

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 9 June 2021 11:00 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Why We Need Water Ethics Managing Water Use In The Mediterranean
CONVENED BY	Silvia Lazzaris, Editor of FoodUnfolded, EIT Food
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/15559/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey

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

34

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

1 0-18 19 19-30 14 31-50 51-65 66-80 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

13 Male 21 Female Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

3	Agriculture/crops Fish and aquaculture Livestock	8	Education Communication Food processing Food retail, markets	2	Health care Nutrition
2	Agro-forestry	2	Food industry	2	National or local government Utilities
5	Environment and ecology		Financial Services	6	Industrial
1	Trade and commerce				Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

4	Small/medium enterprise/artisan Large national business		Workers and trade union Member of Parliament
1	Multi-national corporation Small-scale farmer		Local authority Government and national institution
1	Medium-scale farmer	2	Regional economic community United Nations
1	Large-scale farmer		International financial institution
1	Local Non-Governmental Organization	1	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
4	International Non-Governmental Organization Indigenous People	2	Consumer group
10	Science and academia	7	Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The UNFSS had already organised a global Dialogue on water. The Dialogue we organised was constructed specifically to contribute to current initiatives in the Mediterranean region. While recruiting, we ensured we included a certain number of people who are familiar with the main theme of discussion and already understand the problem so they could contribute and discuss solutions from a solid basis of knowledge. We asked every participant to commit to the “practical” outcome of the dialogue and to only bring to the table solutions that they would themselves be willing to follow through with in practice. Since water scarcity is a complex issue, depends on many different factors, and requires action on multiple levels to be managed, we decided to look at the responsibilities of each stakeholder group in separate discussion groups, to avoid cross-sector-blaming – which often leads to inaction. We worked hard in the recruitment phase to find and make space for people from varying sectors, considering cultural, geographical, time-zone, and language issues. We brought together people from different backgrounds, even where perspectives and agendas may be wildly different, e.g. multinational corporations and small farmers. We were transparent with participants about the outcome of the dialogues, and explained we would be taking notes according to Chatham House rules, promising to treat comments confidentially and anonymously. We told participants that we would have liked the conversation to be very spontaneous and positive, trying to build on top of each other’s ideas respectfully. We also said we didn’t want anyone to feel that they didn’t have enough expertise to contribute to the conversation – if they had been chosen to be there, it’s because we wanted to hear what they had to say.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Act with urgency. We made sure that the conversation focused on the next 3-5 years and revolved around specific realistic and practical solutions. Be respectful. Everyone in the dialogue was encouraged to be respectful of others’ perspectives. Every friction and divergence was dealt with a constructive approach. We promoted food production and consumption policies and practices that strive to protect and improve the health and well-being of individuals, communities, and ecosystems – while at the same time respecting local cultures and contexts. Recognise complexity. Throughout the dialogue, we always recognised that food systems are complex, and closely connected to human and animal health, land, water, climate, biodiversity, the economy, and geopolitics. We allowed and encouraged disagreement with proposed solutions and recognised that solutions likely won’t be easy to implement. We recognised that solutions were needed on multiple levels, and asked participants to vote on each group’s main suggested solutions. Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity. We encouraged conversation between members of different stakeholder groups, and ensured that everyone was always involved in the conversation and invited everyone to express themselves on each topic of discussion. Complement the work of others. We developed our own unique and relaxed style of hosting in an effort to stimulate new discussions that would lead to creative solutions. Build trust. We committed to creating a relaxed and friendly atmosphere to build trust and open airing of truthful views. We created an optional shared spreadsheet where each participant could drop their personal details in case they wanted to be contacted by other participants or by us. We let participants know that we would send the final feedback report to them. Participants also know that they might be offered follow-up opportunities with FoodUnfolded to reach our audience about important issues.

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

We have found that creating interactive polls during the plenary session allowed us to stimulate engagement from the very beginning of the event and to keep a higher level of attention throughout the Dialogue. Using polls also made it possible to democratically vote on the solutions that the majority of participants thought should take priority.

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 Dialogue on "Why we need water ethics" revolved around water scarcity in the Mediterranean. Water scarcity is an increasing problem in our world, with around 4 billion people already living under conditions of severe water scarcity for at least 1 month a year. With an ever-increasing global population and rising temperatures, water scarcity is predicted to increase across all continents. The Mediterranean basin is one area of the world that will suffer heavy consequences of climate change. Besides temperature increase, most models consistently predict rainfall decreases throughout all seasons in the Mediterranean. This will have a significant impact on water availability for food production and water consumption in the region – in just two decades, an additional 250 million people will suffer from water scarcity due to droughts in the Mediterranean alone.

In this dialogue, to which we invited mainly millennial participants from different countries and backgrounds, we reflected on which ethical frameworks we need to adopt in order to change our future water management and consumption so that everyone can get access to this resource. A big question was about how we can move beyond our exploitative mindset when thinking about our relationship to water. We mainly focused on solutions related to the actions of four different stakeholder groups: 1. Farmers' and industry's responsibility; 2. Consumers' responsibility; 3. Political responsibility; 4. Financial responsibility.

Farmers and industry's responsibility. This group focused on the practices that farmers and industry should adopt over the next few years in order to decrease their water footprint.

Consumers' responsibility. This group focused on the ways consumers can already reduce their water footprint related to food consumption.

Political responsibility. This group focused on the policies that could help accelerate the adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices and consumer behavioural change.

Financial responsibility. The group focused on the importance of financial incentives to improve efficiency in water use. The group discussed the use of fines, limits to consumption, taxes, subsidies, tax reductions, and prizes.

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

While technological innovations are in theory already available for farmers to grow food more efficiently, in reality farmers often can't access these innovations as they do not have the financial means to implement them. The issue is that farmers, especially small and medium, are usually too focused on breaking even to have the headspace to think about how to be more sustainable. Participants discussed the hypothesis of shortening supply chains and connecting consumers and farmers more directly, allowing farmers to make more profit.

On the consumer side, the main obstacle most commonly faced when trying to reduce one's water footprint is the inability to find reliable, easily accessible, and not contradictory information to guide decisions. Financial incentives for consumers are also currently lacking – it seems that the products which require more water to be produced are also the cheapest and most subsidised.

For these reasons, most participants identified policy makers and governmental bodies as the most powerful actors to drive change – besides also agreeing on the fact that there is a shared responsibility and we all have to play our part to mitigate the issue.

The groups discussed the importance of policies and financial support that promote more sustainable practices, such as nature-based solutions, regenerative agriculture, and vertical farming, as well as incentives for better managing waste. On the other hand, participants agreed that we would also need "restrictive" policies, to penalise bad management of water and to prevent criminal acts in water scarce areas.

There was a strong sense that governments need to think beyond their national borders to be able to solve this issue. Everyone agreed that water, as a basic human right, should remain a public resource and should not be privatised. At the end of the Dialogue, all participants voted on the solutions that they thought should be the ones to take priority.

These are: 1. Working off long term economic models, which help to share costs and benefits across generations and ensure inter-generational equity. 2. Giving economic incentives to reward sustainable practices, and penalisation for bad water use. 3. Creating programmes that successfully raise awareness of these issues and lead consumers to revaluing water by education. 4. Moving beyond nationalism, funding innovations in different countries.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

Discussion Group 1: Farmers' and Industry's Responsibility

Participants acknowledged that innovations for more sustainable production are in theory already available to farmers. However, the small and medium scale farmers who took part in the dialogue said that farmers are often unwilling or financially unable to take up these innovations, it seems important to create incentives for farmers to actually adopt these technologies. One way could be through financial support and incentives from governments, another would be through the purchasing power of more aware consumers. According to participants, there are four possible solutions that farmers and industry could adopt directly.

- Shortening supply chains and connecting directly with consumers. By removing some intermediaries who take a big cut of farmers' profit, farmers would make more profit and would be able to focus more on employing sustainable practices rather than only having the headspace to focus on staying afloat.

- Recovering old ways of farming. Implementing regenerative agriculture methods, such as composting or crop cycling.

- Better managing waste. Not just waste water, but waste in general, so that all the input that goes into producing food is creating output that's consumed and does not end up in landfills.

- Vertical farming as a new frontier. Shifting away from conventional horizontal farming to maximise efficiency of food production for the global population.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

Discussion Group 2: Consumers' Responsibility

In this discussion group, consumers conveyed the difficulty of accessing information about water usage in food production. There was a widespread consensus that good, reliable, and unbiased information is hard to find. The top three solutions consumers could adopt are:

- Educating themselves more about water footprint. Revaluing water by becoming more aware of how precious a resource it is.
- Reducing food waste, in order to not waste the resources that were used to produce their food.
- Reducing footprint through dietary choices, choosing foods that involve lower water usage.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

Discussion Group 3: Political Responsibility

The group recognised that policies have an impact on industry practices, consumer behaviour, and farmers' livelihoods. These are the main solutions identified by the participants:

- Funding international schemes. Innovation helps better manage water, but there is a need to fund innovation also in poorer countries. One of the obstacles to this solution is to find ways to convince wealthier countries to act internationally even in a situation where the emergency could be still hard to grasp within their own national borders.
- Policies for restricting wasteful water use. Policies should be introduced to reduce the amount of water wasted by farmers and industry.
- Policies preventing criminal acts. Criminal groups exploit the problem of water scarcity and infrastructure, as already seen in Turkey. There is a need for policies that prevent these crimes from taking place.
- Establishing connecting bodies. There seems to be a lack of understanding and communication between different government bodies (e.g. local/regional municipalities and national governments). As different regions need to deal with different realities, they tend to have different approaches to water management. There could be space for the role of "ambassadors" who help connect these different groups.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

Discussion Group 4: Financial Responsibility

With this group, there was a strong sense that what really needs to change is the perceived value of water, across all stakeholders. Here are some specific solutions found at the financial level:

- Penalising bad use of water. Taxes and fines could penalise inefficient use of water. For example, water intensive products would be paid more, there could be caps to the amount of water farmers and industries can use, there could be different taxations for different types of water (e.g. producers using treated wastewater would need to pay less than producers using freshwater). There could be fines for releasing untreated water in the environment.
- Rewarding efficiency in water use. Incentives and subsidies could support the implementation of new technologies, water monitoring, and change in production systems (for example hydroponic cultures).
- Public water banking. This practice was mentioned as a useful tool to reallocate water according to criteria of equity, efficiency, and sustainability.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Some participants disagreed that innovation and technology is the best way to improve irrigation practices. They felt instead that we should look back to traditional forms of farming, where farmers were able to use resources efficiently without having to rely on high-tech solutions. Others believed that even traditional techniques would need modernisation to work on a large scale. There was also some divergence on the importance of certifications like “organic” or “bio”, because these agricultural practices can be more sustainable, but they are not affordable if farmers have to pay large amounts to get the certification.

Some participants identified industry and farmers as being most responsible for causing and having to solve the issue whereas many participants thought politicians and institutions have the biggest responsibility as policy drives consumers’ and producers’ behaviour. The participants were however unanimous in considering that all actors, including consumers, have a share of responsibility and power to change the situation.

Some participants agreed that economic growth needs to still be a priority. Others think that economic priorities and national self-interest are intrinsically at odds with the protection of the environment and communities. Some policy officers think that talking about the greater good does not work in practice, and it is important to change the narrative to show to stakeholders why it is in their economic interest to manage water more efficiently.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **WATER ETHICS_DIALOGUE OUTCOMES MANIFESTO**
https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Waterethics_UN_Summary_Manifesto-scaled.jpg