

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 10 May 2021 09:00 GMT +10:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Whose paradigm counts? An Australia-Pacific perspective on unheard voices in food and water systems
CONVENED BY	The George Institute for Global Health
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/16641/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Australia, Fiji

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

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 George Institute sought to co-convene an Independent Dialogue where Principles were incorporated, reinforced and enhanced by bringing together diverse voices to discuss the health, environmental and equity impacts of food and water systems as they pertain to unheard voices – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Pacific Islander peoples. We developed recommendations reflective of community priorities in food and water systems, exemplifying the 'Recognise complexity' Principle. In pursuing this, we sought to focus our event on Action Track Two, 'Shift to sustainable consumption patterns', as it was most closely linked to our 'Triple P' agenda - prevent non-communicable diseases, protect the planet and promote equity. It became apparent this topic is also inextricably linked to Action Track 1 ('Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all') and Action Track 5 ('Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress'). Unfortunately, the siloing of these topics reflects a lack of recognition of a holistic approach to food and water systems and privileging of a Westernised and colonising approach that excludes Traditional Knowledges. It also fails to consider how stakeholder perspectives can be more broadly included to recognise diversity within communities and across nations. Despite these limitations, there was enthusiasm from communities to contribute to the Summit in a meaningful way. To ensure the inclusion of as many voices as possible and a community-led rather than a top-down approach, a series of meetings with community stakeholders and experts were held over five months between March and July 2021. This engagement exemplifies the 'embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity' and 'build trust' Principles.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

As above.

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

n/a

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

As experts in food policy and Indigenous health, The George Institute for Global Health sought to co-convene an Independent Dialogue (the Dialogue) that could bring together diverse voices to discuss the health, environmental and equity impacts of food and water systems as they pertain to unheard voices – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Pacific Islander peoples. The aim of the Dialogue was to develop recommendations that can be submitted to the Summit that are reflective of community priorities in food and water systems. In pursuing this, we sought to focus our event on Action Track Two, 'Shift to sustainable consumption patterns'. However, it quickly became apparent that there were numerous barriers to community participation within the predetermined paradigm of the Summit. The George Institute recognises the inclusion and representation of unheard voices – in this context, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Pacific Islander peoples – to be crucial to the success of any dialogue. Only through understanding and respecting what the paradigm of health and food and water systems means for different cultures can impactful actions be conceived and developed. Unfortunately, the lack of recognition or understanding of Traditional Knowledges outside of a Western paradigm in the Action Tracks meant limitations were placed on topics for discussion from the outset. This is evident by the exclusion of discussion on water systems in the Summit. While The George Institute has focused on Action Track Two, this topic is also inextricably linked to Action Track 1 ('Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all') and Action Track 5 ('Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress'). Unfortunately, the siloing of these topics reflects a lack of recognition of a holistic approach to food and water systems and privileging of a Westernised and colonising approach that excludes Traditional Knowledges. It also fails to consider how stakeholder perspectives can be more broadly included to recognise diversity within communities and across nations. Despite these limitations, there was enthusiasm from communities to contribute to the Summit in a meaningful way. As such, The George Institute aimed to facilitate a process through which community priorities, strengths and solutions are shared and heard, bringing global attention to important local issues. This meant the method proposed by the Summit was abandoned, and a process of community engagement and shared learning was adopted. To ensure the inclusion of as many voices as possible and a community-led rather than a top-down approach a series of meetings with community stakeholders and experts were held over five months between March and July 2021. Our report, and the associated community case studies, were developed for submission to the feedback process for the Summit. This report reflects the perspectives of specific communities on barriers to reform and community-led solutions for food and water systems. It is important to remember that while there are similar experiences around food and water systems, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Pacific Islander peoples are diverse in cultures and practices and, therefore, should not be homogenised in approaches to solutions. It should not be taken to represent all perspectives from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander peoples and communities. Rather, this report is based on our experiences and community feedback of what it takes to build successful collaborations. We hope this learning will be useful for Summit organisers and others, and can help to inform the design of future Summits.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander people’s voices and Traditional Knowledges are often missing from, or go unnoticed in, decision making processes that profoundly impact their own communities. This top-down approach can result in solutions that are not fit for purpose and not appropriate for specific communities and cultural contexts. Therefore, this Dialogue had three major focal points: (i) to understand and explore community experiences of food and water systems; (ii) to highlight community identified priorities, strengths and solutions in shifting to healthy and sustainable consumption patterns (Action Track 2); and (iii) to examine links between community priorities, strengths and solutions, and government responsibility, engagement and action.

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 | ✓ | Policy |
| | Innovation | | Data & Evidence |
| ✓ | Human rights | ✓ | Governance |
| | Women & Youth Empowerment | | Trade-offs |
| | | ✓ | Environment and Climate |

MAIN FINDINGS

Based on consultations with key stakeholders, information from case studies included within this report and our research and advocacy expertise, we believe:

- Organisers of multilateral summits should ensure First Nations voices are represented at all levels and in all aspects of governance structures from the earliest stages of summit conception.
- Organisers of multilateral summits should recognise the diversity of global Traditional Knowledges and unheard voices and embed flexibility in engagement mechanisms to ensure these are captured.
- Organisers of multilateral summits should ensure discussions of food systems include consideration of water systems as a default.
- Health systems should recognise climate change and its impacts on human health in policy and practice and take responsibility for reducing their own climate footprint.
- Governments should design food policy through a process of communityled policy development that recognises Traditional Knowledges and includes engagement with community leaders and Elders, and shared planning and decision making.
- Governments should adopt a systems approach to developing policy, recognising the relationships and reciprocal links between food and water systems, the burden of non-communicable disease, climate change and equity.
- Governments should support consumer demand for sustainable, fresh and healthy foods, and implement policies to ensure these foods are easily accessible, available and affordable.
- Researchers should monitor the effectiveness of policies that aim to improve food and water systems and develop the evidence base on the impacts of implementation on equity, climate change and the disease burden.

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KEYWORDS

	Finance		Policy
	Innovation		Data & Evidence
✓	Human rights	✓	Governance
	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

Discussions with community stakeholders and experts have led to the development of case studies and Summit feedback. From those, three key food and water security challenges were identified.

TOPIC 1: A shift from traditional diets has compromised food security. For millennia, the diets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were rich in local flora and fauna, particularly native fruit, vegetables and lean animal proteins. The colonisation of Australia and the dispossession of and forced removal from Country caused a 'nutrition transition' away from traditional diets and disruption to food and water systems, resulting in ongoing food insecurity. Forced rations replaced traditional diets and included large quantities of refined grains and processed foods containing high levels of salt, saturated fat and added sugars, which has had ongoing detrimental impacts on health. Communities were prevented from accessing traditional food and water sources on Country, exacerbating hunger and food insecurity. Pacific Island nations include a wide range of cultures and practices. However, they share similarities in that they all have relatively small populations, are in remote locations, have high costs associated with transport and communications, and have varying levels of infrastructure. They also share a reliance on subsistence agriculture, and tourism, agriculture and fishing are key sources of income and support for their economies. Traditional diets of Pacific Islander communities have been also disrupted by colonisation and dispossession, resulting in food insecurity. Extreme weather events have further exacerbated this issue in the Pacific, where the subsequent provision of unhealthy food aid after extreme weather events, including white rice and tinned meats, is relied on to prevent hunger. In these settings, urban migration increases, as local food production and productivity decreases the viability of subsistence farming. This again prevents communities from accessing traditional food sources and limits the ability to grow food. With more people migrating to urban centres and changes in traditional jobs, gender-related roles and responsibilities are changing,⁸ which has subsequent impacts on diet and health. In Fiji, for example, more women are now in the formal workforce, yet they maintain responsibility for the bulk of the care work for their families. The need to balance paid and unpaid work is increasing the reliance on convenience foods, which are often cheap but ultra-processed and lacking nutrition. Across the Pacific, women continue to play key roles in agriculture and fisheries sectors; however, they tend to be undervalued and underrepresented actors in agriculture and fisheries development and decision-making. This underrepresentation means that typically unheard voices in crucial industries go ignored, exacerbating inequalities.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

Discussions with community stakeholders and experts have led to the development of case studies and Summit feedback. From those, three key food and water security challenges were identified.

TOPIC 2: High salinity groundwater has compromised the quality of drinking water and food security. The degradation of inland rivers over time, due to drought and government mismanagement, has had increasingly devastating effects on food and water security and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Communities such as Walgett in New South Wales, Australia, have had to rely on groundwater for drinking and food production. The salinity of this water is almost double that recommended in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines – which are based on palatability not health – and 15 times more than the amount recommended for people with high blood pressure. These unacceptably high levels of sodium can lead to dehydration and increased purchasing of soft drinks, further impacting community health. The salinity of the water in Walgett has resulted in reduced agricultural yield and destruction of soil structure within the local community garden, increasing the community’s reliance on purchasing packaged, processed foods or takeaway foods that are more expensive and less healthy. Extreme weather events linked to climate change, such as tropical cyclones and rising sea levels, are contributing to increased soil salinity and contaminated drinking water in Pacific Island coastal communities. This is further exacerbated by long droughts, which make the soil less able to absorb rain, resulting in declining agricultural yields. Extreme weather events also destroy produce and farming resources, making subsistence farming untenable for local communities. Climate change is also limiting the productivity of local fishers and, therefore, increasing reliance on imported foods and food aid. It is estimated that 75% of coastal fisheries will not meet their food security needs by 2030 due to a forecasted 50% growth in population and limited productivity of coastal fisheries as a result of climate change.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

Discussions with community stakeholders and experts have led to the development of case studies and Summit feedback. From those, three key food and water security challenges were identified.

TOPIC 3: Community-led solutions. Creating resilient food and water systems will have the co-benefit of contributing to a reduced NCD burden. Approaches to achieving this rely on community-identified strengths and solutions and building and strengthening community capacity and skills. Community-led programs can be effective at improving food and water security, nutrition and health; they can help reverse the trend of worsening diets and increasing chronic diseases. The most effective programs adopt a multi-strategy, multi-sector approach that includes both securing and sustaining the supply of local healthy foods and access to safe drinking water. They also include Traditional Knowledges and cultural practices passed down through millennia. Governments need to work with communities rather than perpetuating a top-down approach, ensuring involvement of community leaders, shared planning and decision-making, and appropriate evaluation procedures to guarantee that community-identified food and water system challenges are responded to and community needs are met. Government responses must also respect Traditional Knowledges and ensure they are included in food and water policy.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

This report reflects the perspectives of specific communities on barriers to reform and community-led solutions for food and water systems. It is important to remember that while there are similar experiences around food and water systems, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Pacific Islander peoples are diverse in cultures and practices and, therefore, should not be homogenised in approaches to solutions. It should not be taken to represent all perspectives from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander peoples and communities. Rather, this report is based on our experiences and community feedback of what it takes to build successful collaborations. We hope this learning will be useful for Summit organisers and others, and can help to inform the design of future Summits.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Whose paradigm counts? An Australia-Pacific perspective on unheard voices in food and water systems**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL-TGI-report-23072021.pdf>
- **Preventing non-communicable diseases, protecting the planet and promoting equity in the Pacific**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL-Pacific-case-study-23072021.pdf>
- **A community in action: How Walgett is redefining food systems**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/FINAL-Walgett-case-study-23072021.pdf>