

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 2 June 2021 09:00 GMT +00:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Small Businesses : Good Food for All – Afrique Centrale et de l’Ouest (Français)
CONVENED BY	L’Organisation des Nations Unies pour l’alimentation et l’agriculture, La Chambre de Commerce Internationale, L’Union Africaine, Réseau Agroalimentaire International
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/14532/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte D’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Niger, Senegal

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

104

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

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The dialogue was organised with full respect and commitment to the Principles of Engagement: Act with Urgency In light of this urgency, the Dialogue was organized as a contribution to the Food Systems Summit and to the elaboration of pathways to food systems transformation contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Commit to the Summit The Dialogue empowered stakeholders to participate in the preparation of the Food Systems Summit. All stakeholders were consulted about ways to move forward collectively and creatively, embracing the entire scope of opinions. The dialogue was organised around 2 main discussions which happened in small sub-groups to allow the most participative and safe open-discussions. Be Respectful Respect for one another is a foundation for genuine Dialogue. Participants in the Dialogues listened to each other and were open to the co-existence of divergent points of view. Each sub-group was facilitated by experienced facilitators who ensured everyone had an opportunity to express his/her opinions. Recognize Complexity Dialogues are an opportunity to embrace the complexity of food systems. They promote a systemic approach by involving multiple stakeholders to identify actions across the system together with potential synergies and trade-offs. Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity The Dialogue brought to the table a diversity of stakeholders from within SMEs, Ecosystem Support Organisations (ESOs), the broader business community, small-holder farmers and civil society – working across the food system from production to consumption. Complement the work of others The Dialogue built-on and added-value to existing policy processes and initiatives. It provided an opportunity to share promising innovations, connect stakeholders, and broaden partnerships to transform food systems for the common good. Build Trust The Dialogue was curated and facilitated in a way which created a “safe space” and promoted trust, encouraging mutual respect. The conclusions emerging from the Dialogue are not attributed to single individuals.

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

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

How to boost the role of SMEs in providing good food for all?

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are vital to our food economies. Each country is different, but SMEs are often over 90% of businesses in the agri-food sector, creating half the economic value, providing more than half the sector's jobs, and handling more than half the food consumed. Their tenacity and agility sustain food supplies and access through the COVID pandemic.

What pathways will enhance the contribution of SMEs to the food system? Wasafiri here offers six promising pathways to boost the impact of food SMEs. Which are most important in your context? What is missing? What actions will advance them? How are they interdependent?

1. Elevate the Voice of SMEs

Food entrepreneurs are incredibly diverse. Hence, collectively they neither easily influence nor hear the policy decisions that determine their future. Policymakers are often simply unaware of this quiet majority and are instead swayed by more powerful voices that are easier to engage. Positive examples exist of institutions and processes that elevate the voice of SMEs. The best of these also manage to amplify more marginalised entrepreneurs such as women, youth and indigenous people. Replicating these efforts around the world will ensure our food systems are designed and managed in ways that realise the positive contribution of SMEs.

2. Reduce the Cost of Doing Business

In emerging economies, many basic challenges undermine the commercial viability of food SMEs, for example poor roads, intermittent power, red tape, corruption, unpredictable trade policy, and internet access. Wherever these improve, SMEs grow and proliferate. Access to finance also improves as lenders and investors have more confidence. Cross-sector collaboration can strengthen this basic enabling environment, reducing the risks and costs of doing business in the agri-food sector, and accelerating the "quiet revolution" through which SMEs are already transforming food systems.

3. Reward Positive Outcomes

Our food systems are currently designed to reward the mass production of cheap calories. Different incentives are needed for markets to produce food that is more sustainable, nourishing and equitable. From impact investing to carbon credits, from product certification to sugar taxes, there are diverse mechanisms to reward positive outcomes and disincentivise negative ones. These must be designed and scaled in ways that work for SMEs, rather than adding complexity and cost.

4. Target Support at Food SMEs

Well-resourced business development support for SMEs is a proven driver of inclusive economic growth. Targeting such support at food SMEs offers additional benefits, due to the importance of the sector to public goods such as health, the environment, and livelihoods. Youth, women and other groups face additional barriers to starting and growing a business. Support to them unlocks fresh entrepreneurial energy into the sector and addresses equity gaps.

5. Democratise the Digital Food Revolution

COVID has accelerated a long-term trend towards digitisation of the food system. Whether it is digital farming, block chain for supply chain management, or virtual marketplaces, the food system is undergoing a tech revolution. The vast flows of data could serve the common good or entrench control within a few powerful actors. By design and policy, the data services and digital markets must be accessible to SMEs. This could unlock myriad innovations from payment for ecosystem services, to direct farm-to-consumer sales.

6. Make Good Food Matter

For decades, the food system has been valued for its efficiency in feeding billions of additional mouths. This era witnessed the rise of industrial agriculture. The Summit marks an inflection point. Food systems must now also be valued for nourishing people, regenerating nature, improving equity and resilience to shocks. In this new paradigm, SMEs are in a stronger position with their closer, more nuanced relationships with communities and landscapes.

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

Need to change the agrifood system. Actions to be taken at several levels.
Food standards for all, appropriate equipment, training, technical support for SMEs, access to finance, land, creation of cooperatives. Concern about producing and distributing quality products, wastewater, packaging, worker hygiene, storage, etc. At all links in the value chains.
SMEs must remain competitive and therefore need solutions and support.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/2

Discussion was around the 2 following questions:

1. What is your and your company's contribution to the food system?
2. What are the challenges that limit this contribution?

Feedback 1

- Creation of a favorable environment to allow the circulation in the member states of products that are processed and consumed in the community space both in the UMEA or at the level of the CAC.
 - Example of Niger where they are developing practices that allow good quality Nigerien products to compete with imported products containing potentially harmful / harmful materials.
 - Initiatives to stimulate creativity and innovation. Exhibitions and awards ceremony for the best companies with an example on organic packaging.
 - Actions by incubators who supervise young people: agribusiness projects such as fish farming, forestry, food crops, etc. to stimulate the market
 - Training for the improvement of production techniques by supporting especially the small farms which supply most of our urban markets in Central Africa (and particularly in the DRC).
- Tax inconsistency which is a major challenge because it does not allow companies to promote their activities.

Feedback 2

Production and processing.

Main problem being the lack of equipment. Lack of machinery in standards and packaging. Pb certification to reassure consumers about the quality of products in order to be able to market them. Certification is essential for commercialization. Another pb, import taxes which make products more expensive, intervene on marketing and indirectly on production because there is no point in producing if we cannot market afterwards. Another pb: organization of SMEs as an umbrella organization.

Feedback 3

Important supply routes for SMEs, better results when they are short. Role that SMEs can play to limit intermediaries and facilitate short circuits. Post-harvest losses: actions of SMEs. And the importance of developing stable and sustainable distribution channels.

Solutions: government support with the example and experience of Niger. 3N initiative which has supported SMEs since policy development by creating a framework and allows dialogue between SMEs and government, support / advice structures, structuring financing structures, credit to small producers. Constraints: financing, raw material taxes and supply difficulties.

Feedback 4

1. Question of local supply that can be assumed by short-circuit SMEs (highlighted with the covid crisis). A real asset for SMEs as longer supply chains encountered real challenges during the covid crisis. Real added value for SMEs with examples of localized production (e.g. urban agriculture)

2. Creation of direct and indirect jobs, which makes it possible to have a dynamic at the level of the territories and therefore to locally create purchasing power

3. Inputs with SMEs more anchored in the territories, which can be close to producers, provide suitable offers, training.

Relocation of production systems, with creation / production of organic inputs, local knowledge, new products etc.

Challenges

- Taxation, heavy, complex and for companies that make transformation, taxation intervenes at several levels.

- Human capital, training and technical assistance

- Infrastructure and access to finance: banks and MFIs who do not trust agri SMEs, lack of qualified people who understand how to finance the agri / agro sector. Guarantees that arise for SMEs.

- Problems of conservation and processing in rural areas.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/2

Discussion around concrete actions to get things done and find solutions
The Future: How to boost the role of SMEs in providing "Good Food for All"?

1. Make SMEs heard
2. Reduce the cost of doing business
3. Reward responsible conduct
4. Tailor support for food SMEs
5. Democratise the digital food revolution
6. Make good food matter

Feedback 1

3 courses of action discussed: 2/4/6

Track 2- improved trade and fiscal policies to protect producers, promotion of local agrifood products

Track 4- favor access to industrial zones especially for women / residential areas, pursue commercial policies with exemption from taxes / customs fees for equipment imported especially for processing. Reduction in profit tax weighs heavily on SMEs and discourages SMEs from formalizing. So stay informal. Investors and donors should give more importance to social business and not just for profit business because it is important. Grouping necessary between SMEs (pooling) especially in the field of transformation, to achieve better results. Support processors in new technologies, innovations, training, more organic production, production quality

Track 6- develop policies that promote local products and limit imports, act on trade policies, promote strategies around healthy eating (young children focus), quality / health control service at all levels, promotion of tools for 'balanced diet.

Feedback 2

Tracks 4 and 6

Track 6: importance of raising awareness / informing consumers (and SMEs!) About what healthy and sustainable food is so that they can make conscious (!) Enlightened choices, put the consumer at the center / heart of the system food so that they push and influence SMEs to produce and transform better and better. Requires a policy framework favorable to the development of SMEs and financial support. Proposes to set up a "knowledge" platform on SMEs aimed at informing commercial banks and building confidence for investments.

Track 4: Emphasize the financial and political dimensions.

Track 1: advocacy, integrate SMEs on legislative issues. Important to consult SMEs!

Track 5: support and structure for SMEs integrating digital

Feedback 3

Tracks 4 and 1

Track 4: capacity building, need for coaching, training (online !!) etc. But the cost of training is high ...

Track 6: that SMEs can take part in decisions.

Difficulties: access to energy and raw materials (especially with security issues in the Sahel at the moment), labor and access to land.

Structure SMEs among themselves to make them stronger and greater decision-making power.

Risk aversion for investors

Difficult quality control: no labs with certifications to guarantee product quality.

Feedback 4

Set up networking between countries to link SMEs, organization of webinars etc. newsletter to educate consumers on the importance of good nutrition.

Customs charges on imported equipment, difficult

Promotion and promotion of local products

Role of SMEs in the fight against malnutrition

Policy framework / environment favorable to SMEs for investments and access to equipment

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

ACTION TRACKS

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KEYWORDS

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