

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 16 June 2021 15:00 GMT +01:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Rethinking the Summit's Principles of Engagement: Managing conflict of interest and promoting inclusiveness, transparency and accountability
CONVENED BY	Prof Jeff Collin, SPECTRUM Consortium, University of Edinburgh
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/23190/
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

74

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

9

19-30

31

31-50

19

51-65

2

66-80

1

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

15 Male

45 Female

1 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

6 Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

1 Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

7 Education

1 Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

1 Food industry

Financial Services

14 Health care

12 Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

16 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

3 Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

9 Local Non-Governmental Organization

9 International Non-Governmental Organization

1 Indigenous People

21 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

3 Government and national institution

1 Regional economic community

4 United Nations

International financial institution

1 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

1 Consumer group

4 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

Our independent dialogue was organised with the explicit aim of providing a space for constructive and critical engagement with the Summit's seven Principles of Engagement as a means of stimulating broader discussion about how to enhance Summit governance. The dialogue was informed by a crowdsourcing initiative, in which respondents answered survey questions relating to the Summit principles and offered suggestions for complementary and/or alternative principles (see attachment below for details). The dialogue itself comprised four presentations by expert speakers, followed by small group discussions in which participants were tasked with: - reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the seven Summit principles - considering scope to learn from governance practices in related contexts - examining how transparency and accountability in the Summit process might best be strengthened. This focus reflects our recognition that realising the objectives of the Summit depends on the development of governance mechanisms that are widely seen as appropriate, effective and legitimate. The FSS Principles of Engagement have been presented as advancing the vision of an equitable and healthy future, and their acceptance is a pre-requisite for participation in Summit Dialogues. However, the Principles themselves are the subject of much criticism, alongside other aspects of Summit organisation and governance. Dissatisfaction with these terms of engagement underpins the decision of many civil society organisations to boycott the Summit, while there are indications of significant concerns among those participating across key fora. Such concerns often focus on how multi-stakeholder approaches are being operationalised and on the absence of measures to manage conflict of interest with commercial sector actors, and are compounded by a lack of clarity about how the Principles were developed. To date, synthesis reports on summit dialogues have largely neglected such concerns, and our dialogue highlights the importance of subjecting the Summit Principles to critical examination.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The first part of the Dialogue comprised presentations from four speakers who reflected on the significance and implications of the Principles for FSS governance: - 'Designing a People's Summit: lessons for the UN FSS and beyond', Christine Campeau CARE International and Sherpa to UNFSS Action Track 4 - 'Managing interactions with commercial sector actors: Lessons from nutrition', Fabio da Silva Gomes: Advisor, Nutrition and Physical Activity, Pan-American Health Organization/WHO - 'Lessons from developing principles of engagement for Nutrition for Growth', Meaza Getachew, Global Policy and Advocacy Manager, 1,000 Days - 'UN FSS and the global governance of food systems', Molly Anderson, Middlebury College, and International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) Following an overview of preliminary results from a crowdsourcing exercise (Jeff Collin, U. of Edinburgh), dialogue participants were then asked to consider and respond in small groups to the following questions that had been circulated ahead of the Dialogue meeting: 1. Principles: What are the key strengths and limitations of the FSS Principles of Engagement? 2. Practices: Are there practices in related contexts that can be adopted or adapted to strengthen FSS governance? 3. Process: How can transparency and accountability in FSS governance be enhanced? Groups questioned the operationalisation of the FSS Principles. For example, how is multistakeholder inclusivity ensuring that marginalized voices do not get excluded? There were many concerns about transparency and accountability, and some participants noted that trust should not be an FSS Principle, agreed to ex ante, but could be an output of the process providing there was sufficient transparency.

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

Our experience in convening this Dialogue suggests a need to provide further opportunities for stakeholders to critically engage with the Summit Principles and process. There were high levels of interest and participation in this Dialogue, and many who did not attend indicated they would like to have done so but were unable to make the time-slot. The dialogue was enhanced by participants having the opportunity to reflect on the Principles and to hear different speakers' views on the extent to which the Summit's governance and organise supported these principles. Participants appreciated the opportunity to reflect on and discuss the FSS Principles of Engagement. While a majority of participants supported these principles in general terms, concerns were raised about how specific values were defined and operationalised, and the extent to which the principles could be meaningfully upheld via the Summit processes. We would suggest that convenors of future independent dialogues may wish to create space for participants to discuss the Summit principles and the potential for these to be strengthened in order for the Summit process to be perceived as transparent and legitimate, and to increase the likelihood that its outputs will support the development of equitable and healthy food systems.

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

Our Dialogue provided an opportunity for participants to engage constructively and critically with the Summit's Principles, seeking to inform pragmatic actions and develop recommendations to enhance Summit governance and to support transformation of 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

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

MAIN FINDINGS

While participants broadly agreed with the Principles of Engagement, dialogue discussions highlighted widespread anxieties about the operationalization of these principles in the Food Systems Summit. In particular, participants expressed concern over what were perceived as inadequacies in FSS governance with respect to managing conflict of interest and to defining terms of engagement with commercial sector actors. These themes are consistent with academic and civil society critiques of the opacity of the FSS process. In particular, participants expressed concern that:

- The legitimacy of the UNFSS is undermined by lack of clarity about the process by which its Principles of Engagement were developed
- The organizational structure of UNFSS lacks accountability and transparency
- The process for implementing Summit-generated solutions is unclear
- UNFSS governance risks neglecting rights-based approaches

A common concern was that the development and governance of the FSS exacerbated existing power imbalances between different types of actors, in that stakeholders with substantial economic and political power are better able to engage with and dominate FSS discussions while less influential groups (including food workers, Indigenous communities, and other minority groups) will find it more difficult to engage effectively in the Summit. (To illustrate this point, we quote one participant who made the following comment in small-group discussions: "I have had no capacity to engage. And I'm privileged. I am fully employed, a stable job in academia. I'm not working on the front lines, as an unprotected restaurant worker, trying to manage kids at home, etc. It's impossible to engage fully in this process if you aren't paid to do it, and it's confusing about how you can engage, even for me. I didn't understand until today what the real issues were.") Many participants felt that meaningful participation of less advantaged groups was unlikely to occur given they hadn't been directly involved in the development of the Principles of Engagement and their operationalisation in Summit processes.

A key conclusion of the dialogue was that a more participatory and legitimate Summit should combine recognition of power imbalances between relevant actor groups with a process for managing conflicts of interest. Summit principles and practices tend to assume that all actors and stakeholders have equal capacity and resources to engage in Summit discussions and shape outcomes. This is incompatible with demonstrable power imbalances and substantial evidence that multi-stakeholder dialogues tend to favour privileged actors and fail to generate effective solutions. This danger is compounded by the assumption that all actors participating in the process can be expected to contribute positively to the achievement of Summit objectives. The inclusion of actors with economic interests in maintaining harmful and inequitable aspects of contemporary food systems challenges this assumption, creates risks of generating tokenistic solutions, and highlights the need for governance mechanisms to actively manage such conflicts of interest.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

1. Principles: what are the key strengths and limitations of the FSS Principles of Engagement?

A majority of participants were broadly supportive of the Principles of Engagement, although many participants noted a lack of clarity in what they meant in practice (e.g. the processes via which they would be operationalised). Some principles were regarded as potentially ambiguous, or underspecified. This included principle 5 (emphasising 'multi-stakeholder inclusivity' – which could be seen as a basis for allowing commercial actors to engage on an equal basis with less powerful actors); and principle 7 (where establishing 'trust' might require very different things for different stakeholders). For example, one participant asked "how do you build trust if there is no transparency and you don't address conflict of interest?"

At the same time, participants noted some key deficiencies in the Principles, including the absence of commitments: i) to human rights (particularly the right to food); ii) to ensuring independence from commercial interests; and iii) to recognising and managing conflicts of interest between participating stakeholders.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

2. Practices. Are there practices in related contexts that can be adopted or adapted to strengthen FSS governance?

Dialogue participants felt that many of their concerns could have been addressed if the FSS had adopted norms and practices that are already familiar in related policy contexts. A large majority of participants felt that FSS governance would be enhanced by the principles of engagement developed for the Nutrition for Growth process, and by the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) principles for managing interactions with the private sector. Participants felt that effective governance required the identification and management of potential conflict of interest and ensuring the independence of Summit processes from commercial interests. There was a strong sense that the Summit should explicitly recognise and promote the human right to food alongside other human rights principles, treaties and covenants.

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KEYWORDS

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Finance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Policy |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Human rights | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Governance |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Environment and Climate |

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

3. Process: How can transparency and accountability in FSS governance be enhanced?

Many participants felt there needed to be more direct discussion of how and why the FSS was initiated without direct involvement from existing UN bodies and processes concerned with food systems – including the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the FAO Committee for World Food Security (and the FAO Right to Food office), and the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM).

Several positive suggestions were made for how FSS governance could be enhanced by adopting norms and practices that are already familiar in related policy contexts. There was particularly strong support for drawing on the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition's principles for managing interactions with the private sector, including:

- Identification and management of potential conflict of interest
- Ensuring independence from commercial interests
- Differential safeguards to protect policymaking and to identify private sector organisations whose activities best align with nutrition objectives
- Promoting and respecting human rights principles, treaties and covenants

Other suggestions advanced by participants to enhance accountability and transparency in FSS governance included the following:

- Provide a clear definition and process for managing conflict of interest
- Develop a 'risk and opportunity assessment' process to identify business entities that should not be represented at Summit meetings (including pre-Summit workshops) and that should not be invited to make UNFSS pledges.
- Provide a clear account of how various UN bodies were involved (or not) in initiating, developing and leading the Summit
- Provide greater transparency regarding which organisations and individuals are involved in the Summit, including how members of the Scientific Group, Advisory Committee and Action Track Leadership Teams were selected.
- Provide greater transparency regarding the funding of the Summit and its associated meetings.
- Provide adequate time for public input and scientific review of proposed actions / solutions emerging from the Summit

Many participants noted that civil society groups were effectively prevented from engaging with the Summit because they lack the financial resources to do so. Some suggested that funding support was needed in order to ensure meaningful participation of civil society groups in the Summit.

There was a strong sense that future Summits needed to be initiated and organised more transparently, with the involvement of Member States and existing UN bodies and processes.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There were diverse views as to whether the UNFSS is capable of providing an effective forum for accountable and transparent discussion, given concerns noted above. Some participants felt that – with appropriate adjustments – the Summit can have a positive impact on the development of sustainable and equitable food systems. Other participants felt the Summit's limitations are too fundamental for it to provide for meaningful and effective engagement, and that the most appropriate action at this stage is to not participate.

While there were limited expectations that the FSS would itself generate significant progress in addressing food systems, many participants felt that that discussion around FSS governance created opportunities for indirect benefits in stimulating broader and longer-term discussions about effective ways of engaging relevant actors in this agenda.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Summary of preliminary results from a crowdsourcing exercise**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Appendix-Crowdsourcing-summary.pdf>