

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 26 May 2021 10:00 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Farmers and Consumers at the centre of 2021 UN SG Food Systems Summit
CONVENED BY	Consumers International and World Farmers' Organisation (WFO)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/20809/
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

90

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

90 31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

36 Male

54 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

15 Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

15 Livestock

10 Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

9 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

41 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

10 Small-scale farmer

20 Medium-scale farmer

5 Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

3 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

9 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

13 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

19 Consumer group

6 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

This Dialogue is the last in a series of three, whose purpose is to raise the profile of those players in the value chain who, although they are the lifeblood of it, are the weakest. Thus a path has been set out along which farmers and consumers have expressed a desire to bring together the interests of both and to identify concrete and replicable solutions on which to work together and to propose during this Summit through a single, strong voice. The organization of the dialogue was characterized by the respect and application of all the founding principles of engagement. Farmers and consumers met in a spirit of mutual respect and support, each identifying the other as a partner in the value chain. The ambition, therefore, is to strengthen the union and the bond that unites these two and provide an opportunity to break down the silos in order to shape the strategy for tackling the challenges that emerged from these meetings. In particular, this last session focused on developing real actions that take into account both points of agreement and disagreement. The complexity of food systems lies in those differences, which should not be annihilated but rather valued, as it is unthinkable to have a system in which one model prevails over all others: one size does not fit all. The awareness that change is urgent was present in all those who participated and inspired the identification of common priorities. The structure of the dialogue was designed to encourage open and constructive discussion. Questions addressed to participants concerned expectations and wishes from both the production and consumer side. There are actions and challenges to be overcome which are impossible to achieve without the commitment of both sides

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The premises of this dialogue were to promote inclusive and win-win solutions by adopting a holistic and systemic approach to understanding how to act in a complex system like the food system. In fact, farmers and consumers are the first and last ring in the food value chain and it is essential that they strengthen and reinforce their collaboration, fostering a systems approach to the value chain based on a fairer share of value all along. In doing so, therefore, a multi-stakeholder inclusivity was embraced and it was emphasized that everyone is called upon to play their part. The topics covered were multiple and carefully selected to encourage exchanges and reflect the complexity of food systems. The outcomes identified during the previous dialogue were the starting point and the basis for the discussion and further development of this last dialogue. Throughout the dialogue, a balance was sought in the representativeness of both sides and the involvement of all was ensured. The principle of complexity, respect and trust was embraced by all participants, who appreciated the opportunity for interaction and mutual exchange and hoped that cooperation could continue in the future. The starting point for the dialogue was the recognition of the principle of "acting with urgency". The desire to take common action and issue a joint declaration was expressed, accelerating the pace of change and committing to a shared path.

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

It is important to ensure the representativeness of all relevant categories. Also, it is good to consider that the list of registered participants reduces at the as some do not attend. Another aspect to consider: it is advisable to share in advance the topics on which the debate will develop, so that participants can be more prepared and participate even more actively. In particular, if the topics addressed are specific, it is recommendable to offer the possibility of getting information in order to put the participants at ease during the dialogue. Lastly, in order to cover all regions of the world - in case it is an international online event - it is recommended to organize multiple sessions in different time slots to allow the participation of representatives from different time zones.

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

This dialogue is the latest of a series of meetings between farmers and consumers culminating in the consolidation of a long alliance. Participants were divided into 4 break up sessions, each tackling a different topic identified during the first two dialogues as key areas in which change is needed for farmers and consumers. The different groups were asked to determine what specific solutions the Summit should deliver and what actions are needed from different stakeholders to facilitate this transformation.

One round of break up sessions was organized under the following themes:

- 1) Consumer information
- 2) Food standards and trade
- 3) Fair food prices for all
- 4) Fairer share of value in the food chain

Each discussion that took place in the various break-up sessions was reported back to the plenary by a representative from each of the two sides. At the end of this discussion, in the plenary session, strategies and visions were developed with respect to future steps that could be leveraged through the process.

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

This last dialogue aimed to identify mutually beneficial solutions for food systems transformation, promoting a systemic approach to sustainable food systems through closer collaboration between producers and consumers, the first and last ring of the food value chain. In the course of the discussion and debate, a number of points of particular importance to both sides emerged. The main question in the dialogue concerned how this alliance could provide a solid foundation to safeguard the rights and interests of the two parties. Farmers, on one side, vehemently claimed their urgency to be recognized as entrepreneurs and to make their activity a viable and profitable business. Consumers, on the other hand, have stressed their right to a transparent value chain. The trait d'union in these two complaints lies in the redistribution of risk and reward throughout the value chain. The ambition is to reduce social costs, to respect the environment and to strongly characterize the territory. Otherwise, we would continue promoting a model that adversely affects the balance along the food value chain, offloading the lost profit onto the weaker parties and producing misinformation for consumers. One of the advanced proposals, for example, concerns a virtuous alliance with large-scale distribution and consumers, which does not penalize producers but enhances their work and their efforts to continue guaranteeing excellence. Once again, the importance of awareness and access to information was stressed, underlining the enormous power consumers have and the ability to influence both what to produce and how it should be produced. For this reason, it is necessary to understand the role that consumers play in the food system. Only in this way will it be possible to reach a level of trust whereby producers better understand the needs of consumers and so that consumers feel more comfortable with all the products that are being produced. The final conclusion here is the will to build and nurture a community populated by these two parties and to make it real.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

CONSUMER INFORMATION

A general consensus was reported on the importance of increasing awareness and information among consumers, who are too often victims of both political and commercial biases. The focus of the discussion, therefore, was on the proper use and structure of labels. Labels cannot be the solution. They often report information in a partial or extremely superficial way, failing to reflect the complexity of certain realities such as the issue of sustainability. A feasible solution would be to develop technologies that support both producers and consumers, such as QR codes. In addition, the abundance of commercial and voluntary standards further increases consumer confusion. Finally, the role of governments in this topic was addressed. Education on these issues must be disseminated and promoted from an early age. The issues range from consumer empowerment, to real basic education about food, nutrition, sustainability, to give consumers a chance to truly have an understanding of what they are looking for. In addition to this, it is also important to establish a basic standard to mitigate some of the marketing claims, which are driven by the interest of commercial gain and not necessarily by any sort of sustainability outcome. Consumers desire to be empowered to navigate between the various claims. While marketing and advertising will always exist, people need to be equipped with the right tools to avoid and minimize the risk of greenwashing.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

FOOD STANDARDS AND TRADE

The participants of this group agreed on the difficulty of addressing this issue in such a short time. One of the main challenges arises from the diversity of worldwide standards, depending on the geographical area of application. It is therefore cumbersome to apply and implement standards that are fair, unless they are inclusive of socio-economic factors. The risk here is to exclude producers in middle and low-income countries from the most profitable markets. so the emphasis here was on a fair balance between standards that must be universal and solutions that must be local. Surely bringing socio-economic factors into the conversation is a must in order to arrive at standards that are win-win, eventually leading to an international codex.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

FAIR FOOD PRICES FOR ALL

The conversation in this group can be summarised in the following points:

- Consumer rights also imply responsibility. In the EU, 88 million tonnes of food waste are generally generated each year, with associated costs estimated at one hundred and forty-three billion euros.
- It is necessary to reduce the growing imbalance between the developed world where food is too cheap and the developing world where food is still too expensive.
- Healthy food is a human right issue. Too often quality and nutrient food is expensive and nutritionally poor food is cheap, which is a real threat to the health of our children globally.
- Educating our consumers could be the key. Currently, 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas. This percentage is expected to grow to 68% by 2050. Educating consumers about the cost of producing good food in a sustainable way is vital.
- Politicians and legislators need to be informed about the important role of ensuring sustainable solutions for future food security.
- The roles of civil society and the private sector need to be clearly defined and actors identified and involved.
- We need to understand outcomes, which are often simply driven by price. We should have meaningful conversations about value, which includes quality and price.
- We should focus on inclusivity, doing things better in the future and rewarding outstanding sustainable practices to raise the bar for everyone.
- We don't reinvent the wheel. We work to highlight established and scientifically proven best practices and celebrate them more in our communications.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

FAIRER SHARE OF VALUE IN THE FOOD CHAIN

According to the rapporteurs, there is a perplexity in the actual possibility of connecting producers and consumers at a global level, given the numbers involved and the importance of branding. Branding, in fact, is an integral part of how the product story is told and received by consumers. In addition, the importance of cooperatives, the value they provide and their ability to rebalance the food supply chain was examined at length. recognising it as an indispensable model for the prosperity of the farming sector.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

The only points of friction and disagreement concerned the use of pesticides during cultivation and the perspective regarding the production/consumption of animal proteins. In this case, consumers expressed concern about the health and environmental consequences of these practices. However, farmers have articulated forcefully the reasons behind such a choice. First of all, getting rid of animal protein from the human diet, especially in Africa or also in certain areas of Latin America and South-East Asia, where there is a challenge of stunting growth would be detrimental. Conversely, in food systems such as the European one, the challenge is to produce more with fewer resources. However, this is not achievable by getting rid of fertilisers or agrochemicals. Instead, what should be discussed is a smarter and more effective use of available resources to reduce the use of agricultural land. If there is a desire for greater equality along the food value chain, the entrepreneurial dimension of agricultural production must be recognised and dignified. Producing food is what farmers make their living from, and like any business it is profit-driven. If there was no profit in food production, nobody would do it. However, it is vital to be able to make that profit every year. For this reason, no one is more concerned about protecting the environment and aware of the risks of climate change than farmers.

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