# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

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| **DIALOGUE DATE** | Wednesday, 30 June 2021 15:30 GMT -04:00 |
| **DIALOGUE TITLE** | Final U.S. National Food Systems Dialogue: Pathways for More Sustainable U.S. Food Systems |
| **CONVENED BY** | Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh, Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture |
| **DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE** | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/27245/ |
| **DIALOGUE TYPE** | Member State |
| **GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS** | United States of America |

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

90

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0-18 | | 19-30 | | 31-50 | | 51-65 | | 66-80 | | 80+ |

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | | Female | | Prefer not to say or Other |

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28 | Agriculture/crops | 15 | Education | 2 | Health care |
| 4 | Fish and aquaculture | 1 | Communication | 2 | Nutrition |
| 8 | Livestock | 1 | Food processing | 2 | National or local government |
| | Agro-forestry | 2 | Food retail, markets | | Utilities |
| 2 | Environment and ecology | 4 | Food industry | | Industrial |
| 3 | Trade and commerce | | Financial Services | 16 | Other |

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Small/medium enterprise/artisan | 1 | Workers and trade union |
| 4 | Large national business | | Member of Parliament |
| 5 | Multi-national corporation | 2 | Local authority |
| 2 | Small-scale farmer | | Government and national institution |
| | Medium-scale farmer | | Regional economic community |
| | Large-scale farmer | 1 | United Nations |
| 28 | Local Non-Governmental Organization | | International financial institution |
| 9 | International Non-Governmental Organization | 1 | Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance |
| 1 | Indigenous People | 1 | Consumer group |
| 10 | Science and academia | 21 | Other |

# 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The United States hosted its final National Food Systems Dialogue ("the Dialogue") on June 30, 2021. The event used the Summit principles of engagement: Act with Urgency, Commit to the Summit, Be Respectful, Recognize Complexity, Embrace Multi-Stakeholder Inclusivity, Complement the Work of Others, and Build Trust. See below for specifics.

## HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The U.S. National Food Systems Dialogues seek to empower U.S. domestic stakeholders to participate in the preparation for the UN Food Systems Summit. The final U.S. National Dialogue, held virtually, embraced multi-stakeholder inclusivity, and engaged stakeholders from across U.S. food systems, ranging from U.S. producers, agricultural organizations, food industry, research and academic institutions, farm and food workers, and civil society groups. All invitees from the first and second U.S. Dialogues were invited to the final Dialogue. The Dialogue sought to ensure representation from minority groups, women, and youth in food and agriculture and provided a forum for participants to share diverse perspectives, learn from each other, and collaborate to identify solutions to pressing challenges. Small group discussions at the Dialogue emphasized respect and trust-building through facilitation by objective U.S. government experts and researchers. The Chatham House Rule of non-attribution encouraged participants to engage in frank and collaborative discussion. The Dialogue discussion topics highlighted the complex synergies and tradeoffs of food systems policy interventions and solutions. To build trust, promote transparency, and accurately reflect the voices of U.S. food systems stakeholders, readout reports and summaries went through multiple levels of review and validation. The notetakers sent anonymized notes from the breakout rooms to facilitators, who developed anonymized reports that were shared and validated by participants before incorporation into the final official UN Dialogues Gateway feedback form. A complementary report highlighting high-level outcomes will be posted on the USDA Food Systems website.

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

N/A

# 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

In following with the guidelines of the UN Dialogues Toolkit and to ensure a systematic, comprehensive approach to assessing food systems, the final U.S. National Dialogue focused on identifying pathways for building more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable food systems in the United States. The discussions built on the results of the first and second U.S. National Food Systems Dialogues.

The event agenda consisted of opening remarks, followed by one fifty-minute small group breakout sessions led by U.S. government experts and researchers, and concluding with a closing plenary featuring read-outs of the breakout session discussions by facilitators.

To motivate the breakout discussions, participants were requested to come to the Dialogue ready to share their perspectives on the steps necessary to create pathways towards more sustainable food systems in the United States over the next 3-5 years, keeping in mind the challenges and solutions identified in the first and second National Dialogues.

Discussion Questions: To encourage a systematic assessment of pathways, breakout groups considered the following main questions:
• How do we advance sustainable food systems in the United States over the next 3-5 years (economic, social, environmental)? What approaches are necessary?
• How can food system actors work together to meet these goals?
• Additional questions:
o What steps/approaches are necessary to make progress?
o What structures/processes are necessary to ensure that all stakeholders and perspectives are included?
• Consider synergies and tradeoffs between the three pillars of sustainability:
o What are the synergies among social, economic, and environmental objectives?
o What are the tradeoffs among social, economic, and environmental objectives and how will we manage these tradeoffs and recognize or compensate those who might be made worse off?

Breakout groups were asked to consider pathways to advancing the three pillars of sustainability:

1. Economic - Decent incomes for farmers, farm workers and workers along the supply chain plus fair and competitive markets that serve all sized producers (production, processing, aggregation/distribution, markets)
2. Social - Access to nutritious foods and healthy diets, bolster participation of socially disadvantaged groups
3. Environmental - Agricultural production that minimizes negative environmental impacts and mitigates climate change

### 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

This report represents the views of U.S. stakeholders who participated in the Dialogue; it does not represent the official views of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the United States Government.

The focus of the final Dialogue was to identify pathways for improving the sustainability of U.S. food systems. While the discussion topics were organized around the three pillars of sustainability as described above, some pathways addressed a single pillar of sustainability while others considered cross-cutting aspects of sustainability and tradeoffs across food systems. Participants agreed that all three pillars of sustainability should be considered holistically. The pathways towards more sustainable U.S. food systems by 2030 that emerged were: 1) resilient, efficient, and productive food systems based on fair and competitive markets; 2) nutrition security, equitable livelihoods, and inclusion ensured by collaboration; 3) climate-smart agriculture enabled by innovation, incentives, and markets; and 4) cross-cutting approaches including access to technology and adoption of innovation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, education and capacity building, equity and inclusion, incentives for change and investment at all levels, resilience, efficiency, and productivity, and trust and collaboration across sectors.

(1) Economic Pathway: resilient, efficient, and productive food systems based on fair and competitive markets

Dialogue participants identified building resilient, efficient, and productive food systems through fair and competitive markets as a pathway towards greater economic sustainability. Some participants hypothesized that increased productivity, efficiency, and deployment of appropriate technologies could increase profitability and create synergies between social, environmental, and economic goals. Some participants noted how resilient supply chains and access to rural broadband could increase market access. Some participants emphasized that science- and rules-based international trade is also a key to expanding market access. Funding and market-based mechanisms were noted by some participants to incentivize social and environmental actions. Some participants stressed the importance of resilience, noting the need to increase adaptivity across infrastructure, supply chains, and food systems.

(2) Social Pathway: nutrition security, equitable livelihoods, and inclusion ensured by collaboration

Dialogue participants agreed that pathways towards greater social sustainability require collaboration to achieve positive outcomes in nutrition security, equitable livelihoods, and inclusion. Participants emphasized the urgent need for diverse stakeholders to build trust and work together to make progress towards sustainable food systems. Some participants highlighted the importance of nutrition security, not simply increasing calories, but enhancing the quality of those calories and access to safe, nutritious, healthy food. Participants also agreed that producers' equitable access to economic opportunities is a priority, and that policies and programs should prioritize the most vulnerable communities. Some participants noted the importance of youth engagement in food systems. Some participants highlighted the need to improve information flows amongst disadvantaged and minority farmers to increase access to markets and programs.

(3) Environmental Pathway: climate-smart agriculture enabled by innovation, incentives, and markets

Dialogue participants agreed that pathways towards greater environmental sustainability are built through innovation, incentives, and markets that enable the adoption of climate-smart agriculture. Some participants stressed that multiple levels of public investment and support are needed to plan and adapt to environmental crises. Some approaches mentioned by participants include resilient infrastructure and supply chains, voluntary incentives for climate-smart agriculture, financial measures to mitigate risk (price or yield supports, crop insurance, and insurance markets), investment in research and development, and extension and capacity building. Some participants noted that improved use of and access to technology could allow producers to stay competitive, resilient, and to learn from extreme climate events. Some participants explored the idea of building soil health and carbon markets, noting that better-functioning carbon markets could encourage farmer participation.

(4) Cross-Cutting Approaches

Some participants highlighted approaches that would address the social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainability and should be considered in U.S. pathways towards more sustainable food systems. Some participants agreed that multi-stakeholder dialogue was an important first step in the pathways to more sustainable U.S. food systems. Cross-cutting approaches included:
o Education and capacity building amongst producers and consumers
o Equity and inclusion, with a focus on youth, women, and marginalized groups
o Incentives for change and investment at all levels
o Multi-stakeholder dialogue
o Resilience, efficiency, and productivity
o Trust and collaboration across sectors

## ACTION TRACKS

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|---|---|
| ✓ | 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

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

## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/4

Economic Pathway: Participants agreed that pathways towards greater economic sustainability should be based on fair and competitive markets that contribute to productive, efficient, and resilient food systems.

Some participants noted the importance of building more fair and competitive markets for large and small producers. Strategies mentioned by some participants include avoiding excessive market concentration and identifying and addressing barriers to entry to level the playing field. Some participants hypothesized that increased productivity, efficiency, and deployment of appropriate technologies could increase profitability and create synergies between social, environmental, and economic goals. Some participants suggested that productivity gains were the best way to satisfy most stakeholders, noting that there should be sustainable, profitable production by our farmers.

Some participants stressed the need for continued innovation and technology that is scalable and inclusive. Some participants noted how supply chains and rural broadband could increase market access. Supply chain dynamics could contribute to a more diversified output and expand market access opportunities for farmers, some participants hypothesized. Some participants noted that infrastructure and broadband could improve supply chain management and help to communicate economic signals across the value chain (e.g. commodity prices, availability, input costs). Rural broadband could connect farmers to consumers and producers of all scales to work with clients including integrators, feed sales, consumers, and processers, added some participants.

Some participants emphasized that science- and rules-based international trade is also a key to expanding market access, noting that further discussions on the role of trade in sustainability and resilience are needed. Some participants noted that support for place-based food systems compliments a large-scale focus on national and global markets. One group outlined a Local Pathway, which could seek to strengthen domestic local and regional food systems through procurement, subsidies, and market access. The group also outlined a Global Pathway to contribute to global food security through a rules-based trading system and sharing U.S. expertise in agricultural research, innovation, and technology. Both Local and Global Pathways could be complementary. Another group noted that Indigenous communities face nutrition security challenges and that all communities should have access to decentralized food systems that allow for local food sovereignty.

Funding and market-based mechanisms were mentioned by some participants to incentivize specific actions (social or environmental). For example, some participants mentioned that giving greater value to farm labor could generate more livable wages or better-functioning carbon markets could encourage farmer participation. Some participants stressed the importance of assuring livable wages, access to healthcare, and equity/fairness for all people with emphasis on those working in the food system. Some participants highlighted that approaches to investment and regulation should benefit national and international interests to grow markets and improve food systems at all scales.

Some participants stressed the importance of resilience, noting the need to increase adaptivity across infrastructure, supply chains, and food systems. Some participants agreed that more diversified food systems could improve resilience, as well as generate novel economic opportunities. Improved nutrition security and the ability to adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses were additional benefits of resilience cited by some participants.

Some participants noted a possible tradeoff between efficiency and resiliency, mentioning how efficient supply chains lacked resilience during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some participants noted that economic objectives may be in opposition to other sustainability goals, mentioning how sustainable agricultural practices could increase the cost of food production and food prices.

### ACTION TRACKS

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### KEYWORDS

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/4

Social Pathway: Participants agreed that pathways towards greater social sustainability involve collaboration to achieve positive outcomes in nutrition security, equitable livelihoods, and inclusion. One group suggested that the social aspects of sustainability are the most difficult to resolve. Some participants agreed that there is an urgent need for stakeholders to collaborate and take steps to alter existing power dynamics to enhance social equity in food systems.

Some participants highlighted that nutrition security is a key element of social sustainability. Some participants noted that building a resilient and sustainable food system will not simply involve increasing calories but enhancing the quality of those calories and increasing access to safe, nutritious, and healthy food. Some participants noted that building a nutrition "safety net" is important in disadvantaged communities and highlighted the opportunity for long-term savings in healthcare through nutrition assistance and education. Some participants agreed that food systems need to be easy and accessible to consumers, especially populations lacking in access to nutritious foods. Some participants noted that vulnerable low-income, marginalized, and/or non-English speaking consumers can lack access to available food delivery programs.

Participants agreed that equitable access to economic opportunities by producers is a priority. Barriers to equitable livelihoods facing producers, noted by some participants, include geographical and market barriers and fair pricing that hinder the ability of smaller producers or new entrants in the production sector. Pathways identified for equitable access for producers by some participants include price controls to facilitate market access, support for creation of farm-to-school, food pantry, and other programs, the use of cooperatives (transportation and other) to get products to market, and the potential for food production and processing decentralization at the local level. Some participants also highlighted "soft infrastructure," or community approaches that adapt food systems models to local contexts.

Some participants noted that government procurement practices should prioritize the most vulnerable communities, for instance incentives could promote purchases of products from small minority-owned farmers and from American businesses. Some participants noted that incentives should ensure equitable distribution of wealth. Some participants highlighted the importance of incentives to remove institutional barriers and improve access to land. Some participants noted that government investment among and within various production sectors is unevenly distributed and should be more equitable.

Increasing information access amongst disadvantaged and minority farmers was highlighted by some participants as important for increasing access to resources for all communities and stakeholders. Some participants noted that all programs should be inclusive of different languages and socioeconomic groups, citing the example of direct-to-consumer, on-line food delivery that may be difficult to access for those without internet or phone access or non-English speakers. Some participants noted that a central online space for accessing information, rural broadband and education, and intercultural education could increase access to resources for all. Some participants agreed that language we use needs to better reflect the diversity of stakeholders, foods, and production/harvesting methods of our food systems.

### ACTION TRACKS

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/4

Environmental Pathway: Participants agreed that pathways towards greater environmental sustainability are built through innovation, incentives, and markets that enable the adoption of climate-smart agriculture. Participants highlighted the urgency of climate change and agreed that food systems should transition to respond to climate change through more sustainable and environmentally friendly food production. Some participants emphasized that policy should be flexible as there is no one-size-fits-all approach and supportive of innovation. Some participants added that encouraging regenerative farming and exploring the circularity of farming operations are promising ideas.

Some participants stressed that multiple levels of public investment and support are needed to plan and adapt to environmental crises. Some approaches mentioned by participants include resilient infrastructure and supply chains, voluntary incentives for climate-smart agriculture, financial measures to mitigate risk (price or yield supports, crop insurance, and insurance markets), investment in research and development, and extension and capacity building. Some participants noted the importance of voluntary, incentive-based measures designed in an equitable way to increase adoption of climate-smart practices. Other participants highlighted that price guarantees or yields-supports could mitigate risk and increase participation by ensuring that farmers will make the same income while experimenting with new technologies and climate-smart practices. Some participants discussed that additional financial incentives might include stacked financing, deferred interest on loans, deferred payment on loans, or higher levels of cropping insurance. Others noted that risk mitigation is important for both local and global pathways, noting that crop insurance to build soil health is a model that could be transferred to other countries. Some participants noted that increased investment in research and development is needed to improve sustainability. Some participants posited that capacity building and extension services targeting underserved communities are needed to help farmers transition to sustainable farming.

Some participants noted that improved use of and access to technology could allow producers to stay competitive, resilient, and learn from extreme climate events. Some participants noted that nationally and internationally, sharing of data can provide better directions for researchers and producers, prompting development and adoption of innovations. Some participants cited the example of grocery-store availability of information on reducing food loss and waste such as the FoodKeeper app.

Some participants explored the idea of carbon markets, noting that better-functioning carbon markets could encourage farmer participation. Some participants agreed that carbon markets would benefit from improved information flow as well as publicly shared definitions, measurements, and standards, which is where the government can play a role as an “honest broker.” Some participants discussed soil carbon and the need to support soil testing and verification to allow farmers to take steps to improve their soil health, likening the importance of investing in soil health to a retirement savings plan.

Some participants recognized that soil health is a highly complex and multi-dimensional challenge and that farmers should not focus myopically on soil carbon as the only solution to soil and ecosystem health on their land. Likewise, some participants noted that soil health is one of many dimensions to the challenge of addressing climate change in the context of food systems. Some participants stated that there is also a need to focus on the health of water and river resources as well as air in this discussion. Participants speculated that environmental co-benefits could emerge from adapting agriculture to changing climates and producers could also benefit economically from have more adaptive and resilient systems, for example when facing water scarcity or other environmental crises.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/4

Cross-Cutting Approaches and Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue: Some participants highlighted approaches that would address the social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainability and should be considered in U.S. pathways towards more sustainable food systems. Some participants agreed that multi-stakeholder dialogue was an important first step in the pathways to more sustainable U.S. food systems. Cross-cutting approaches included:
o Education and capacity building amongst producers and consumers
o Equity and inclusion, with a focus on youth, women, and marginalized groups
o Incentives for change and investment at all levels
o Multi-stakeholder dialogue
o Resilience, efficiency, and productivity
o Trust and collaboration across sectors

Some participants emphasized the urgent need for stakeholders to collaborate to make progress towards more sustainable food systems. Some participants noted the need to build trust between all relevant stakeholders (government, industry, farms, consumers, farm and food workers, and others). Some participants agreed that the U.S. National Food Systems Dialogues have provided a forum to meet people from across different interest groups and agricultural sectors and begin to listen to people with different perspectives. Some participants posited that an iterative dialogue and inclusive forum where all interest groups can participate would be an important pathway. Some participants highlighted the importance of taking steps to alter existing power dynamics to enhance social equity in food systems. Some participants agreed that examining the systemic inequities at play in the food system, such as issues of environmental justice, and having inclusive dialogue should be step one.

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## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

While not all discussion groups reached consensus on a pathway or pathways, discussion participants built on each other's ideas and agreed that pathways for U.S. food systems sustainability need to holistically consider economic, social, and environmental aspects and related trade-offs. Participants agreed that the complexity and interconnectedness of our food systems will continue to create challenges and require compromises for solutions that optimize all dimensions of sustainability.

Some participants noted the significant challenge of identifying who should pay for actions to address climate change at the producer and farm level. Some participants expressed that consumers should pay more for the climate-friendly agricultural commodities, but this is a tradeoff for equitable access to healthy foods. Some participants emphasized that policies should avoid tradeoffs such as farmers raising consumer prices to pay for sustainable practices. Some participants noted that the preference for the use of voluntary, performance-based incentives is complicated by the difficulty in quantifying environmental benefits.

Participants agreed on the need to assure the inclusion and input from diverse farmers, including women and minority farmers, as well as the need to ensure their access to innovative programs and tools. Some participants recognized the need to listen to participants in all sectors of the food systems, including farm workers (including immigrant farm workers who often lack protected rights), owners of production, processors and retailers, and consumers. Some participants noted that local communities and producers stakeholder interests must have a seat at the table, in particular Black, Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) producers, pastoralists, hunters, fishers, and wild harvesters who must see their values and interests reflected in any pathway that is advanced through these discussions. Some participants noted that the communities and stakeholders most negatively impacted by current food systems, predominantly BIPOC communities, must be central in these discussions. Some participants mentioned relevant approaches including the "Values Aligned Approach" by the National Farm to School Network and long-term investment strategies and approaches led by the Intertribal Agriculture Council with Native producers under the Native American Agriculture Fund.

Some participants noted the importance of youth engagement in food systems, and the need to address structural barriers for youth and youth of color through programs, removing institutional barriers, and improving access to land.

### ACTION TRACKS

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