food sector, and leadership in sustainable cattle production.
- Collaborative approaches to preventing food loss and waste that connect farmers and grocers in the process.
- Adoption of Indigenous knowledge and approaches to agriculture and food systems.

Challenges noted include:

- Transportation – lack of robust transportation networks connecting urban centres with northern and Indigenous communities, and lack of equity and opportunity in the market (e.g., while transport trucks bring food and supplies to isolated communities, they return south empty).
- Paucity of value added production capacity, from local abattoirs to further processing.
- Need for increased awareness of the contribution of animal sectors in supporting sustainable food systems.
- Regulatory barriers including restrictions on land access, inter-provincial trade barriers.
- Emergence of food deserts.
- Food security challenges are particularly severe in northern and isolated areas, due to lack of fundamental resources such as water, roads and broadband.

Successful models – Participants identified a number of community initiatives that lever strengths and address challenges relating to food insecurity and food loss and waste including:

- Community-led initiatives that grow and produce food in a sustainable manner, for local consumption. The Smart Farm Project was highlighted as a particularly successful model: adopting smart growth principles to small farm acreages; leveraging increased density to create affordable housing and farming opportunities; and, establishing frameworks to help make farming more financially viable.
- Food banks and food assistance organizations have shifted towards providing more fresh, nutritionally dense food.
- Loop Resource partners with grocery stores across British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, to divert unsold grocery store food to registered charities and farms as feed and compost.

Collaboration - Participants identified the following areas as having potential for further collaboration, to support a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food system:

- Partnerships between local growers/producers and processors, to increase capacity for regional and community sourced food.
- Sharing knowledge and leveraging resources to support climate change adaptation.
- Initiatives that promote circularity, such as Loop, to prevent food loss and waste.
- Initiatives that support northern food security, and promote self-determination to improve access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food.

Areas for collective action:

- Participants agreed collective action among governments, sectors, industry, communities and individuals is needed to address priority areas including: support for education and training initiatives, as well as peer-to-peer learning; innovative solutions to adapt to climate change; and, strengthening production capacity.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/6

Northern Canada

Food system strengths include:

- Northern communities' creativity, adaptability and innovation have been key to survival and success in remote areas and harsh climates. These strengths are enduring and inherent in northern society, traditions and culture, and evident in cultivation and harvesting traditions.
- Vast, diverse geography with rich natural resources and strong connections to the scientific community.

Challenges noted include:

- Government policy and regulations around safe food handling and sale are often misaligned with northern realities and culture. There is an opportunity to incorporate country food and traditional knowledge and harvesting methods into regulations and governance mechanisms.
- Lack of sufficient local, accessible abattoirs and storage capacity, to promote traditionally harvested, culturally appropriate food.

Successful models – Participants agreed that collaborative community-led models that bring together multiple disciplines in partnership for food security projects have seen great success. The following examples were identified in the discussion:

- Partnerships with organizations in the South for skills development and training.
- Integrated pest management strategies (across provincial and territorial jurisdictions).
- Local community gardens.
- Funding programs that take a long-term approach and are community centered are more been successful in building sustainable capacity and strengthening the resilience of local food systems.

Collaboration – Participants identified three priorities for improving collaboration towards a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems:

- Including diverse perspectives in policy and program development, considering all food system actors in analyzing and monitoring food security and food systems in northern communities.
- Increasing networks for – and expanding partnerships between – food hubs and local distribution, connecting individual producers and farmers with communities. The Yukon Agricultural Association was highlighted as a leading model. The association's mission is "To foster and promote sustainable Yukon agriculture for the benefit of both private and commercial producers and consumers through education, infrastructure development, and liaison with government agencies and with non-government organizations."
- Reducing the regulatory and policy barriers to expanding the availability of and access to traditionally harvested country food. E.g., governments could collaborate with communities to include locally produced food in subsidy programs.

Areas for collective action – Participants identified the following actions as initiatives governments, the sector, industry and civil society could take, to improve the resilience of food systems in Canada's northern communities:

- Provide workshops, training and skills development, equipment and other supplies to support small-scale food production.
- Promote the region's successes and capitalize on positive outcomes.
- Adopt a community-centric approach to policy and program development, focusing on needs and mechanisms identified at the grassroots level.
- Adopt more sustainable funding models to support local producer associations.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 6/6

National

Food system strengths – Participants identified the following strengths that are particular to a sub-region in each of the above categories:

- Halifax, Nova Scotia: values of sharing food and supporting one another is woven into the culture.
- Wellington-Guelph, Ontario: strong food culture, agri-food research and networks, and diverse farming operations.
- Quebec: multiple and diverse food systems throughout the province.
- Northwest Territories: Strong Indigenous practice, traditional knowledge and culture, and innovation. Smaller governments are adaptable and nimble to react to shocks (e.g., COVID 19).

Food system challenges – Participants noted a variety of challenges related to: labour, the environment and climate change; the legacy of colonialism; and, food security, as priority challenges to the resilience of Canada’s national food system:

- Labour: While the people who work in the food system are essential, they are often not treated as such, with low wages, unstable or precarious work conditions, and little to non-existent social or health support. This challenge exists throughout the food chain, from temporary foreign workers, to retail workers and transportation and distribution channels (e.g., truck drivers).
- Environment and climate change: Participants expressed concern that Canada’s food system may not be well-positioned to weather the impact of an environmental shock analogous to the impact of the pandemic.
- Colonial legacy: Significant traditional Indigenous knowledge and practices have been lost through the systemic racism of residential schools and other colonial policies. Participants strongly agreed on the need for change to preserve and promote Indigenous knowledge and practices, listen to Indigenous voices, and to adopt inclusive, self-determined approaches to funding programs and projects, and governance.
- Food security: Access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food was identified as challenge, primarily impacting low-income communities. Participants expressed the view that while some people have the means to access ‘good’ food, the food system is two-tiered, leaving large groups of Canadians either food insecure currently, or at risk of becoming food insecure soon.

Successful models – Participants identified the following models as successful in promoting food security and resilient, inclusive food systems:

- Community food centres and organizations that take a holistic approach to food security by providing food literacy, training and skills development for employment, access to health and other social services.
- Civil society networks that promote equity in food systems and enable connections with funding organizations and other supports.
- School food programs that source locally grown and produced food and integrate food skills and literacy in educational programming.
- Institutional procurement policies that prioritize local, sustainably produced food.
- Consideration for the concept of a national food system, modelled after Canada’s approach to national health care.

Collaboration:

- Participants noted sharing best practices, and learning from others’ experience are key collaborative mechanism. The discussion highlighted that opportunities exist to strengthen and expand sharing networks, to include more diverse voices that represent actors, participants and partners from across the food system. Collaborative networks would also enable connections among funding organizations and recipients, with the potential to create synergies and maximize resources.

Areas for collective action:

- Participants agreed that organizations, civil society, governments and individuals could work together to develop school food programming that supports local production.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There was not a significant area of divergence among stakeholders. All stakeholders agreed on the need and the importance to build a resilient and sustainable regional food systems. As noted above, participants from each region considered different approaches.

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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>