

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Wednesday, 9 June 2021 14:00 GMT +10:00
<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	Australian Food Systems - Addressing Shared Challenges
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/23300/">https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/23300/</a>
<b>DIALOGUE TYPE</b>	Member State
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS</b>	Australia

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

81

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

Male

Female

Prefer not to say or Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

Other

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

In its role as National Convenor for the Australian Food Systems Summit National Dialogues, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment convened a series of thematic dialogues (in the form of publicly accessible virtual webinars) to facilitate open and independent discussions between a wide range of stakeholders on a variety of issues and challenges facing Australian food systems. These provided an opportunity for stakeholders to participate in meaningful discussions and promote Australian stakeholder engagement in broader UN Food Systems Summit processes. There were 81 unique webinar log-ins for the live webinar session – however we are unable to provide detailed participant metrics according to the above criteria. We can confirm that the webinar attendees reflected a broad base of stakeholder and representative groups in Australia including: not-for-profit and advocacy organisations; community groups; academia and the university sector; advertising, marketing and consultancy firms; research and development institutions; federal, state/territory and local government; private sector and industry peak body groups; farmers and farmers peak body organisations; natural resource management groups. Additionally, to promote greater outreach and accessibility for interested parties unable to attend the webinar on the day, recordings and transcripts of the session have been made available on the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's website: <https://haveyoursay.awe.gov.au/food-systems-summit-2021>

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

The dialogues provided an open and independent platform for Australian stakeholders to share their perspectives on a variety of issues and challenges facing Australian food systems. The dialogue sought to recognise the efforts of various Australian stakeholders (including government, industry, NGOs, think-tanks, consultants and academia) to tackle complex food systems challenges and issues through various initiatives and programs, operating at a range of scales. The dialogue brought diverse stakeholders together to discuss agri-food sector issues and encouraged the emergence of new and innovative thinking, collaborations and approaches. Furthermore, the open and publicly accessible webinar platform sought to encourage and facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement and raise awareness of UN Food Systems Summit processes amongst Australian stakeholders. There was no limits on attendees and the webinar was advertised publicly through social media platforms. The webinar was subsequently made available for both audio and video, by video recording and transcript. Discussions emerging during the dialogue reflected the need for sustained and meaningful action at all levels to give effect to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

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

The 'Principles of Engagement', as outlined by the Food Systems Summit, are useful for National Food Systems Summit Dialogue Convenors, and should be considered as a useful starting point. Dialogue Convenors are encouraged to consider modalities and processes which suit their national circumstances.

# 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 series of thematic dialogue webinars convened by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment provided an open and independent platform for Australian stakeholders including experts, academics, industry representatives, farmers, the general public and others to share experiences, ideas, opportunities and solutions on a variety of issues and challenges facing food systems. Discussions between panellists were open and transparent, and as representative as possible. Introductions and panellist presentations covered less than 30% of the available time. Four to five panellists spoke for 5 to 8 minutes each, providing an overview of the work they are engaged with. Some used Powerpoint presentations, some provided pre-recorded video presentations. Importantly, the majority of the webinar focused on the panel answering questions posed by the stakeholder audience. During the webinar, questions on a range of topics reflecting diverse stakeholder views, were received from the audience and posed to the panel for response. There was an ongoing opportunity to provide more ideas and to “keep the conversation going” following each webinar, by submitting additional thoughts and views through the Department’s Have Your Say online consultation forum, open until 10 June 2021. The webinars were independent of Australian Government processes and views. In addition the feedback provided in this form is also independent of Australian Government processes and views.

# 4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

## MAJOR FOCUS

As the fourth in the series of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) led Australian National FSS Dialogues, the Australian Food Systems – addressing shared challenges webinar explored:

- how we can think holistically about food systems and work to meet the triple challenge of providing food security and nutrition, delivering strong livelihoods throughout the supply chain and ensuring environmental sustainability;
- the notion of “trade-offs” and synergies in food systems; and
- the need for decisions to be underpinned by rigorous science and evidence whilst acknowledging and managing diverse stakeholder interests and values.

We were pleased to have the participation of the following panellists to lead discussion:

- Lee Ann Jackson, Head of Division, Agro-food Trade and Markets, OECD
- Dr Anne Astin PSM, Chair of the Board, Food Agility CRC
- Howard Parry-Husbands, CEO of Pollinate
- Krista Singleton-Cambage, Head of Climate and Food Security, World Wildlife Fund Australia.

### 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 report seeks to summarise views and perspectives of webinar participants and does not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government.

A scene-setting presentation was delivered exploring the webinar themes outlined previously. Key messages highlighted during this presentation included:

- The COVID-19 crisis has brought renewed attention to the importance of food systems and their role in meeting the triple challenge – delivering food security and nutrition, providing livelihoods for stakeholders across food supply chains and ensuring environmental sustainability.
- Food systems have delivered significant accomplishments in recent decades - including quadrupling of agricultural production since 1960 and decoupling production from agricultural land expansion through efficiency gains – however there remain shortcomings relating to food security and malnutrition and the environmental impact of food production. Better policies can make a difference to solving these issues.
- While many of the challenges facing food systems are well-understood, there is often less focus on the identification and development of appropriate policy solutions. Many agri-food policies currently implemented globally are not effectively addressing the triple challenge and may be exacerbating the challenges in some instances. This can include distorting policy instruments – such as those providing production incentives to individual producers – which can lead to significant environmental externalities and international agricultural market distortion.
- Developing coherent agri-food policies requires policymakers to be aware of possible trade-offs and synergies with other policy areas. For instance, agricultural sector policy interventions are likely to impact health or environmental outcomes and vice-versa. It is important for policymakers to vigorously evaluate possible interactions across food systems and look to maximise synergies and effectively manage any unavoidable “trade-offs.” There is unlikely to be a “silver-bullet” policy instrument – and there is a need to consider using a mix of policy instruments and approaches.
- Sometimes there may be a need for difficult discussions, debate and choices around “trade-offs.” These decisions can be made more difficult as occasionally stakeholder perspectives on certain issues can be primarily informed by values. There is a need for policymakers to appreciate the role of facts, interests and values in policy debates and to use innovative approaches to bridge gaps and create opportunities for better understanding and collaboration between competing stakeholder interests.

Panellists were asked to provide some initial thoughts and reflections on the scene-setting presentation, which included:

- Emphasis on the importance of holistic approaches for food policy making – noting in Australia that a core focus has traditionally been on agri-food sector competitiveness to underpin our economic wellbeing.
- The importance of overcoming challenges relating to data collection and using it appropriately and effectively to enable better policymaking – while ensuring that food remains accessible, high quality and is aligned with consumer demand.
- Recognition that complex systems have fundamental characteristics and traits which need to be acknowledged – for instance, they are constantly evolving and there are complex interactions and consequences (both known and unknown) for different policy interventions. There is likely to be a need for mixed policy approaches which are coherent (for instance across production and consumption sides), recognise complexity and employ “systems thinking”.
- The need for taking an inclusive approach which seeks to consult widely and consider the needs and views of diverse stakeholder groups. Through its engagement and leadership in the Asia-Pacific region, there is also a role for Australia in helping our international partners to address the triple challenge through better policymaking for food systems.

The question-and-answer session was wide-ranging reflecting strong stakeholder engagement and interest. Some key thematic elements of the discussion related to:

- Navigating challenges and opportunities for agri-food policymaking as consumers increasingly make food choices according to environmental, social and ethical considerations.
- The role of deliberative processes for effectively dealing with “trade-offs” and ensuring diverse stakeholder engagement and representation, including at the local/regional government level.
- The critical need for more and improved data on food systems at the local, national and global level for food systems policy and decision making.
- How best to take food systems conversations and discussions forward, to promote improved coherency and policymaking across sectors.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

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In addition to the topics already highlighted – there were a number of additional high-level key messages emerging during the dialogue discussion, including:

- Exploration of future food systems and the most crucial actions needed to ensure that our food systems are delivering on the triple challenge of economic livelihoods, health/nutrition and environmental outcomes. These included the need to address current gaps and flaws in data, a lack of diversity in stakeholder engagement, conflicts over facts and interest groups, and a lack of traceability in the supply chain.
- It was suggested that consumers may be feeling “guilt-fatigue” as they continue to receive conflicting messages around the ethical and environmental consequences of their consumption choices. For this reason improving traceability could be one of the most promising tools for improving consumer trust and transparency in Australian food systems. Better collection and use of datasets will be crucial along the supply chain to provide assurance of health, environmental and social outcomes to consumers and producers alike.
- There is a need to improve data collection and “knowledge production” practices to facilitate better collaboration, assessment and analysis and ultimately policymaking, potentially through the implementation of data standards or a more coordinated approach. This may also involve some consideration of the role of future “data markets” and “data trading”.
- Policymakers need access to better quality datasets to inform food systems decision making. There is a need for greater collaboration across the supply chain to better analyse and interpret the data we have, and to identify where there may be gaps. A key priority for food systems policy related data is being able to quantify assessed policy trade-offs and their respective impacts, to inform better decision making.
- Effective food systems policy making relies on consultation and engagement with diverse stakeholders. Deliberative processes can be useful in policymaking to overcome differences in stakeholder views, interests and values, and can lead to more transparent and equitable decision-making.
- The era of digital technology and innovations provides huge opportunities for producers and other stakeholders in the food sector to reduce inputs and improve efficiencies. This includes proper assessment of the contributions and supporting architecture for satellite technology in helping to collect, manage and store agricultural and food system data.

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## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

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In addition to the key messages already detailed, there were a number of issues discussed which may have signified a divergence of views, including:

- The need to consider communications, positive messaging and enhanced “narratives” to highlight the importance of food systems and engender greater understanding in the community of their critical role for achieving important economic, social and environmental outcomes. It was suggested that there is a prevailing dichotomy at play in contemporary food systems, and a desire on the part of the consumer and advocates to be able to classify certain foods, production practices and/or sectors as “good” or “bad” – when the reality is far more nuanced and complex.
- It was suggested that since many Australians associate modern agriculture and food systems with challenges and generally have a negative perception which dissuades stakeholder engagement and collaborative discussion. For this reason, it was suggested that reframing the narrative by focusing on “shared food values” and the positive contribution that food systems make to society – may be one way to engage diverse stakeholders in future conversations about sustainable food systems.
- The facts, interests and values which determine the reality of food systems (for instance what consumers can choose to eat, or what producers are able to grow) can be constrained by the current limits of knowledge, culture, history and other factors. Reframing problems and challenges in new and innovative ways can be useful when thinking about and addressing systemic challenges. This could involve thinking more fundamentally about what we choose to produce and consume in Australia and for instance, reflecting on the place of indigenous species in our food systems.
- When discussing food systems, the term “complexity” may often be confused with something being “complicated”. Complexity involves the interaction of complex systems, while something being complicated means it is difficult to solve. Improving food systems can involve both complexity and complication. Taking a “systems thinking” approach, may involve reframing our food systems as “complex” systems which we aim to “guide” to function better, instead of isolating our focus to unitary outcomes or goals – which may not lead to the best outcome.
- There is a need to consider how best to create the space for continuing these types of discussions around the challenges and best-practice approaches and recommendations for sustainable, healthy and resilient food systems. This may involve consideration of the utility of a higher-level food strategy, formalised governance structures or incorporation into political frameworks.

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# ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

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## RELEVANT LINKS

- **Addressing shared challenges webinar recording and transcript**  
<https://haveyoursay.awe.gov.au/food-systems-summit-2021>
- **Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment - UN Food Systems Summit 2021**  
<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/market-access-trade/un-food-systems-summit-2021>