

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 27 January 2021
DIALOGUE TITLE	Bites of Transfoodmation - Journeys of Transition in Food Production and Distribution Practices
CONVENED BY	Ludovica Donati, Bites of Transfoodmation project coordinator
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/2337/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Italy, Switzerland

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

54

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

31

19-30

21

31-50

2

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

22 Male

32 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

6 Crops

Fish and aquaculture

1 Livestock

0 Agro-forestry

14 Environment and ecology

1 Trade and commerce

3 Education

3 Communication

7 Food processing

2 Food retail, markets

2 Food industry

Financial Services

1 Health care

3 National or local government

Utilities

1 Industrial

10 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

7 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

0 Small-scale farmer

1 Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

6 Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

18 Science and academia

0 Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

9 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

2 United Nations

International financial institution

2 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

9 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The BoT organizing team has selected a group of young and motivated individuals already (or ready to be) projected into the realm of food systems and provided them with a safe space to discuss, openly and creatively, the way forward for a more sustainable and resilient future. As such, both the organizing team and the participants understand the need to act with urgency and are committed, either personally or professionally, to contribute to the vision, objectives and outcomes of the FSS. The BoT participants aim to be agents of change and wish to contribute to the outcome of the FSS. David Nabarro's intervention during the first BoT virtual meeting clearly inspired them and helped them better understand the process behind the Summit. In the organization of the Dialogue, the BoT organizing team made sure to embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity by inviting participants from different countries, backgrounds and sectors, including but not limited to civil society, government, academia and the private sector. It must be pointed out, however, that the Dialogue has been organized and carried out with a focus on the youth and on the Middle Eastern – Mediterranean region geographically speaking. The facilitators selected were all part of the organizing team, and had been briefed with attention to ensure the creation of a safe space conducive for dialogue based on respect and trust. A number of 'principles' for discussion were shared with the participants at the beginning of each sessions to foster this sense of inclusivity, mutual respect and trust. These included the need to complement the work of others, build on what the person before has said, challenge only when you have an alternative to propose, and finally seek compromise in order to arrive to a unifying message.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The dialogue focused on the future of production, transformation and distribution, whilst maintaining consumption as the entry point. The Dialogue is part of a broader set of workshops and events organized by the Bites of Transfoodmation team, which aim to take into account and discuss different aspects of the food systems, thus recognizing their complexity. The final aim is to achieve a political intention of the group, in the form of a Manifesto and Lines of Action, which will take a holistic and systemic approach to food systems transformation. Yet, as the very name Bites of Transfoodmation suggests, the idea is to propose some 'bites' of change which are coherent to and reflect the vision of the group of young change-makers and the themes identified by the group as key. The principles of inclusivity, respect and trust were reflected in the design and roll-out of the Dialogue and have been an essential feature of the entire Bites of Transfoodmation process. The participants have not only been included in all stages of the project in a transparent and inclusive way but have been its very center. A real sense of trust has been created along the way, and this could be witnessed during the Dialogue for the participants felt they could express their views freely and openly, even when these did not necessarily reflect the views held by others. The Bites of Transfoodmation organizing team has received a lot of positive feedback from the group and is looking forward to the next Dialogue, which will take place on February 17th.

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

Thanks to the fact that there is a team working exclusively on the Bites of Transfoodmation project, a lot of information and knowledge sharing is able to take place both between the participants, and between the participants and the organizing team. The organizing team has ensured that various different avenues and spaces for exchange are created, both during and in the build-up to the Dialogues. This has definitely contributed to building trust as well as to keeping the momentum, engagement and commitment of the participants high. Our advice to other Convenors would be to make sure, if possible, that there is a strong point of contact between the Dialogue participants and the Convenors. This allows for participant feedback and continued interaction after the workshops and Dialogue so that the ideas can be further refined, and knowledge further shared. Furthermore, it seems to be a valuable approach to choose participants with a diverse background in order to permit exchange about different realities, while working towards compromise and unifying elements.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

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

Yes

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The narrative that has emerged in the last years shows a massive reduction in biodiversity, a de-link to seasonality of consumption, more food sophistication, and a reduction in the time we devote to prepare food to adjust to our increasingly busy and quick lifestyles. Food used to be the main element of societal and family gatherings, and has slowly become more a matter of feeding and keeping us fit. This trend is also the result of globalization of trade that came about with colonization and reduction of the costs of production, opening the path to shifting from primary sector based economies to cheap labour based industrialization. After the Second World War and up until the 1990s, this trend was further accelerated by the massive use of marketing strategies, the fast urbanization of the population, the reduced average size of family units, the growth of pre-cooked food with the de-linking between rural and urban areas, all intertwined with rapid economic and tertiary sector growth. In this context, big data was already starting to influence and enforce specific narratives. Did this narrative work? Yes - but fundamental elements such as equity and sustainability were missing in the equation. The narrative started to change in the 1990s focusing on a technocratic language, slowly starting to shift the focus towards sustainability (ESG in financial terms), as well as to an increased rights-based approach to food while feeding a fast growing and urbanized population. What about the narrative of the future? Our first two BoT workshops showed us that the future of food is an indicator of the new macro-narrative which tells us that time has come to embrace diversity, bring about a culture of empowerment, assure that in anything we do we are considering the true cost of what we are doing, and this implies that we need to rethink our habitats. Why? Because we feel the requirement to do it and more importantly, we also can. We have all we need to do this. We have better knowledge of the true costs and the trade-offs; we are going towards personalized diets determined by health considerations; we know that inequalities exist and increasingly define social determinants of health related to food consumption; and that food marketing can be better tailored to drivers of sustainable modernization of food-related processes. The major focus of the Dialogue was to discuss the future of production, transformation and distribution systems keeping the evolution of consumption patterns as an entry point. Participants were helped to project themselves into this subject by two showcases, namely a Swiss valley that reorganized its social fabric and structure with local organic farming and processing and the experience of a zero waste catering based on a defined traditional contest. The discussion was focused around four main questions/discussion topics: a) How can we link the need to rethink our urbanized habitats to evolving production systems? Will be proximity and diversification of production a way to unite consumers and producers? b) Speaking about true costs, is food waste prevention and reduction a way to create awareness and commitment by both citizens and authorities? c) In the evolution towards sustainable urban life habits, how will key components of civism like empowerment and rights based approaches be affected by traditions and innovations in the food chains? d) Will reduction of inequalities in terms of food consumption depend on a total reshuffle of the transformation and distribution chains?

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 Dialogue was characterised by rich and animated discussions. The variety of participants' profiles in terms of background and profession allowed mutual learning and paved the way for new perspectives, while confirming the relevance of some central points such as the importance of embracing diversity through new and adapted traditions, to bring about a culture of empowerment and social proximity, to consider the true cost of what we are doing and the need to transform and adapt our habitats. Participants acknowledged the need for a change of narrative, with a stronger focus on embracing diversity, bringing about a culture of empowerment, and rethinking our habitats while reconsidering the value of food with the lenses of a true cost approach. This implies that we look at sustainability, a key feature of a true cost based economy, beyond a technical ESG approach. For this, an increased awareness, passion, curiosity, knowledge and inclusion in all sectors of the food systems are guiding features. Tearing down the invisible wall that has traditionally divided urban and rural areas, means linking sustainability with social proximity, where enacting through food a virtuous cycle of civism, responsibility, connectivity and education, will lead to new forms of social fabric. One way to get there might profit from initiatives aiming at setting up a new tradition pattern, where our natural need for a sense of belonging couples with the revaluation of ancient know-how blended with innovative approaches. Often this can happen with an initial incentive, thus with a political will. Critically in this respect are pre-conditions, where inequalities and power concentration is persisting as this might be a frustrating factor, especially in terms of accessibility. Changing the status of food from commodity to public good, might help. After all, food is a recognized right. This recognition leads to taking into account its true cost but also its true value. A fresh look into production, transformation and distribution towards a healthy and sustainable diet for all will bring us to profound systemic changes. During the Dialogue, participants embraced the two real life examples of Valposchiavo and Altatto as positive and future-desirable realities. But how can they be connected, multiplied and expanded? Imagine the world of the future as one big and dense fabric, made up of smaller economic, social, natural and governing fabrics or networks. Within each of these, small, independent and well-functioning realities, such as Valposchiavo and Altatto, stand ready to be connected with one another. Common elements and shared values as well as communication, exchanges, new standards, incentives and norms enable this connection and ultimately form the building blocks of the world's fabric. By creating more of these realities and reinforcing the density of the different fabrics, a unifying vision for a more sustainable and resilient future is both communicated and enacted. We keep hearing that these realities can not grow because they rely on a romantic perception that can only work on a small scale and among the wealthiest of the world. What about reconsidering the concept of the notion of scaling up? After all, the interconnectivity, the access to know-how, the change of the perception of reality introduced by the digitalization era is showing that, while an acceleration in terms of classic scaling up is occurring, at the same time a tissue of new forms of interconnected local economies blending new traditions, social proximity, sustainability and affordability is growing fast. To have an inclusive conversation and truly embrace diversity, thus avoiding a Eurocentric (or romantic?) vision of the future, we must discuss and dive deeper into the topics of inequality, power concentration and accessibility.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

There is a strong need to focus on avoiding conflicts between urban and rural areas; trying to create a denser bond between these two realities and destroy that invisible wall that divides them. Rural and marginalised areas should have access to new technologies, while urbanized habitats should be reorganized with an eye on nature and urban/peri-urban food production and processing. Education and trust should be the entry points to create new important supply opportunities and consequently a higher quality of life for all. We define this approach using the term of social proximity. This implies more sensibilization, awareness, passion, curiosity, knowledge, and inclusion in all sectors of the food systems. A controlled and responsible use of new DNA editing technologies is accepted, only if these will not compromise traditions, typical products, biodiversity and health.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

Waste and losses of non-renewable resources do not exist in ecosystems. By considering the true cost of food (including externalities such as human and natural resources, transport, health, subsidies), the system will not produce food waste and losses anymore as the price will be too high. A solution would be to have shorter and more circular supply chains, exchanging only the goods necessary for every community to have a healthy diet. We need transparency and trust, accompanied by a change in regulations in a way that waste and losses are considered either as expensive or as a resource to close a loop. We need to reconsider the status of consumers as queens and kings and accept what natural resources can give us without compromising their ability to do so for next generations. Lastly, concrete initiatives to reduce food waste and losses (such as the app "Too Good To Go") are useful if they bring the system closer to the true costs of food, thus as a transition instrument.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

Tradition is a dynamic and complex concept due to its constructed nature. For this reason, it cannot be said that tradition and innovation are opposed, because the latter needs the former and innovation has always been part of development. The future often draws inspiration from the past and it would therefore be more accurate to speak of innovations as "new traditions". Moreover, innovation is necessary when the current situation does not produce sustainable results. In order to link tradition and innovation to create a better future in terms of food production and consumption, cooperation between the different generations is necessary as much as the reform of the education system. Finally, responsibility lies in our personal choices and for this reason it is essential that all those who care about the world and our future take a few small steps in the right direction.

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<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

Producers need to be paid and supported in such a way that they can have a higher financial gain for their labor and work. This will also give them more autonomy in selling their products to a greater majority of people at an affordable price. Distribution needs to change its current way of working, namely to take the best products (in terms of product and nutrient quality) and send it to the bidder of highest price (wealthy nations or wealthy neighborhoods). In order to achieve this transition, we need to give education and access to all communities, not just those with status, power, and wealth. We need to further connect networks of people, producers, consumers, distributors so that there is transition of information along the value chain, transparency, care, and understanding about how a product is made. This will imply changing the status of food from commodity to public good. There is a necessity for change in terms of how we frame our food system. We can do this by collecting data at all points in the supply chain. This data should not serve as a marketing strategy or profit tool for retailers / brand owners but rather as a way to shape food and trade policy to support local communities, create new financial instruments to support producers, and create information that is useful for consumers.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There were few divergences within and amongst the discussion groups, but participants highlighted some critical areas of divergence that involve difficult trade-offs: 1) The tension between locality/resiliency and affordability in order to scale virtuous food systems especially in light of population growth. 2) The tension between the efficiency of highly technological food systems vs. going back to nature and the multiple benefits in terms of health and environmental of diversification. 3) The trade-offs in terms of what are most important issues to tackle in terms of distribution practices: the competitiveness of low-cost imports versus local production versus the need to ensure efficient and nutritious food distribution; etc. 4) The risk of over-romanticize certain professions linked to agricultural production and farming as this over-romantization risks to impede connecting traditions which are revitalized by innovative approaches. 5) The trade-offs between consumers' access (buying capability) and producers' income. 6) The question on how to reshape and redefine agricultural and production incentives (including subsidies). No clear answers have been identified to address these challenges, however there has been consensus that the majority of these questions could be better approached by using a true cost approach. These aspects will be explored further in light of the redaction of Bites of Transfoodmation manifesto.

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