

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

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| <b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>       | Friday, 11 June 2021 11:00 GMT -04:00   |
| <b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>      | Food Safety for Improved Health and Consumption   |
| <b>CONVENED BY</b>         | Jeri Kelly - Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources - The Bahamas                               |
| <b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b> | <a href="https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/21773/">https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/21773/</a> |
| <b>DIALOGUE TYPE</b>       | Member State  |
| <b>GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS</b>  | Bahamas   |

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

56

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

4

19-30

24

31-50

23

51-65

5

66-80

80+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

12 Male

44 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

9 Agriculture/crops

6 Fish and aquaculture

4 Livestock

Agro-forestry

1 Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

2 Education

Communication

4 Food processing

4 Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

10 Health care

6 Nutrition

7 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

3 Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

18 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

1 Multi-national corporation

8 Small-scale farmer

14 Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

2 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

10 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

3 Consumer group

Other

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The Principles of Engagement were first introduced during the opening remarks of the Convenor as part of welcoming the participants. It was mentioned during the speech by highlighting the Principles phrases. Following this, the Curator explained the importance of the Principles and provided each description as it relates to the Dialogues. These Principles were further emphasized during the curator's welcoming remarks as she placed their importance in the context of transforming the food systems in relation to food safety.

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

Participants were respectful in their discussions as they listened to each other and commented on specific points made by others that changed their viewpoint on possible solutions. They also in turn provided solutions based on their own personal experiences and knowledge of initiatives that are happening in other ministries and organizations that may be adapted and provide a solution for food safety issues. They recognized that resolutions will require the effort of the private sector to become more involved in ensuring the regulations are adhered too. In concluding the Dialogue, a shared dedication to the Principles of Engagement amongst participants was acknowledged and trust that future engagements and commitments will be upheld.

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

The advice to other Convenors is to ensure that the core team hosting the Dialogue (curator and facilitators) are in agreement with the Principles and are able to guide the Dialogue to ensure that the Principles are recognized. In addition, it is important that these Principles are stated at the beginning of the Dialogue to set the expectations of the discussions. Once this is acknowledged and accepted by participants, they will understand that their voices are equally important to creating change.

# 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

The method used for this Dialogue slightly differed from that in the Reference Manual. Due to the core team members' unavailability to attend the event, a curator was unable to be assigned. However, a facilitator (a representative from the co-host organization, BAHFSA) was able to share in the responsibilities of curating the event and facilitating a discussion group. Notable to mention, this team member curated another Dialogue and was familiar with the duties. This was the only difference between the method used and the method in the manual.

# 4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

## MAJOR FOCUS

Topic: Food Safety for improved health and consumption.

### Description:

Food Safety plays a critical role in the food systems; the ramifications of the cost of unsafe food extends beyond human health issues. Contaminated food hampers socioeconomic development, overloads healthcare systems, and compromises economic growth and trade. From food production to food consumption - food safety is a shared responsibility. This Dialogue will examine the importance of food safety in the food systems for improved health. The objective of discussions was to identify transformative ways to ensure that safe and healthy foods are produced, imported, and consumed in our communities. Participants was divided into 3 breakout discussion groups to discuss the following topics:

1. Food storage and transportation's impact on health
2. Importance of Food Testing and Laboratory services
3. Food Safety, Hygiene and Sanitation

### 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

### Unregulated food storage and transport throughout the country

Proper food transport and storage enhances food safety, helps maintain nutritive value of foods and reduce waste. The country's regulatory system of enforcing and monitoring safe food storage and transport is inadequate. There are few laws and regulations that address this issue but they are governed by various governmental agencies. There is no one specific authority body that has full responsibility over food storage and transport therefore information on how this regulatory system is being monitored and evaluated is disjointed and undefined. A systematic approach involving all key stakeholders is required for an efficient regulatory management system.

### Need for additional food safety testing laboratories

There is only one food testing laboratory in the country. This lab consists of a microbiology lab and a chemistry lab that receives samples from the general public. The current role is food testing for salmonella, coliforms, E.coli, staph aureus, listeria, etc. and providing reliable results. Challenges relate to accessing supplies needed for testing; maintenance of equipment; limited equipment and testing capabilities. Considering that there is only one facility in the country, there is a delay in providing results. Additionally, often agri-foods that may require testing enter the markets without being tested. There is also the need for more testing of locally produced agri-foods as opposed to only testing imported foods and food for export (mostly fisheries products).

### Implementation of food safety regulations

There is a need to enforce grades and standards, which implies training and technology transfer, and improvement of short-term storage facilities to ensure that the quality and safety of the agri-food product is maintained. This will require additional food inspectors and enforcement throughout the food supply chain. Public awareness of the importance of safe foods on personal health must be generated. As persons become more aware of the linkage between one's health and safe food storage and transport, they will be more inclined to hold authorities accountable to enforcing an efficient regulatory system. A national food safety system requires the involvement of both public and private stakeholders.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

### Food storage and transportation's impact on health

Challenge (i): Undetermined governmental regulatory system to enforce and monitor food transport and storage

Solution:

- At ministerial level, laws should be synchronized amongst various agencies to ensure the joint engagement for enforcement
- Best practices from regional and international countries are adapted to formulate an effective regulatory management system, specific to the needs of The Bahamas
- Food retailers/wholesalers and transport agencies are made aware of the regulatory system and trained on the proper standard operating procedures for adhering to the policies

Challenge (ii): Unregulated food storage and transport, especially from and to rural (Family) islands

Solution:

- Increase inspections of vessels responsible for food transport to ensure that their facilities and standard operating procedures (ie. maintained proper cooling systems) are implemented for safe storage and delivery of food; impose a fine or penalty for not adhering to regulations
- Increase inspections of food retailers/wholesalers facilities for safe food storage; impose a fine or penalty for not adhering to regulations
- Food stores and food transport agents need to ensure that proper facilities are made available for storage to reduce food waste

Challenge (iii): Lack of public awareness- persons are not aware of the resources available on proper food safety handling

Solution:

- Education is key, but it needs national support - not from a political party
- There should be food safety guidelines set for food wholesalers/retailers to follow when importing foods to ensure that imported foods are safe for public consumption
- More stringent requirements should be placed on the exporter to ensure that the product being exported is safe. As the importing country, we have to hold exporters accountable to distributing safe foods and prevent labeling fraud.
- Consumers need to be made aware of the linkages between unsafe foods and personal health to understand the importance of safe food storage and transport; link food safety in transport and storage to health and disease prevention. More food safety information sessions are needed throughout the islands; this can be done through social media, digital text notifications, pamphlets, posters and televised public service announcements.

Challenge (iv): Data collection required to capture information on food transported inter-islands and how they are being stored

Solution:

- Data is collected for food imported into the country but not transported throughout the islands. Food inspectors can be assigned to each island to document food transport and storage.
- Food transport vessels should be held accountable to record and report food transport to various islands; they should be able to also produce this information to food inspectors.
- Data on food waste due to inadequate food transport, storage or expiring should also be recorded by food inspectors

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

### Importance of Food Testing and Laboratory services

Challenge (i): Lack of diagnostic capacity to test foods - insufficient facilities, supplies for testing, limited equipment and testing capabilities.

Solution:

- Increase investment in the development of additional food laboratories in the most populated islands
- Increase investment in equipment and facilities of testing labs
- Increase the cost of testing to supplement the maintenance of equipment and procurement of testing supplies
- Encourage the private sector to partner with the government to provide food testing in private laboratories

Challenge (ii): Lack of enforcement of policies such as food labelling; some labels of imported foods are not in English and there is the concern on the safety of foods labelled "export only"

Solution:

- Increase food inspections to prevent labelling fraud
- Generate public awareness on 'how to understand food labels' and recognize any labeling fraud
- Local consumer responsibility can be encouraged where consumers take photos and report on incorrect food labels
- Outline specific food labeling policies required by exporters to permit imported foods to further verify the safe consumption of foods.

Challenge (iii): Food testing of local fresh and value-add agri-foods production

Solution:

- Require that all agri-foods must be tested and certified by a food testing laboratory before entering the domestic market
- Encourage food associations and/or cooperatives to acquire food testing equipment/facilities to ensure quality local agri-foods are being provided to the markets

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

### Food Safety, Hygiene and Sanitation

Challenge (i): There is a lack of human resources such as food inspectors – trained persons who can conduct safety checks throughout the supply chain

**Solution:**

-The Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Environmental Health, and Ministry of Health and other key agencies conduct food safety training to ensure that all persons in the food system receive the same level of training.  
-Digitalize the regulatory system for ease of use, efficiency and accessibility by all stakeholders (ie authorities, food inspectors, food retailers/wholesalers and transport agencies) to ensure knowledge is widely disseminated for compliance

Challenge (ii): Animal slaughter is unregulated in the rural (Family) Islands, it is unclear what sanitation and slaughter process are being carried out, and how the animals are being transported.

**Solution:**

-Food safety training which can be linked to the farm registration to ensure farmers are trained.  
-Certified facilities for meat products can be established by farmers cooperatives/associations, with support of governing authorities, to ensure good food safety practices are being implemented

Challenge (iii): Unmonitored use of unsafe pesticides and chemicals in local fresh and value-added agri-food production

**Solution:**

-Develop an extensions services unit that is dedicated to policing the use of unsafe pesticides and chemicals; ensure regular visits to farm, farm stores and agro-processing facilities  
-Make available continuous training on good agricultural practices for the safe use of agro-chemicals and pesticides

### ACTION TRACKS

|   |  |
|---|--|
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### KEYWORDS

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

## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There were no areas of divergence regarding the food safety of the country. Participants are all in agreement that there is a lot of work to be done to ensure safe and nutritious foods to all. The most urgent need is defining a regulatory management system that can diligently work towards the enforcement of food safety policies.

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