

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Friday, 29 January 2021 11:00 GMT +05:30
<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	UNFSS: Grassroots Perspectives from India
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Bharat Krishak Samaj and Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/1956/">https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/1956/</a>
<b>DIALOGUE TYPE</b>	Independent
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS</b>	India

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

67

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

1 0-18      10 19-30      27 31-50      24 51-65      5 66-80      80+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

50 Male      17 Female      Prefer not to say or Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

16	Agriculture/crops	8	Education		Health care
1	Fish and aquaculture	2	Communication		Nutrition
1	Livestock	3	Food processing	4	National or local government
4	Agro-forestry	1	Food retail, markets		Utilities
12	Environment and ecology		Food industry		Industrial
	Trade and commerce		Financial Services	15	Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

7	Small/medium enterprise/artisan		Workers and trade union
	Large national business		Member of Parliament
	Multi-national corporation		Local authority
4	Small-scale farmer	4	Government and national institution
2	Medium-scale farmer		Regional economic community
	Large-scale farmer	3	United Nations
21	Local Non-Governmental Organization	1	International financial institution
4	International Non-Governmental Organization	4	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
2	Indigenous People	1	Consumer group
9	Science and academia	5	Other

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

Act with Urgency – In our background note and invite letter to the dialogue, we incorporated the sense of urgency with which the UN Food Systems Summit has been convened, as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. We outlined the major crises facing our food systems today, and the pandemic's role in exacerbating their effects. Commit to the Summit – The Dialogue materials we prepared emphasised the importance of the Dialogues in the Food Systems Summit process and explained that the conclusions from this dialogue would inform the outcomes of the UNFSS. Be Respectful – The Dialogue method, the introductory remarks of our Convenors and the skilful facilitation of our Facilitators set the tone as an open, respectful conversation rather than a debate. All discussions were respectful and collaborative, despite each discussion group having members with diverse perspectives. Recognize Complexity and Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity – We invited participants with varying positionalities across the food system, from researchers and policymakers to development practitioners and farmers. This facilitated discussion that recognised the complexities of food systems in India from the perspectives of different stakeholders. Complement the work of others – A major focus of the Dialogue was to discuss the learnings from programmes that are already being implemented. Many participants shared resources about initiatives being undertaken on the ground. Build Trust – We abided by the Chatham House rule, ensuring that social media posts about the Dialogue did not reference individual statements. Our Facilitators created a safe, open environment by encouraging participants to share their views and appreciating them for the same.

### HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

As mentioned above.

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

# 3. METHOD

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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

As organizations that advocate for and work towards the interests of farmers and producers, we decided to organize an Independent Dialogue that would represent the farmers' stakes in our food systems. In India, while there are separate policies on agriculture, food security and nutrition, the food systems approach is lacking. The problems of unsustainable production, producer's livelihoods, consumer welfare and the environment are often seen at odds with one another. However, these issues intersect for the farmer, who is both a producer and a consumer, and depends on the environment for their livelihood. Keeping this in mind, the focus of our dialogue was on 'Building synergies between seemingly competing interests of production, consumption, livelihoods and the ecosystem', in the Indian context.

As the focus encompassed several major aspects of our food systems, it was decided to have discussions organized around the five Action Track Discussion Starter papers. The participants were assigned to five discussion groups based on their preference, which would each explore an Action Track. The objective of each group was to discuss the specific issues under each Action Track as well as the linkages (including trade-offs and synergies) with other Action Tracks. Each group also discussed the concrete actions/solutions that could be undertaken by different stakeholders in the food system, such as governments, producers, civil society and the food industry.

### 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

The major findings from the Dialogue are detailed below:

- The shift to agro ecological approaches and nature-positive production systems needs to be taken up on a priority basis. Scientific evidence and documentation of regenerative production practices are essential to facilitating this shift in policymaking and governance.
- Although there is a need for a national level policies that facilitate the shift towards sustainable production and consumption, their implementation should be decentralized. National policies need to be flexible to accommodate the needs of local communities and the specificities of regional ecologies.
- For decentralized implementation to be effective, local institutions and human resources need to be mobilized. In consumption, this can be done through existing government schemes such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), Anganwadi and mid-day meal schemes.
- Empowerment of the community, and specific stakeholders such as farmers, women and consumers, should be encouraged through women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and consumer co-operatives.
- Although there is a broad understanding of the problems in food systems, there is a strong need for workable, context specific solutions. The participants were requested to share breakthrough solutions that are already being implemented on the ground (some of these solutions are attached with this form).
- Importance of diverse perspectives - The participants were also encouraged to hold similar dialogues with the stakeholder groups they work with, such as farmers, youth, indigenous people and women, so that these perspectives are also reflected in the Food Systems Summit.
- Need for continuous engagement. It was also agreed that the engagement of relevant stakeholders on food systems issues should not be limited to the Dialogues or end with the Food Systems Summit, but continue as an essential part of food systems transformation.

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### KEYWORDS

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/5

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 1 are given below:

Action Track 1 - Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all

• Is this feasible or a utopian wish? Can we do something towards this:

o For all involved in food production (as farmers, agricultural labourers, etc.)

o For rural communities?

• What are the best options to increase marginalised communities' access to affordable, nutritious food?

Would this be through food stamps, public distribution programmes, direct benefit transfers, or other measures?

• How can we identify the major food safety issues (such as adulteration, contamination and antibiotic resistance) at production and post-production level? What are some of the low-hanging fruits that can be targeted to improve food safety?

• Any other suggestions that AT1 must include in its mandate?

• Any suggestions for other Action Tracks?

The participants discussed the key challenges and solutions for ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all. Actions were discussed in three broad areas: improving access to nutritious foods for marginalized and rural communities, increasing consumer demand for natural, sustainably produced food and enhancing food safety.

In order to improve access to food and food security, participants suggested that the current production systems need to change and adopt agro ecological approaches. Government needs to play a role in incentivizing natural farming and setting up Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), especially for small and marginal farmers. They also recommended village/community level measures such as storage and distribution systems and backyard poultry for landless households.

To increase demand and consumption of nutritious food, the discussants recommended measures such as awareness campaigns, decentralizing procurement and distribution under the Public Distribution System (PDS), strengthening local markets (such as mandis) for farm produce and ensuring cooked, healthy meals to children under the Anganwadi and Mid-Day Meal programmes.

To enhance food safety, the measures recommended were government certification of organic products, soil testing and discouraging perverse incentives and subsidies (such as electricity and fertilizer subsidies) that encourage monoculture and industrial agriculture.

### ACTION TRACKS

✓	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
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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 - 2/5

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 2 are given below:

Action Track 2 - Shift to Sustainable Consumption Patterns

- What constitutes Sustainable Consumption Patterns? How can we move towards them?
  - o Stricter governmental regulations? Or awareness campaigns and corporate volunteerism?
  - o Taxing foods that have an adverse impact on health (such as ultra-processed food and food high in salt, sugar and fat)
  - o How do we understand the role of advertising in encouraging consumption of unhealthy foods? Can we employ advertising to also discourage unhealthy food consumption?
- How do we tackle food waste at various levels – post-production stage, supply chain, consumer, and retail?
- Is the circular economy approach feasible? Roles of community organizations, civil society?
- Any other suggestions that AT2 must include in its mandate?
- Any suggestions for other Action Tracks?

This discussion on AT2 revolved primarily around the question of how to define sustainable consumption and how can we move towards it. It was decided that sustainable consumption patterns would entail sustainability not just for the environment and the human body, but also over time. For this, changes needed to be made not just in production systems and government regulations but also in consumer behaviour.

There was an understanding that our current food systems encourage the consumption of unhealthy, processed foods, which are not only more affordable than fresh, healthy food but also more aspirational. The role of advertising was debated in this context and the discussants agreed that punitive measures such as regulating advertisements or taxing unhealthy foods needed to be supplemented by constructive measures such as building awareness and providing affordable alternatives. Discussants also questioned the role of government in regulating food choices and consumption, as the Right to Food is recognized by the Indian constitution. The consensus was that the government's role should involve providing information and awareness to consumers while also implementing behaviour change interventions such as removing sugary foods from checkout counters and promoting indigenous foods and kitchen gardens in schools. Government schemes and systems that are already in place, such as mid-day meals and Anganwadis, can be used to facilitate sustainable consumption at the local level.

The discussants then returned to the question of who should decide the standards for healthy and sustainable diets. Everyone agreed that, while national frameworks are necessary, they need to be flexible to be adopted within local cultural and environmental contexts. Indigenous and traditional foods, wherever supported by science, should be promoted. The question of food waste was also discussed. The participants agreed that shorter value chains and the farm-to-fork approach would help in tackling food waste. Circular economy approaches should also be promoted, not just in terms of food but the overall capital of a community. The government could also play a role by regulating the food waste of food retail businesses, through certifications or ratings.

### ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
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### KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/5

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 3 are given below:

### Action Track 3 - Boost Nature-Positive Production

- Can we improve crop intensity and productivity while protecting and restoring the environment? How?
- Can we have production practices that help create resilience to climate change while also restoring degraded ecosystems? Examples?
- What needs to be done to shift to nature-positive production?
  - o Government steps to reduce the use of chemicals in agriculture and incentivise ecosystem services?
  - o Local input-output shops, Champion Farmers, women's SHGs, Farmers' Collectives, digital platforms?
- Any other suggestions that AT3 must include in its mandate?
- Any suggestions for other Action Tracks?

The discussion centred on the question of what measures should be taken to shift towards nature-positive production. Many discussants highlighted certain regenerative agriculture approaches such as Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), which has been implemented in states like Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. It was agreed that there is a lack of proper scientific evidence and poor documentation of traditional natural farming practices. These should be taken up on a priority basis and disseminated to both farmers and policy makers.

The importance of local level collectives such as FPOs, women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) and cooperatives in bringing about the transition to natural farming on the ground was acknowledged. The role of the government in this transition was also discussed, in terms of incentivizing and subsidizing natural farming (such as compensation for ecosystem services) instead of chemical intensive agriculture.

Participants also spoke about the consumption side of the issue, as increasing the market demand for natural produce is equally important. This could be done through consumer awareness and increasing the affordability of such produce. At the same time, farmers' incomes needed to be remunerative. Providing quality bio-inputs at low cost was also crucial to increasing farmers' margins.

### ACTION TRACKS

	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
✓	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
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	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

### KEYWORDS

✓	Finance	✓	Policy
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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/5

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 4 are given below:

### Action Track 4 - Advance Equitable Livelihoods

- How do we increase employment and incomes for farm-centric, sustainable rural livelihoods?
  - o Repurposed agricultural supports and subsidies?
- How do farmers realise better prices?
  - o Market reforms, infrastructure and linkages?
  - o Support prices?
  - o Strengthened local food value chains, wet markets?
  - o Individual and collective enterprises?
- Should this be complemented by a welfare approach?
  - o Universal Basic Income or Direct Benefit Transfers?
  - o Interest subvention?
- Any other suggestions that AT4 must include in its mandate?
- Any suggestions for other Action Tracks?

In this discussion, there were two main overarching concerns: that farmers are perceived as only 'beneficiaries' and not as producers, service providers and risk-taking entrepreneurs; and how should we value farmers' contribution to the economy and ecology? The share of rural India in the national GDP is much smaller than the share of its population. This implies that, even if farmers were to get their fair portion of the consumer rupee, it might not amount to a substantial income redistribution. This calls for a more expansive understanding of the valuation of farmers' contribution, to include ecosystem services as well as their produce.

The solutions discussed for the above mentioned concerns included strengthening the local, circular economy, ensuring better price realization for farmers and creating equitable systems of production. This will involve knowledge generation at the grassroots level, enterprise development and infrastructure, all of which would require public investment. Crucial to such a transition would be farmers' collectives and women's SHGs, as a large proportion of small and marginal farmers are women. An appreciation for the ecological services provided by farmers should also be inculcated through mass consumer education, implemented through digital technologies. Finally, it should be remembered that the farmer is also a consumer and nutrition security should be ensured for farming households.

### ACTION TRACKS

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/5

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 5 are given below:

Action Track 5 - Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks, and Stress

- How do we prevent, cope with and mitigate the effects of shocks on vulnerable food systems actors (farmers, fishers, livestock owners)?
  - o Social protection and safety net programmes?
  - o Government level, community level?
- Can we have food value chains resilient to economic and environmental shocks such as the recession or global pandemics?
  - o Production-to-consumption?
  - o Local food value chains?
- How do we ensure food security for ecologically vulnerable and socially marginalised communities (such as indigenous farmers, coastal communities and nomadic pastoralists)?
  - o Specific strategies?
  - o Roles of communities, civil society, Governments?
- Any other suggestions that AT5 must include in its mandate?
- Any suggestions for other Action Tracks?

Resilience and sustainability were two important keywords that anchored this discussion. The challenges of ensuring both resilience and sustainability, especially for marginalized and indigenous people, were discussed. Two closely linked approaches, of diversification and decentralization, emerged from the discussion.

Diversity involved acknowledging the diversity of agro-ecologies in India and the world, and recognizing that diverse, localized approaches needed to be taken. Transitioning away from the monoculture, rice-wheat model of the Green Revolution would require crop diversification according to the local environment. This would not only ensure carbon sequestration but also lead to increased diversity of foods consumed.

There was a consensus among the participants that production and consumption systems needed to be decentralized. This was further emphasized by the pandemic, where local supply chains became important. National and state policies needed to focus more on the principles of action and the outcomes rather than the inputs. Investing in local capacity building and consumer education would also facilitate decentralization.

### ACTION TRACKS

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## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Despite the presence of diverse stakeholders, there were no major areas of divergence during the Dialogue. There was a broad consensus on the main issues with our food systems and the direction of their transformation. All participants were in agreement on the main findings of the Dialogue, especially on the urgent need to shift to regenerative agriculture, to empower small producers and women, to decentralize the implementation of government schemes and to build consumer awareness. There was also consensus on the ideal vision of a sustainable, equitable food system: which regenerates the environment, ensures decent incomes and livelihoods for producers, and facilitates access to and consumption of nutritious, safe food.

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# ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

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## ATTACHMENTS

- **Summary Report of UNFSS Dialogue - India**  
[https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Summary-Report\\_UNFSS-India-Dialogue-29th-Jan-2021.pdf](https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Summary-Report_UNFSS-India-Dialogue-29th-Jan-2021.pdf)
- **Inputs of Dr. G. Poyyamoli, a participant at the Dialogue.**  
[https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UNFSS-Dialogue-29th-Jan-2021\\_G.-Poyyamoli-Inputs.docx](https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UNFSS-Dialogue-29th-Jan-2021_G.-Poyyamoli-Inputs.docx)