

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 24 March 2021 10:00 GMT +06:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Third Sub-National Dialogue in Jamalpur
CONVENED BY	Khaja Abdul Hannan
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/25572/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Bangladesh

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

43

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0 0-18

3 19-30

28 31-50

7 51-65

5 66-80

0 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

38 Male

5 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?

While organizing the dialogue, the Convener has engaged different government ministries and departments into the process. Ministry of Food is leading the process in Bangladesh, but it has simultaneously engaged the Ministry of Agriculture, departments of agriculture extension and marketing, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, departments of livestock and fisheries, food safety authority, and directorate of national consumer rights protection. Together with that, participation and engagement of other relevant stakeholders, for example, farmers/ producers, food processors, farm owners' associations, vendors, restaurant owners, retailers, consumers' associations, small entrepreneurs, and public service providers, have been ensured. It has also focused on the fact that, not only the central bodies of the government, but also the local level service providers and authorities also commit to practice and contribute to the vision, objectives and the final outcomes of the Food Systems Summit.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Climate change and augmenting natural disasters are posing substantial threat to food security of Bangladesh. Government of Bangladesh is committed to take urgent actions at all levels to mitigate those impacts on food system while reaching the respective Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, which has been reinforced through the sub-national dialogues. The dialogue has also welcomed innovative ideas and thoughts that can transform the local food system, considering the natural disasters it faces, while conserving the bio-diversity of the area. The need for more sustainable use of natural resources, such as underground water, cultivable lands, and surface waterbodies, has also been emphasized. The call for ensuring fair prices and enhanced access to markets and extension services for smallholder farmers has been reiterated. Several government initiatives have been placed to address some of those. The local level potentials for have been explored and informed to policy-makers. This will pave the way to make the regional, as well as, the national food systems more inclusive, resilient, and equitable.

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

Ensuring participation or representation of different stakeholders is important in order to explore the local food system as a part of the national food system in greater depth. Participation in the dialogues sparks enthusiasm among all to explore, engage, and contribute more into the process. Thus, Dialogue Convenors should create and widen the opportunities for everyone to stay involved.

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

Jamalpur, one of the northern districts of Bangladesh, is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. It has been chosen to have a territorial dialogue for the United Nations Food Systems Summit because the district represents an important agro-ecological zone of Bangladesh, the river bars (char). The char areas are significant into the food systems as they are used to pursue agricultural activities such as, cropping, grazing land for cattle, and fishing, as well as to establish settlements.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) report of 1997 suggests that in the relatively lower reaches, where land is more fertile, cropping intensity in the chars appears to be between 150 and 185, which is quite similar to the average intensity of 165 for the entire country. The perennial availability of water in the rivers provides year-round opportunities for fishing to many of the char communities.

Although, vital for food production and offering rehabilitation and livelihood opportunities to some extent for the smallholder farmers who loose homes and cultivation lands every year, the chars are extremely vulnerable to erosion and floods. Impact of climate change has resulted in increased frequency of floods, storms, and river erosion in these areas.

Besides being hit by natural disasters, the char areas are extremely hard to reach as they lack necessary infrastructure and basic service delivery peripheries. People barely have access to agriculture extension services, markets, formal sector traders, and financial services. Thus, the dialogue was organized with an objective to learn their challenges related to food systems better and to facilitate a process where they can find solutions to their challenges.

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

Government and the private sector actors should invest together to establish cold chains and other necessary storage facilities to reduce crop loss and to ensure fair prices for farmers. Public-private investment is also required to develop food processing industry in the area, which has a very good prospect, considering the abundant food production. The Export Processing Zone (EPZ) that is under construction is expected to draw more private sector investments into the area, encompassing the food processing industry.

The area also has potentials to grow large scale dairy-based industries. Communication barriers, especially in the char areas, are hindering the private sector dairy processors to invest there. Joint initiatives from the government, financial service providers, dairy processors, and agro-tech companies are required to reap the benefits.

The government is committed to make infrastructural improvements to control floods and river erosion in the area. The Bangladesh Water Development Board has already passed a plan to construct a 113-kilometers protective dam with sluiceways on the river Jamuna from Dewanganj to Sharishabari Upazila (sub-districts) which will help to control floods and reduce river erosion, as a part of the master plan to control floods. Re-excavation of Jamuna river is also going on, which will help further to reduce losses due to floods. Government is also working to rehabilitate the people who lost homes due to river erosion in this area. Construction of accommodations, along with cattle shelters, in government-owned lands for them is underway. Once completed, it is expected to provide settlement for many landless people.

The representatives of hotels and restaurant owners associations has expressed intentions to cooperate with the government in ensuring preparing and selling safe, hygienic, and healthy foods. Representatives from various agriculture and livestock farm owners' associations have also shown interest to get training on producing safer products. Food processors urged to have only the safe ingredients in the markets, so that they do not need to worry about the quality of the ingredients they are using for food processing.

Potentials for climate-smart and flood-resilient agricultural practices should be examined in greater depth. Studies can help to suggest the crop varieties and farming practices most suitable for the area, in order to avoid crop losses due to floods.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

1: Availability of diversified, safe, and nutritious food:

Challenges:

Prevalence of diseases and insects in crops and vegetables is increasing due to recurring floods. Farmers use hormones to grow crops quickly and pesticides to prevent insects, which make the food unsafe. Cultivation of flood resilient crop varieties have not expanded much. Thunderstorms and heavy rainfalls also harm crop production.

There is shortage of cattle feed, and during floods the scarcity reaches an extreme. Prices of cattle feeds are increasing sharply. There is no means in the local level to check whether the grain-based cattle feeds available in the markets are adulterated. There is no shelter to keep cattle during floods, thus the low-income households have to sell out their cattle at a very low price during flood. Exposure to flood water increases prevalence of diseases in cattle, which also leads to lower milk production. Due to communication barriers, farmers cannot access services like artificial insemination.

Way Forward:

A plan to construct 113 kilometers protective dam with sluiceways on the river Jamuna from Dewanganj to Sharishabari Upazila (sub-districts) has been approved by the Bangladesh Water Development Board which will help to control floods and reduce river erosion, as a part of the master plan.

Chars have good potentials for cattle farming, as the households have favorable conditions for cattle rearing. The char lands can be turned into grazing lands, as good quality grasses can be grown there and the fodders produced in char lands are of very high quality.

2: Transformation, delivery, access, and role of private sector:

Challenges:

The recurring floods not only damage crops, but also hampers seed production. Roads are damaged due to floods every year, which disrupts the transportation and distribution of agricultural inputs. The district does not have improved waterways for communication; rail communication is also very limited. Thus, transportation costs for crop production and marketing is very high, which surges further during the flood season.

There is no cold storage or preservation facility available at farmers' level, especially for the cash crops like maize and chili. Farmers do not get proper price for their products, as they have to sell to middlemen and middlemen concentrate on their own profit.

Way Forward:

Excavation of rivers, construction of dams, repairing roads, and improvement of waterways and rail communication is required.

Setting up shared storage facilities by government and private sector for small farmers, especially in case of crops which are heavily produced in the area, will help reducing food loss and waste.

Digitization of the market system (i.e. giving farmers to sell directly to end customers using online platforms) can also enhance market access for farmers.

3: Consumer behaviors, nutrition, and food safety:

Challenges:

Lack of awareness.

Excessive use of unsafe colors, artificial flavors, additives, and unhealthy oils prevail in the area.

Ready-to-eat food vendors including hotels, restaurants, fast food shops, and bakeries/ confectionaries prepare food in unhygienic condition.

Way Forward:

Raising awareness about nutrition and standard (balanced) diet is required.

Farmers are required to be trained up about proper use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Food processors, vendors/ traders and restaurant should get awareness about the permitted limits of use of colors, artificial flavors, and other additives.

4: Climate vulnerability, inclusion, and governance:

Challenges:

Floods, recurring flood (four times in 2020), and river erosion are not only causing losses of crop (including loss of cash crops like jute) and cultivable lands, but they are also harming the fisheries farms.

There is no food processing facility in the area, thus perishable crops have to be sold at low price right after harvesting. This also hinders ensuring fair price for the farmers.

Way Forward:

Proper dams and embankments with sluiceways should be constructed for flood control.

Proper water drainage system should be in place.

Excavation of Jamuna River is underway, It should be completed quickly.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There was no major area of divergence among the participants. All the participants have emphasized on infrastructural development to control floods and river erosion, and improvement of flood resistant transportation and communication facilities which they think can improve the food production and transportation situation of the area.

One of the issues raised by the group discussants to the government representatives was that although the government is subsidizing 70% on the imports of agricultural machineries, the rate of mechanization of agricultural activities at the individual farmers' level has been very low. Thus, discussants have urged to the agricultural department to take other complementary initiatives to promote mechanization of agriculture at the grass-root level and to reach these facilities to the smallholder farmers.

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