

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Friday, 18 June 2021 13:00 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Science for Food System Policy: an emerging agenda
CONVENED BY	Kundhavi Kadiresan, Managing Director, Global Engagement & Innovation, CGIAR ; Marion Jansen, Director of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD ; Ousmane Badiane, Executive Chairperson, Akademiya2063
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/25576/
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

91

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

46 Male

45 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

0 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

15 International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

10 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

6 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

13 United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

47 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

Specifically multistakeholder inclusivity: In our dialogue we had participants from the UNFSS sciencific group as well as a panel of friendly critical to help us explore the topic of science for Food System Policy and specifically data gaps. Our paneillsts and invited attendees were selected based on their regional, gender and expertise to ensure a diversity and views from across various elements of the food system and the challenges facing it. Invited participants included stakeholders engaged in Action Track deliberations, UNFSS Scientific Group, policy makers from various organizations and countries.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

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

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

This was a closed event with a limited number of participants that were invited by the convening organisations to keep the conversation tight in the short space of time and to be able to run break out groups focusing on data gaps for the 5 Action Tracks. The goal for this Dialogue was to create a better understanding of the evidence gaps currently holding back action to transform food systems, and consequently to kick start the definition of a priority research agenda. This dialogue thus acted as a preparatory step towards the Science Days on July 8-9, and was organised in collaboration with the Scientific Group. Importantly, the Dialogue focussed on the content of the research agenda and did not cover the question how science for food systems policy should be organised institutionally, a question which is currently being studied in other fora.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

As stated above, the goal for this Dialogue was to create a better understanding of the evidence gaps currently holding back action to transform food systems, and consequently to kick start the definition of a priority research agenda. This dialogue thus acted as a preparatory step towards the Science Days on July 8-9, and was organised in collaboration with the Scientific Group. Importantly, the Dialogue focussed on the content of the research agenda and did not cover the question how science for food systems policy should be organised institutionally, a question which is currently being studied in other fora.

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

Finally, an important point raised in the discussions was who gets to define what the “evidence gaps” are. The consensus which emerged is that this should be a dialogue between researchers, policy makers and stakeholders.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

Main insights by Action Track on evidence gaps

In the Action Track 1 discussion, a distinction was made between data, evidence, and what we can do. There are considerable data gaps on many issues relevant to food security and nutrition. For example, much of the data on food safety issues is fairly old; there is a lack of accurate data on the burden of foodborne disease. In other cases, estimates are not sufficiently granular; e.g. food waste estimates tend to be at the global level; on many issues, data is not disaggregated by gender. There is also a gap in basic data on diet quality (e.g. what people are actually eating), or which food environment they face. Tracking along food value chains is similarly limited. An important gap is around the question of “agency” – i.e. what influence people have themselves. Evidence is missing on policy effectiveness – for example, how could nutrient gaps be filled? How could we influence food environments, and how would this in turn shape consumer behaviour? There is also not enough evidence on how to make healthy food more affordable. Faced with these gaps, we also need to have better insights on what we can do concretely. Evidence mapping could be a good place to start.

In the Action Track 2 discussion, a number of similar issues came up, including the lack of information on what people eat and why (consumer psychology, values, culture, and the role of policies in shaping demand). An important question is how far progress on healthy diets will get us (e.g. in terms of reaching sustainability objectives), which touches on the broader point of synergies and trade-offs of different policy instruments. On the one hand, it feels as if enough is known about what constitutes a healthy and sustainable diet to start moving policy; on the other hand, we don't always know specifics of current dietary patterns, drivers, and policy effectiveness.

In the Action Track 3 discussion, five main themes were raised. A first point is that we do not always understand the effects of (current or proposed) policies, and their synergies or trade-offs. A second and related point is that assessments of policies sometimes overlook the social and/or the environmental dimension, but both are needed to identify solutions which can be adopted and scaled. Third, knowledge can come from different sources, and the role of traditional and indigenous knowledge has often been overlooked. A fourth issue is that it is not always clear when trade-offs are real, and when they are simply a narrative – i.e. distinguishing facts versus myths. A final point is that more knowledge is needed on how to drive long-term trends to stimulate positive change.

In the Action Track 4 discussion, recurring and intersecting themes were the role of data, the role of structures and localisation, and the role of agency. For example, information is often sparse on the number of people working in food supply chains, and their vulnerability, as well as on the different pathways taken by different households. The role of agency (i.e. how much influence people themselves have over their own lives) is key to the work of Action Track 4, but very little is currently known about how much agency people have, and it is not obvious how this should be measured, nor is there much evidence on how various policies would affect agency and what their costs and benefits would be. There are also numerous open questions on structural and local aspects, e.g. the role of land rights, the impact of small-scale versus large-scale farming, etc.

In the Action Track 5 discussion, a central concern was the link between the social and environmental aspects of systems. Information is often missing on the social aspects of systems, as well as on “tipping points” for both social and environmental systems. Cost benefit analysis is also missing on the impact of various possible initiatives to build resilience.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Feedback from the critical friends

A panel of four “critical friends” (Elise Golan, Geeta Sethi, Eugenio Diaz-Bonilla and Karim el-Aynaoui) and an additional special guest (Shakuntala Thilsted) reflected on the ideas generated in the Action Track breakout sessions. Some of the points raised were the following:

- Development is a learning process – and permanent. We will never fully overcome data or evidence gaps, our knowledge will always be incomplete. While this means that we may need to act before we have all the facts, we should still remain flexible and try to avoid rash decisions.
- Trade-offs are inevitable, and not well understood. It is important to recognize and follow or measure them, but be careful trying to always minimize them. For example, given some current estimates of the externalities associated with food, internalising these costs could hypothetically double the price of food. Some of the necessary transformations of food systems may similarly create negative effects on people's employment and livelihoods. But the fact that trade-offs exist should not become a reason for inaction. Some policies may indeed make some people worse, but may still be what is needed.
- Based on the reflections from the various Action Tracks it seems that information on preferences, values, cultural aspects, desirability... are particularly lacking.
- While the discussion focused mostly on identifying evidence gaps where more research is needed, we should also be thinking about how we make better use of the existing evidence. In fact, given the knowledge we currently have, we're not doing great in terms of policies. We should think about issues around communicating science to policy makers; these are equally important.
- Information is often missing at the local level, for example on local foods (and their nutritional content, prices, etc). But a creative use of existing information (e.g. moving back and forth between information on the production side and on the consumption side) can often reveal “entry points” for change. There is a need to better capture of what is happening in the informal sector, which is so important for the agri-food domain.
- The importance of safeguarding the operating space for science behind the policy formulation process was also highlighted.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Main insights Science for Policy Dialogue 18 June**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Main-insights-Science-for-Policy-18-June-Dialogue.docx>