

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 26 May 2021 08:41 GMT +12:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Action Track 4- Livelihoods and Equity in Fiji
CONVENED BY	Mr Ritesh Dass-Permanent Secretary-Ministry of Agriculture
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/25941/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Fiji

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

157

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

18

19-30

109

31-50

29

51-65

1

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

67 Male

90 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

28 Agriculture/crops

9 Fish and aquaculture

11 Livestock

11 Agro-forestry

8 Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

4 Education

3 Communication

3 Food processing

1 Food retail, markets

2 Food industry

Financial Services

15 Health care

4 Nutrition

16 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

42 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

1 Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

18 Local Non-Governmental Organization

14 International Non-Governmental Organization

4 Indigenous People

9 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

67 Government and national institution

5 Regional economic community

18 United Nations

1 International financial institution

1 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

2 Consumer group

17 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The Fiji National Dialogue was divided into five separate Action Track dialogues, each focusing on a specific Action Track. This report refers exclusively to Action Track 4 – Advance Equitable Livelihoods. The Fiji National Dialogue for Action Track 4 was curated by the Fiji Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and led by the Fiji Convenor, the Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Mr Ritesh Dass. Technical support for the curation of the dialogue was provided by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) offices in Suva, Fiji. Recognizing and observing the UNFSS Principles of Engagement, a series of highly consultative, inclusive, preparatory meetings were held in the lead-up to the dialogue with key government ministries and partners such as the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the Ministry of Economy, the International Fund for Agriculture Development, IFAD, and the Ministry of Agriculture as the national Convenor. The preparatory meetings developed the dialogue agenda, framed questions and topics for discussion, developed a group reporting template to focus and guide group discussions and identified themes for discussion across three strands (i) Access to Economic Opportunities (ii) Access to Productive Resources and Services (iii) Gender Inequality in the Food System. The Action Track 4 dialogue was chaired by the Fiji Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and officially opened by its Permanent Secretary, Ms Jennifer Poole. The preparatory meetings highlighted the Summit's Principles of Engagement and ensured that they were understood and incorporated into the format of the dialogue agenda and the identification of participants. In addition to this, participants were sent a URL to register online where they were required to read and agree to the Principles before being able to register. This ensured that everyone read and understood the Principles and committed to the SDGs before participating in the Dialogue.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

As highlighted above, the Fiji national dialogue on Action Track 4 ensured that the UNFSS seven Principles of Engagement were observed throughout the dialogue curation process and its preparatory meetings. They were reflected in the development of the dialogue agenda and in the careful selection of participants from a diverse range of stakeholders. The need to (i) act with urgency, (ii) commit to the Summit and show (iii) respect for all views and individuals were highlighted throughout the dialogue preparatory process, and were endorsed by stakeholders during the dialogue as well. The (iv) acknowledgement of complexity in our food systems was highlighted, particularly in the context of Fiji and the Pacific, where the food we eat not only brings together as families and communities – it also connects us back to the land and sea, where our food is traditionally sourced from. Transformation therefore, would require a systemic multi-stakeholder approach, taking into account the fragility of our food systems and unique vulnerabilities to factors such as climate, environment, biodiversity and food safety challenges etc. (v) Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity (vi) Complement the work of others – This was reflected in the diverse group of 157 participants who were part of the multi-stakeholder national dialogue - from areas of science, business, policy, healthcare and academia, farmers, youth and women's organisations, consumer groups and environmental activists. The dialogue provided an opportunity to 'think outside the box' and share innovative thinking, connect stakeholders and broaden partnerships. (vii) Build trust - The dialogues was curated and facilitated in a way to ensure a "safe space", promote trust and encourage mutual respect for ideas and discussion.

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

The Summit Principles of Engagement are an important guidance for Fiji in the curation of its dialogues across all five Action Tracks, including the National Dialogue. The Principles encouraged Fiji to think innovative, transformative and to draw on the wisdom of a diverse group of stakeholders and partners to explore solutions in our food systems, and to help advance progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, the Principles were used to guide different stages of Fiji's dialogue preparatory process and assisted in the identification of participants and stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and diversity. The Principles also assisted in facilitating discussions to ensure that all views were heard and respected and that any divergent views arising at any stage of the process were taken into consideration, listened to with respect and recorded.

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

The Fiji national dialogue on Action Track 4 – Advance Equitable Livelihoods was held on 26 May 2021 at a crucial time as the country battled its second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic with restrictive measures and lockdowns. This makes this Food Systems Summit even more crucial to Fiji as it enables the country to study the challenges exposed or exacerbated by the COVID crisis and to find transformative solutions to emerge and build back. This is the fourth national dialogue to be organized for Fiji in May 2021. Curation and Methodology — In compliance with the country’s COVID-19 restrictions, the Fiji national dialogue was virtually curated on the Zoom platform, using a participatory method of wide, multi-sectoral stakeholder engagement. In addition, interaction and crowdsourcing platforms such as Slido, polls and the Zoom chat box were also used to crowdsource questions and engage participants in live polls and quizzes throughout the duration of the four-hour dialogue. One hundred and fifty seven participants took part in the dialogue that was officially opened by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Ms Jennifer Poole. Participants represented government ministries, development agencies, UN agencies, civil society, international institutions, Pacific regional agencies, women’s groups, international NGOs and academia. Prior to the dialogue, participants received the following from the Secretariat: (i) Invitation to participate in the dialogue (ii) Dialogue Agenda (iii) Relevant resource materials (reading materials, video links etc.) (iv) Reporting template identifying questions and topics for discussion groups Dialogue Format — Registration of participants (online in advance and on the day itself) — Official opening address by the Permanent Secretary for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWPA) — Setting the Scene What is the UN World Food Systems Summit 2021? (Video) — What is a Food System? (Fiji’s National Food Systems Dialogue) by the Director of Poverty and Monitoring Alleviation — Poverty Status in Fiji – Fiji Bureau of Statistics — Presentations on Action Track 4 o Inequality in Access to Economic Opportunities: International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) o Inequality in Access to Productive Resources and Services: Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) o Gender Inequalities in the Food System: Department for Women (MWCPS) — Discussion groups on themes and questions focused on questions such as (i) Who are the groups with less economic opportunities in Fiji? Has this change after COVID-19? (ii) What are the issues faced by vulnerable/ marginalized groups in accessing economic opportunities in Fiji? (iii) Current status of work in addressing inequality in accessing economic opportunities – marginalized / vulnerable groups (iv) What are the transformational approaches in the food system in achieving equal access to economic opportunity for all. — Participation and Engagement – Through crowdsourcing using Slido questions, live polls, zoom chat, zoom breakout discussion groups, plenary reports/discussions and presentations. Group reporting templates were also shared with participants to review following the dialogue to allow them the opportunity to include any information that may have been missed out by rapporteurs — Communications and media — The outcomes of the dialogue and key messages from the Fiji Convenor were highlighted in a Press Release issued to the media which received extensive coverage by local mainstream media and on social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). UNFSS hashtags #UNFSS @foodsystems #SDGs and #foodsystems were used in all media content to ensure that messaging had a multiplier effect. Links to media coverage are included in the attachments section at the end of this report.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The Dialogue focused on a comprehensive exploration of Fiji's food systems as follows:

Setting the scene: Poverty Status in Fiji: Fiji Bureau of Statistics

According to the 2019-20 Household & Income Expenditure Survey, national poverty rates stand at 29.9 % and more attention should focus on rural areas (41.5%) and the Eastern Division (42.7%) which recorded the poorest. Poverty rates were high amongst individuals living with household heads with low education attainment, employed in the agriculture sector and engaged as subsistence and family/community worker. Employment income accounts for 74% of the total household income. In 2019-20, only 4% of the total household income in Fiji received by the poor compared to 22% of the total household income received by the rich households. Similar distribution was evident in consumption.

Strand 1 - Inequality in Access to Economic Opportunities: International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD)

In addressing inequality in access to economic opportunities, IFAD focused on countries strategies defined by governments, targeting hard to reach poor rural people, strong focus on women and new emphasis on youth. In the Pacific, IFAD has been working through partnership with local NGOs in community development, improving access to markets, designing investment projects that engage civil society, supporting inclusive value chains, promoting integrated farming systems and strengthening farmers organisations.

IFAD's transformative approach include multi-stakeholder engagement, leveraging on different partner's strengths, and promoting community engagement and capacity building as key aspects to ensure ownership and intervention's long-term success. Linking small holders into established or new value chains, data is very important: need to know where are the poor, start small, implement, measure effectiveness and scale-up.

Strand 2 - Inequality in Access to Productive Resources and Services: Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)

A snapshot of farmer's distribution in Fiji showed that there are 1,544 (2%) commercial, 3,659 (5%) semi-commercial and 65,970 (93%) subsistence farmers in the country. The types of assistance provided by MoA include Infrastructure and Mechanization (e.g construction of farm roads), Processing/Distributing/Marketing (e.g construction of packing sheds) and Services (e.g procurement of wooden & fibre glass boats). In the monitoring of projects, MOA found 73% of implemented projects are successful in achieving its intended objective, 88% of assisted projects have access to stable markets, 14% of assistance has been provided to female beneficiaries in the past 3 years and 5% of farmers registered under the so-called Committee on Better Utilization of Land, CBUL, are women.

Some of the issues/gaps identified are lack of systematic approach in capturing participation of women in agriculture, reliance on government assistance and reactivity to disasters rather than being proactive. The challenges faced are culture and traditional roles and responsibilities of women, accessibility to assistance by maritime and rural communities and general mindset of the population.

Game changing solution include communal storage facility (cold storage) for disaster and urban agriculture (planting fruit trees instead of empty green spaces, spice garden, mini-container gardens of edible plants and plant both edible and decorative plants etc.)

Strand 3 - Gender Inequalities in the Food System: Department for Women (DOW-MWCPA)

The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation presented some of the gender issues in the Fiji food systems. Women contributions are less visible and not considered as professional farmers/fishers and more related to subsistence or informal income generation activities. Unequal access to productive resources and services limits women's productive potential in the sector. Unequal employment opportunities, with heavy workloads for women with many responsibilities despite the lack of resources and being responsible for children, food security and nutrition, were highlighted as part of the barriers faced by women.

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 and conclusions

A summary of the main outcomes of the Group Discussions is reported in the next section, however, below are additional findings across the three thematic areas: Advancing equitable livelihoods in the food systems requires an intersectional perspective when considering disadvantaged groups such as women, girls and youth, people with disabilities, low skilled and low levels of educated persons. Policy makers should look at both creating economic opportunities as well as removing the barriers faced by disadvantaged groups so that no one is left behind. These barriers include social, physical, institutional, structural, environmental, distance, class etc.

Building resilience

These disadvantaged groups are not able to cope with the multiple shocks of natural disasters and pandemics such as COVID19. Therefore, any long-term initiatives to provide economic and livelihood opportunities must also build resilience in these groups through diversification of activities, facilitating access to financial services, encouraging the establishment of home gardens, providing agriculture insurance, recognizing the value of traditional knowledge and practices in sustaining food systems and having a communal storage facility where people can store their crops, livestock, assets during disasters.

Strengthening collaboration and coordination

There are many innovative and beneficial initiatives implemented by government, development agencies, NGOs etc., that could bring about transformative changes in the food systems on a bigger scale. However, this is not happening as there needs to be better collaboration and coordination amongst the different stakeholders. A mechanism such as a "food protection" think tank should be established to explore how collaboration and coordination amongst the various stakeholders can be improved.

Addressing gender inequality

Policy makers must recognise women and youth as leaders and influencers of the food system and involve them in decision making at all levels. Women have less visibility in the digital space and this limits their access to economic and livelihood opportunities. Better sex-disaggregated data is needed to understand their needs and priorities and inform policy makers.

Digital technology

Digital technology is an invaluable educational and information tool in closing the information gap and assessing economic opportunities. Government should ensure women are more visible in the digital space by providing access to mobile phones and internet in rural areas.

New opportunities

COVID19 has increased appreciation for local produce and food producers. Government to work with food producers and sellers, hotel chefs and continue to encourage use of local produce under Fijian made branding. TV shows and digital platforms should showcase innovative cooking and food programmes showing local and nutritious foods, value addition tutorials, create a gastronomical culture in Fiji etc.

Government should work with farmers, and private sector to institutionalize COVID19 safe measures from farm level to plate to avoid disruption of supply chains and inspire confidence of supermarkets and consumers.

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		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

Strand 1 – Access to economic opportunities

Groups with less economic opportunities in Fiji have less ability to cope with multiple shocks such as cyclones and the pandemic. Generally, these are people with lower levels of education, women, girls and youth, the informal sector and physically challenged people. These groups also lack information and awareness of the different support mechanisms available to assist them.

Creating economic opportunities should include linking subsistence farmers to markets and institutionalizing value chains. Value addition activities should be promoted. Assisting women to access finance is key to empowering women entrepreneurs. Government, land owners and key stakeholders should explore land tenure and finance to attract more investments in the agriculture sector. Need better targeted trainings and capacity building programmes. Sub-division housing policies should include backyards for home gardening needs. School gardens should be brought back into the curriculum. Need more innovative local agriculture, fisheries, cooking segments on TV etc., to educate and inspire Fijians. Digital technology and platforms must be explored to facilitate access to economic opportunities.

There are many good programmes implemented by various ministries, development agencies, NGOs and faith-based organisations. Coordination and collaboration must be strengthened and there should be stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Furthermore, the solesolevaki (working together) tradition should be encouraged and supported. Most traditional knowledge and sustainable practices are underestimated in providing economic opportunities for people, particularly during the pandemic.

Strand 2 – Access to productive resources and services

Social inequalities, power relations, geographical remoteness mean some groups have less access to productive infrastructure and services therefore less likely to have access to economic opportunities.

Solutions to address accessibility must take into consideration the impact of climate change, natural disasters and opportunities that digital technology can provide in closing the information gap or enhancing coordination amongst different stakeholders to bring about efficiency. Solutions must be inclusive, reflecting the views of key stakeholders, including traditional leaders, women and youth.

Policies must better link nutrition back to agriculture production. They must translate to the local, grass root level otherwise they will not be sustainable – this means genuine collaboration between key government ministries, provincial councils, grassroots mobilizers etc., and the business communities. A “food protection” think tank should be established to continually discuss and propose solutions for food security during pandemics and natural disasters. A key stakeholder in the nutrition agenda of the family is the mother, therefore mothers should be empowered by involving them in discussions so that decision makers are able to better understand the nutrition choices they make. Government to consider having an insurance scheme for agriculture sector.

Strand 3 - Gender Inequality in the Food System

Markets are an important component of the food system and women make up more than 50% of market vendors in Fiji, providing livelihood and economic opportunities for them. However, they face a number of challenges that further prevent them from benefitting from the same opportunities as their male counterparts, e.g., they have less visibility in the digital space and thus lose out on opportunities for on-line sales. CV19 has further exposed their vulnerabilities as they struggle to transport their produce to the market place due to border restrictions.

In order to close the inequality gap, policies must respond to the needs and priorities of women., e.g., internet coverage in rural areas and providing access to smart phones targeting women, women assisting women transport their produce to the border during lockdowns and targeting women for training and capacity building programmes.

An assessment of impact of backyard garden initiative on food security, nutrition.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Some of the areas in which participants had different opinions are described below.

Strand 1 – Access to economic opportunities

Traditional knowledge and modern knowledge gained need to be translated into ACTIONS, as the ultimate is the BEHAVIOUR CHANGE that needs to happen by individuals within all our households. Implementations of new farming techniques that is more sustainable.

Information on economic opportunities are made available in the communities but due to limited understanding or education, people are unable to read properly and/or understand the economic opportunities available

Strand 2 – Access to productive resources and services

Food producers have food produce but are often faced with access problem due to remoteness and out of existing infrastructures.

Empower youths to plant by breaking community perception that farming is just for those who have not been able to succeed in other areas in their lives. Messaging on healthy foods is quite low compared to Coca Cola and Fanta, it might be worthwhile for stronger messages on healthy foods. Getting food from the market doesn't mean it is healthy - farmers need to be aware of the implications of chemical insecticide that we as consumers ingest due to unethical practices.

Many policies are discussed only at national level but it is really important to be able to contextualise policies to community level and are sustainable. Transfer of skills and technologies on the various animal science disciplines to make livestock production attractive and profitable to farmers, thus creating employment opportunities, increasing rural incomes and reducing rural urban migration.

Strand 3 - Gender Inequality in the Food System

At community level there are cultural barriers. Communal work is encouraged in our communities, however women, men and youth have their own groups to carry out their community work. There is a need to break that cultural barrier so that work is not seen to be done in isolation but something through collaboration and inclusive.

We need an assessment tool for food distribution in order to identify those in need for food distribution during this pandemic and assist government to focus their intervention. The absence of this assessment tool put those that cannot called the helpline or have access to this service into disadvantage.

Free trainings and workshops for women into farming would create some mobility and having investor ready projects supported by government subsidies targeted to women only will be a great incentive. Highlighting successful women in agriculture and hands-on farming through media to motivate women who desire but lack the confidence to step into this field as they are usually left as assistants to their husbands who are active farmers.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Food systems dialogue calls for transformative approaches to advance equitable livelihoods in Fiji.**
<https://www.facebook.com/fiji.agriculture/posts/2934098143528037>