

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Thursday, 18 February 2021 14:00 GMT +05:30
DIALOGUE TITLE	UNFSS: Grassroots Perspectives from Asia & Africa
CONVENED BY	Bharat Krishak Samaj and Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/2060/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	No borders

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

40

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0 0-18

6 19-30

19 31-50

8 51-65

1 66-80

0 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

10 Male

30 Female

0 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

15 Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

1 Agro-forestry

6 Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

1 Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

1 Financial Services

1 Health care

Nutrition

2 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

7 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

2 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

3 Small-scale farmer

7 Medium-scale farmer

1 Large-scale farmer

1 Local Non-Governmental Organization

10 International Non-Governmental Organization

2 Indigenous People

1 Science and academia

1 Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

3 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

2 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

1 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 in the food system, from researchers and policymakers to development practitioners and farmers. This facilitated discussion that recognised the complexities of food systems in the Global South 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

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 in India, we believed it necessary to organize an Independent Dialogue that would represent the farmers' stakes in our food systems. 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 his/her livelihood. This is especially important in the context of the Global South, where large populations depend on agriculture 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'.

The geographical scope of our dialogue was Asia and Africa. Although the two continents comprise diverse ecologies and cultures, there are many similarities in our food systems that made our discussion a rich source of insights and learning.

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 five Action Tracks of the UNFSS served as the basis for the discussion topics. The Dialogue participants were requested to indicate an Action Track of their preference. As most of our participants indicated their preference for Action Tracks 1, 3 and 5, we decided to coalesce the Action Tracks into 4 Discussion groups:

- Discussion Group 1 - AT1 (Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all) and AT2 (Shift to sustainable consumption patterns)
- Discussion Groups 2a and 2b - AT3 (Boost nature-positive production)
- Discussion Group 3 - AT4 (Advance equitable livelihoods) and AT5 (Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress)

The Discussion Starter paper for their preferred Action Track was then shared with them, which formed the basis for the discussion. The objective of each group was to discuss the specific issues under the Action Tracks 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:

- **Nature-positive Production** - The shift to agro ecological approaches and nature-positive production systems (such as regenerative or conservation agriculture) needs to be taken up on a priority basis. This transition needs to go hand in hand with a change in the narrative around farming in the Global South. Agriculture is often associated with poverty, and adopting nature-based approaches could help change this to one of pride and joy.
- **Traditional Knowledge** - Indigenous knowledge and traditional production practices should be conserved and promoted, as they are nature-friendly and sensitive to local ecologies. This is often validated by modern science as well. Thus, indigenous and scientific knowledge should be considered equally important in research and policymaking.
- **Empowerment of Stakeholders** – Any transition has to be community-driven to be sustainable over time. Thus, communities should be empowered to take ownership of this transition. This could be facilitated through capacity building and collectivizing schemes for specific stakeholders such as farmers, women, youth and consumers (such as women Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and consumer co-operatives).
- **Improving Access and Affordability** – One of the major challenges in implementing and scaling food systems initiatives is the lack of access or affordability of resources. On the consumption side, this manifests in lack of affordability/availability of safe, nutritious foods. On the production side, this could manifest in smallholder producers' lack of access to knowledge or quality organic inputs. Thus, efforts should be directed towards improving access to resources for marginalized communities, through initiatives such as fair price shops or facilitating local production and sale of organic inputs.
- **Role of Technology** – Digital technology can be a useful tool in disseminating information, improving access to resources, and reducing the gender gap in agriculture.
- **Funding** – Funding for non-conventional food systems initiatives, such as regenerative agriculture, is often difficult to source. Linking grassroots organizations with donors or financial institutions that work in sustainable finance could be a solution. Banks and NBFCs should also be incentivized to provide credit to small farmers, for use in nature-positive production.
- **Need for continuous engagement** - 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.

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
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- ✓ Policy
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- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

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)
 - o For rural communities?

- What are the 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 or the other Action Tracks must include in their mandate?

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?
 - o How do we tackle food waste at various levels – post-production stage, supply chain, consumer, and retail?
 - o Is the circular economy approach feasible? Roles of community organizations, civil society?
- Any other suggestions that AT2 or the other Action Tracks must include in their mandate?

What are the synergies and trade-offs between ATs 1 and 2? How can they be maximized/minimised?

Concerning AT1, the participants agreed that providing access to safe, nutritious food to all was achievable, but required significant policy shifts and ground level changes. One of the most important steps towards this is to localize food value chains and public distribution programmes. This would lead to less food loss, sustainable, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and a more resilient food system. The participants highlighted the importance of building resilience in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which severely undermined nutrition security for millions in Asia and Africa. Regarding the issue of food safety, the participants emphasized the importance of incorporating traditional, indigenous knowledge with scientific knowledge. This information should be disseminated to consumers through food safety awareness campaigns. The food safety polices and implementing bodies (such as FSSAI in India) need to be strengthened to tackle systemic issues such as adulteration and chemical residues in food. Along with this, the safety of air and water should also be ensured, as they can affect the health benefits accrued from safe, nutritious food.

The participants then addressed the issue of transitioning to sustainable and nutritious consumption patterns. Diversifying and localizing diets was seen as the way forward. Globalization and industrialization have resulted in increased consumption of processed foods in both Asia and Africa. This results in processed food being more affordable than fresh, organic produce, disproportionately affecting the health of the marginalized poor. Thus, governments should encourage the production and consumption of locally sourced foods. The group suggested producers and consumers should be organized into institutional collectives, which need to work together to better our food systems.

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

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Finance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Data & Evidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Human rights | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Governance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Women & Youth Empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> | Trade-offs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environment and Climate |

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 2a 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?

- Can we have nature-positive integrated production with sustainable, decent incomes and livelihoods to producers? Examples?

Examples?

- Any other suggestions that AT3 or the other Action Tracks must include in their mandate?

In this discussion, participants concurred on the need to change the narrative around farming such that parents can actually encourage their children to pursue it. In most parts of Asia and Africa, farming is associated with pain and poverty. Moving away from conventional farming practices could help change this narrative to one of hope and productivity. Participants pointed out that current farming policy often incentivizes chemically intensive agriculture, and concrete actions need to be taken to encourage nature-positive approaches, such as minimum tillage and conservation agriculture. Rwanda's Green Growers initiative was brought up as an example of such a policy action. Policy that incentivized funding for non-conventional agriculture was also crucial. The importance of indigenous knowledge was also recognised in this transition, as traditional farming practices were more ecologically sensitive and sustainable. There is an urgent need to actively conserve and promote such indigenous knowledge, which is rapidly dying out due to the pressures of food security and commercialization. The discussants then brought up the many implementation challenges that they had observed at the ground level. In the African context, smallholder farmers lack access to resources and policy support to make the transition to sustainable production. Intensive capacity building (such as educating farmers on effective farming practices) and providing access to resources (such as markets and value chains) were required to overcome these hurdles. Technology was also considered as a tool to increase access to resources, and to reduce the gender gap in agriculture. The participants agreed that any change had to be community-driven to be sustainable over time. Thus, communities needed to be empowered to take ownership of this transition through FPOs, women's SHGs and other collectivizing schemes. Informal/formal networks for resource and equipment sharing would also help make this transition sustainable over time.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Women & Youth Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade-offs
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 2a 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?

- Can we have nature-positive integrated production with sustainable, decent incomes and livelihoods to producers? Examples?

Examples?

- Any other suggestions that AT3 or the other Action Tracks must include in their mandate?

The participants began by addressing the question of whether it was possible to shift to nature-positive production while maintaining productivity. The example of regenerative agriculture was brought up, which can be undertaken even in dryland ecologies. This type of production is environment friendly while also increasing productivity and profitability. A few participants spoke of their personal experience as farmers practicing conservation agriculture in India. They had seen improved yields, soil health and fertility and increased incomes. Another participant illustrated the experience of Thailand in implementing integrated land and water management in agriculture. The participants noted that traditional farming practices are also regenerative and scientific concepts such as permaculture and agroecology validate their significance. Thus, communities should be empowered to revive their indigenous knowledge to improve both human and planetary health. The participants then discussed the implementation and scaling challenges for nature-positive approaches. Currently, the commercialization of agriculture has led to chemical intensive mono-cropping. This can make communities more vulnerable to shocks such as drought and famine, as history has often demonstrated (for instance, the Irish potato famine). It was agreed that the first requirement for the transition was the empowerment of small farmers. This would require support through policy instruments and collectivizing institutions such as cooperatives and FPOs. The lack of access or affordability of organic inputs was another constraint preventing the large-scale adoption of nature-based production. The setting up of Bio-input shops at the local level (as in Andhra Pradesh) could be a policy instrument to encourage natural farming and boost the village economy. The involvement of youth was also considered crucial in facilitating the shift. The participants also recognised the importance of creating solutions that are sensitive to local contexts and ecologies.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
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KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Women & Youth Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade-offs
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

The discussion prompts for Discussion Group 3 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 or the other Action Tracks must include in their mandate?

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 or the other Action Tracks must include in their mandate?

What are the synergies and trade-offs between ATs 4 and 5?

What can be done to maximise synergies and minimise trade-offs?

This group began the discussion by recognizing the complexity of the interconnections between various aspects of food systems. The importance of learning from nature, linking indigenous knowledge to modern science and disseminating it with the help of digitalization were also acknowledged. The participants then discussed the benefits of knowledge intensive and regenerative agriculture. This kind of agriculture encourages carbon sequestration, which in turn increases the groundwater table (for every gram of carbon sequestered, the soil can hold 8 grams more water). Regenerative agriculture also improves the soil microbiome. These can lead to greater resilience of farming to climate change and also decrease the chance of zoonosis like Covid-19.

The practicalities of promoting and implementing regenerative agriculture were then discussed. A crucial question was how these schemes would be funded. Participants suggested linking grassroots organisations in need of funding with financial/donor institutions that are looking to finance green initiatives. An example was Microsoft, which recently gave 1 billion US dollars to companies that were showing long-term carbon sequestration, to help them achieve their net zero carbon goals. It was also necessary to empower communities and facilitate development that spreads from farmer to farmer. Women's SHGs and farmers could be considered as the unit of knowledge transfer. Universities could be enlisted to provide financial and capacity building training to these communities. The idea that farming is a business that has to provide financial as well as ecological returns should be mainstreamed.

ACTION TRACKS

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

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Despite the presence of diverse stakeholders from diverse geographies, 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 through collectivization, to conserve and promote traditional knowledge and to improve access to resources for marginalized communities. 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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KEYWORDS

- ✓ Finance
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- Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Summary Report of UNFSS Dialogue - Asia & Africa**
https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Summary-Report_UNFSS-Asia-Africa-Dialogue_V1.pdf