

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Tuesday, 25 May 2021 11:00 GMT +04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	FIRST NATIONAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE MEETING IN AZERBAIJAN
CONVENED BY	Ms. Ilhama Gadimova and Mr. Rashad Farajov
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/23913/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Azerbaijan

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

45

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

4

19-30

28

31-50

12

51-65

1

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

29 Male

16 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

3 Livestock

1 Agro-forestry

1 Environment and ecology

2 Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

1 Food processing

1 Food retail, markets

2 Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

1 Nutrition

24 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

9 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

1 Large-scale farmer

5 Local Non-Governmental Organization

2 International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

2 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

1 Member of Parliament

Local authority

24 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

10 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

A special attention have been paid to ensure the diversity and inclusion of all stakeholders during the Dialogue. Convenor of the Dialogue sent invitation letters to broad and diverse range of both government and non-government institutions to foster their participation in the process. A standardized approach have been adopted for the convening, curation and facilitation of the Dialogue, as indicated in the guidelines of organizing the Dialogue. Throughout the Dialogue, facilitator created a supportive environment for meaningful and open dialogue among the participating stakeholders. Respectful questions have been formulated by the facilitator to encourage dialogues and discussions, clarify some of the ideas mentioned and check understanding. Dialogue opened a space within which representatives of various organizations shared their ideas, positions as well as explored each other's perspective that are essential to shape the food system in the following years. Forward-looking discussion topics have been chosen to build on and add value to the existing policy processes and initiatives directed to the agricultural development and food system transformation. Importantly, all of the discussion topics were related to the local realities within the country and this in turn made it possible to formulate challenges and define sustainable solutions. Amid COVID-19 outbreak, in line with the local rules, regulations and guidelines, Dialogue was organized using an online platform. It was agreed to communicate via emails to share participants' comments and views that are not expressed during the meetings.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

For the organizing team it was essential to guarantee that Dialogue reflects specific aspects of the Principles as planned for the design. All the participants of the Dialogue embraced the principles such as building trust, be respectful, complement the work of others and recognise complexity. Discussions were organised in a way to ensure safe space as well as promote trust among the stakeholders. Participants of the Dialogue respected each other's view in formulating sustainable food system, agriculture and rural development. Questions and concerns raised during the discussions have been addressed appropriately by the responsible participants. Participants of the discussions also recognised the utmost urgency of sustained and meaningful actions to achieve SDG 2030. All of the participants were committed to contribute to vision, objectives and final outcomes of the Food System Summit preparation and follow up, because they are aware that this is an essential milestone to mobilize future actions in transforming food system. Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity principle of the Dialogue were not strong as expected. Although representatives of almost all of the invited institutions took part in Dialogue some of them were not active during the open discussions. Nonetheless, this Dialogue provided a unique platform for national stakeholders to exchange their views and interact with each other's aiming to support food system transformation.

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

During the planning of Dialogue, one should take into account that not all invited institutions will participate in the meetings. In addition, one should also take into account that not all of the participants of the Dialogue will be active during the discussions. Selecting and briefing facilitator/s is also vital for the success. This may ensure that facilitator/s are not pushing their own agenda but creating a space for all to express themselves and listen to each other. Finally, one should design discussion topics that represents the current situation and points critical issues. This certainly will help avoid rather artificial conclusions. Although, after the first Dialogue meeting it was agreed to communicate via emails to share some views, comments, recommendations, however, stakeholders poorly participated in this process.

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

The main objective of the first meeting was to reach a common understanding among the participated stakeholders on the following areas: (i) the 2021 UN Food System Summit, (ii) the national dialogue process and (iii) the “sustainable food systems approach”. By bringing together key stakeholders contributing to the food systems of Azerbaijan, the Dialogue has become a starting point for an inclusive and collaborative exchange of views on the path to sustainable national food system; as well as for identifying challenges and sharing best practices for improving food systems and ensuring their sustainability in the future.

The major focus of the dialogue meeting are:

- To provide information to the participants on the importance of dialogue meetings held in preparation for the UN 2021 Food Systems Summit to be held in September this year. In this regard, materials on the topic (also relevant guidelines) were introduced to the participants by both local and international representatives.
- Providing participants with general information on food systems. Also, participants were provided with information on sustainability in food systems within the SDG 2030 Agenda, as well as the transformation of food systems to achieve sustainability.
- Expected results from the national dialogues carried out by the member countries within the framework of the Food Systems Summit. Some of the participants of the Dialogue raised questions about the expected results of these dialogues, and representatives of relevant governmental bodies answered these questions.
- Discussion of issues related to the role of women in the establishment and operation of sustainable food systems in the country, especially in rural areas. Discussions focused on the role of women, including rural women, in agricultural and food production, and agreed that appropriate measures should be taken to assess the role of women and achieve gender equality in these activities.
- The discussions also centered on the question of what measures should be taken towards transitioning to nature-positive sustainable production practices. Participants generally agreed on the need for improving monitoring and control systems for the use of agricultural chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides to ensure sustainable food production systems; and the possibility of introducing additional measures for incentivizing and subsidizing natural farming (for example, payments for ecosystem services) instead of chemically intensive agriculture.

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

MAIN FINDINGS

Main findings can be summarised as follows:

- Some participants stated that there is a need for new approach in terms of ensuring sustainability in agriculture. Currently, the main role in the digitalization of agriculture in Azerbaijan belongs to the state, there is a need to expand the role of the private sector, the system of agricultural subsidies should include issues related to sustainability (for example, climate-smart subsidies), as well as, expand the use of biotechnology. In this regard, the representative of the Ministry of Agriculture accepted the need for improvement measures in these areas and noted that the issue will be discussed.
- The dialogue was welcomed by the participants in terms of achieving the sustainability goals. It was recommended to achieve consistency in the organization of such meetings, at the same time, the participants expressed their readiness to cooperate in this direction.
- It was suggested that the Center for Agrarian Research under the Ministry of Agriculture be identified as a coordinating body in terms of coordinating dialogue discussions.
- It was decided to have discussions on conducting a Rural Women's Forum to educate women on the sustainability of food systems and raise awareness campaigns.
- Although farmers who receive subsidies are registered by the state, there is no registration of farmers who have small arable land and produce mainly for their own consumption – namely so-called subsistence farmers. The representative of the Ministry of Agriculture stated the urgency of this issue and said that discussions would be held to take appropriate measures.
- In comparison to the previous periods, the urgency of food systems including the food security issues in the country is fully recognised. Although a superficial approach to food security issues was demonstrated during the development of the Strategic Roadmap for Agricultural Production and Processing, representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organizations have now acknowledged the urgency of this issue and have expanded included activities related inclusion of food security issues in state strategic documents.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

Resilience and sustainability were two important keywords that initiated the discussions. Participants emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic and the escalation of the conflict situation in the country have caused the need to accelerate the transformation of food and agricultural systems to make them more resilient in the face of potential challenges and stresses, including climate change. There was a consensus among the participants that there is a need to introduce new measures and strategies in the “Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development”. Discussants also shared some pilot ideas such as: (i) strengthening business development services in rural areas with a focus on promoting agricultural technology start-ups; (ii) strengthening digital extension services to help farmers easily adapt to systems transformation; (iii) stimulating climate-smart agriculture through the introduction of agriculture-specific input subsidy programs and policies; (iv) introducing innovative agricultural practices and green biotechnologies; (v) and promoting the use of sustainable food production and climate resilient farming practices.

Participants raised the key challenges and proposed solutions for ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all. Actions were discussed in three broad areas: (i) improving access to nutritious foods for subsistent farmers as well as vulnerable groups such as IDPs and people living in remote rural areas, with a particular focus on women and children; (ii) the importance of enhancing the role of women in rural and agricultural areas through the promotion of women's entrepreneurship; and (iv) the need for enhancing of national food safety systems; as well as raising awareness on food security and nutrition concepts.

The discussions also centered on the question of what measures should be taken towards transitioning to nature-positive sustainable production practices. Participants generally agreed on the need for improving monitoring and control systems for the use of agricultural chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides to ensure sustainable food production systems; and the possibility of introducing additional measures for incentivizing and subsidizing natural farming (for example, payments for ecosystem services) instead of chemically intensive agriculture.

Participants conveyed the need to emphasize, promote, replicate, and scale up existing models that increase women's role in the food systems, as well as generate livelihood opportunities to attract more rural women to the sector. Discussants highlighted the critical importance of empowering women in the agricultural sector by improving their access to extension and business support services. The idea of organizing a forum of rural women at the country level was also proposed to demonstrate the key role that rural women play in food production and security.

The need to strengthen digital agriculture was also underlined, with a focus on improving access to agricultural and rural data such as the agri-food supply chain and its stock levels as well as data on landless farmers who therefore cannot register in the electronic agricultural information system.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

During the meeting, several disagreements were observed that are summarised below:

- Representatives of the non-governmental institution reported that rural women are unaware of sustainable food systems and sustainable development goals in general as well as government adopted support measures directed to the woman entrepreneurs who are producing food. Government officials as well as FAO Azerbaijan office mentioned that they have conducted several projects directed to improve live of rural woman who are engaged in agricultural production and are part of the food system. It was recommended to take concrete steps to define the role of women's entrepreneurship in the formation of sustainable food systems.
- Another interesting opinion stated during the meeting were related to production of health food. It was mentioned that there is an abundance of food products in the market, but insufficient attention is paid to the impact of products on human health, as well as weak control over the use of pesticides. While acknowledging the existence of problems and the need to take appropriate measures to improve the situation, government officials have already noted that the government has already taken steps to establish a mechanism for initial control over the use of pesticides (Electronic Agricultural Information System - EKTIS).
- One of the main stakeholders raised his concern regarding to the unified translation of food into Azerbaijani language in order to avoid disagreements and misunderstandings.

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