

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Tuesday, 13 July 2021 18:00 GMT -04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Empowering Youth Food System Leaders
CONVENED BY	York Region Youth Food Committee
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/29386/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Canada

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

22

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

3 0-18 18 19-30 1 31-50 51-65 66-80 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

2 Male 20 Female Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

4	Agriculture/crops Fish and aquaculture Livestock Agro-forestry	5	Education Communication Food processing Food retail, markets Food industry Financial Services	2	Health care
3	Environment and ecology Trade and commerce			4	Nutrition National or local government Utilities Industrial
				4	Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

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

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The York Region Youth Food Committee (YFC) hosted a United Nations Food Systems Summit Independent Dialogue that aimed to bring youth voices into the broader conversation taking place at the Food System Summit. Through hosting an Independent Dialogue, the YFC was able to engage with other youth in the region, province, and beyond. Youth have unique concerns, innovative ideas, and will ultimately inherit the food systems currently in place. The YFC incorporated and reinforced the Principles of Engagement laid out by the United Nations throughout the process of holding the Dialogue. The Dialogue was centred around the Principles of “Act with Urgency” and “Commit to the Summit”, with the SDGs and ways to move forward as the focus and drive behind the Dialogue. While organizing the event, the organizers sought to “Complement the Work of Others” by echoing the topics and conversations happening across our region, and through building connections with other youth groups. The Dialogue was structured to “Recognize the Complexity” of the issues impacting food systems by hosting the conversation in two parts. Organizers “Embraced Multi-Stakeholder Inclusivity” by including a diversity of voices from different cultures, backgrounds, and sectors (including public health, agriculture, academia, environment, and ecology). The breakout conversations during the Dialogue were centred around “Being Respectful” of one another and of differing opinions and “Building Trust” with participants. After holding the Dialogue, the organizers continue to enhance the Principles by following up with participants, building on relationships formed during this process, and using the findings from the Dialogue as a springboard for their events, advocacy and actions moving forward.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Act with Urgency- Despite limited time to plan and implement the Dialogue, the YFC acknowledged youth voices as a vital pathway to food systems transformation, which led to organizing a youth-led and youth-oriented discussion. Commit to the Summit- The Dialogue provided youth with a platform to discuss food systems issues. As the convenors, our network was expanded and partnerships were formed during the planning process. Official feedback will be used to inform the YFC’s actions on advocacy and projects. Be Respectful- The facilitators promoted the Principle of respect by providing everyone with an opportunity to voice their perspective and ensuring openness to different viewpoints. Recognize Complexity- The organizers acknowledged the complexity of food systems by separating the Dialogue into two parts. This structure allowed for a deeper discussion on intricate and intersecting issues. The keynote speakers also elaborated on the complexity through critical thinking during their presentations. Moreover, complexity was echoed in the representation of voices from different backgrounds and sectors. Embrace Multi-Stakeholder Inclusivity- Youth working and/or involved in the areas of public health, forestry and conservation, nutritional sciences, food security, climate justice, food policy, and food systems were invited to the Dialogue. Complement the Work of Others- The YFC was able to connect with several youth groups and organizations operating in the region. In addition, our committee promoted the work of grassroots organizations, youth farmers, and community groups through social media and word-of-mouth. Build Trust- To maintain transparency and trust between participants and organizers, the YFC created a safe and welcoming environment for participants by keeping any data collected anonymous, encouraging open dialogue, asking for consent, and sharing the Dialogue summary with all participants.

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

We recommend that Dialogue Convenors include time for introductions and a social icebreaker prior to starting a dialogue between stakeholders to uphold the “Build Trust” Principle. Introductions should allow participants to express their personal gender pronouns and preferred name. A social icebreaker should be brief, such as asking participants “What is your favourite food?”. We also recommend that Dialogue Facilitators encourage different forms of communication during discussion such as emojis and text by means of a chat box. We recommend the UN Food Systems Summit ensure underrepresented voices are present at the event, specifically peasant and Indigenous-led groups. Including these groups will ensure it is a “people’s summit” and reflect the principles of engagement. In addition, financial support, such as grants, for Independent Dialogue Convenors is needed from the Summit to pay for technology support and honorariums for keynote speakers. Lastly, Independent Dialogue Convenors require a multitude of resources, such as time, money, and people, to convene a dialogue.

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 Dialogue was convened on two separate evenings, as virtual events to address the topics of Food Justice (Day 1) and Sustainable Food Systems (Day 2). Each event was structured similarly to the Standard Dialogue Run of Show with an opening plenary, a keynote speaker presentation, a 1-hour breakout discussion group, and a brief group discussion summary. Breakout discussions consisted of groups of 4-8, including a facilitator and a notetaker. Facilitators developed questions based on the Reference Manual to guide the conversation, while notetakers used Chatham House Rules to collect data. Also, the YFC created a learning resource document (LRD) to complement the youth dialogue. The LRD is a compilation of articles, reports, and media on topics related to our Dialogue discussions. The LRD served as a tool for participants to continue conversations that occurred during the events. The Dialogue followed the method by selecting topics for discussion that relate to the objectives of the Summit. The Food Justice topic relates to Action Track 4. Inequitable access to resources, unpaid work, and labour issues of farmers emerged during the discussion. Additionally, a lack of youth and BIPOC representation in agriculture was also discussed, which relates to the Summit objective of "Advancing Equitable Livelihoods". The second virtual event and discussion topic, Sustainable Food Systems, related largely to Action Track 3. The keynote speaker for this topic spoke mostly about the role of regenerative agriculture as a solution to the climate crisis. Improved soil health, increased biodiversity, and carbon sequestration are benefits of regenerative agriculture that reflect nature-positive food production. Based on participant feedback, the Dialogue was generally well-received. Youth were given a platform to discuss food systems issues and youth barriers and challenges. It was noted that 1 hour for discussion on topics was "not enough time" for some participants. We believe all voices were heard during the discussions, however, facilitation on encouraging equal speaking times for participants could have been improved. A few participants also expressed that dialogues like this one may be inaccessible to youth who are unfamiliar with food systems and food issues. Most of the participants had post-secondary education and were already involved in food-related work. Therefore, these participants were aware (or familiar) of concepts and issues such as ecology, food sovereignty, and local food politics. It is the YFC's duty to make future dialogues more accessible and friendly to all youth, regardless of education and level of awareness of food systems.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

This Independent Dialogue was formed to capture youth voices as young people will inherit the future food system and therefore, youth play a critical role in transforming food systems. This youth-led Dialogue, titled Empowering Youth Food Systems Leaders, focused on food systems issues and how we can support youth to be agents of change in food system transformation. Food systems face plenty of challenges from labour issues, to food waste, to hunger, therefore the need to make food systems more innovative, inclusive, just, and sustainable was identified by dialogue convenors. Two discussion topics, convened over two days, were selected as key areas of concern for youth in food systems: Food Justice and Sustainable Food Systems. Food justice needs to be centred in food systems discussions and food system transformation. As youth convenors, we used a food justice lens: acknowledging that several forms of oppression (e.g. racism, colonialism, classism, sexism) have formed and are embedded in our current food system. Food justice is a call to dismantle inequities in the food system. Food injustices are a result of policies, actions, and rules by institutions and systems that hold the most power. Some examples of food injustices are the dispossession of land, hunger as a weapon, prevalence of higher food insecurity rates in Black and Indigenous households, and poor working conditions for migrant food workers. The role of youth in sustainable food systems was also important for this dialogue since the SDGs are yet to be achieved. The youth convenors recognize a food system to be sustainable when it is profitable throughout (economic sustainability), it has broad-based benefits for society (social sustainability), and has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment (environmental sustainability).

Two youth farmers were selected as speakers to inspire dialogue on food justice and sustainability. Speaker 1 presented on and educated participants on food security, food sovereignty, and food justice. Speaker 1 discussed how food intersects with many social issues such as gender inequality, housing, and income. The speaker also emphasized food system inequities, particularly the exclusion of peasant and Indigenous voices in the UN Food Systems Summit 2021. The dialogue convenors also acknowledged this inequity during the planning process. Speaker 2 educated participants on regenerative agriculture and climate change. Speaker 2 discussed climate change as the most pressing issue we are facing as a global community. Agriculture is both impacted by climate change and offers solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Speaker 2 emphasized agroecology and regenerative agriculture as the future of agriculture. However, as sustainable food systems include social, environmental and economic sustainability, the speaker noted that while regenerative agriculture offers many benefits such as improved soil health, plant biodiversity, and carbon sequestration, there are many risks and challenges involved. Farmers may face challenges such as lack of sustainable financing, pests, and consumer demand for a variety of crops.

Since empowering youth food systems leaders was the major focus and title of the Dialogue, discussion questions prompted by facilitators for each discussion topic (Food Justice and Sustainable Food Systems) focused on the youth perspective of a just and sustainable food system, identifying barriers and challenges youth face in contributing towards food systems that prioritize food justice and sustainability, and strategies to overcome these barriers and 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

Our Independent Summit uncovered the challenges and opportunities faced by youth—the participants and facilitators alike—that could be used to educate and uplift youth contributions to an equitable and sustainable food system in Canada and across the world.

Youth face many challenges getting involved in the food system. The most critical barriers that our Independent Dialogue uncovered are lack of food systems education, unpaid work, and underrepresentation of youth in the food system. In Canada, food systems careers and social issues in the food system are not a part of school curriculums. Youth may not even be aware of the career possibilities and opportunities for involvement. In addition, many internships in agriculture and food systems are unpaid, which makes them inaccessible. Most farms and businesses want 2-3 years of experience for starting positions, but there are limited pathways that are actually accessible to youth. Furthermore, the prevalent image of a farmer in Canada is the “old white man”. Youth need to be able to “see themselves” in the food system in order to be encouraged to take part.

The Dialogue also uncovered numerous facilitators that can uplift youth into the food system and identified opportunities for innovation in our institutions. For example, to address the lack of intersectional food systems education in the Canadian school systems, it is crucial to set a curriculum surrounding food literacy and opportunities in the food system. It is also important to provide students with experiences out on the land to build an appreciation for nature and the food system through school gardens or access to urban farms. Grants and bursaries for programs and learning opportunities that expose youth to careers in the food system can help address financial barriers. It is particularly imperative to create programs and mentoring opportunities for BIPOC youth to get involved so that the food systems workforce reflects the diverse make-up of Canada. Combatting whiteness in the food system and greenwashing is critical to ensure we honour all cultures and ways of growing food.

In accordance with the sustainable development goals set out by the UN, our Dialogue was also able to highlight areas of improvement for the Canadian food system as a whole. The Dialogue identified opportunities to improve environmental sustainability and equity in the food system.

Environmental sustainability involves the system as a whole—to ensure that no harm is being done to the environment. This can be achieved by ensuring the food system is low waste and that individual daily habits demonstrate sustainable practices. Regenerative practices need to be incorporated in agriculture and should be encouraged through government grants and bursaries. Individuals should be encouraged to follow sustainable diets which generate low and decreased food waste. Sustainable diets should be locally sourced, financially accessible and culturally appropriate for all Canadians.

A just food system is one where everyone has access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods that are made using fair methods. Many Indigenous communities live in communities with boil water advisories and it is essential to improve their access to safe drinking water. In addition, it is important to create more opportunities for Indigenous food sovereignty. Moreover, there is room to improve the food charity methods we use aimed to address food insecurity, to ensure that individuals are aware of these programs and can access them with dignity. Furthermore, temporary foreign migrant workers face many discriminatory policies despite being essential to Canada’s food production system.

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KEYWORDS

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

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/8

What values should a just food system demonstrate?

Diversity was largely emphasized by participants, both in the food we eat and in people who work in the food system. A just food system should provide culturally-appropriate foods that are easy to access, which includes seed sovereignty in order for citizens and farmers to grow their own culturally-appropriate foods. Therefore, food sovereignty is a key contributor to a just food system. Participants agreed that freedom means not relying on (predominantly Westernized) grocery stores for food. People should not need to rely on supermarket chains where culturally-relevant foods are sparse and nutritious foods such as fresh produce are expensive relative to cheaper, calorie-dense processed foods. People should be able to grow their own foods in response to the inaccessibility of nutritious foods due to financial or geographic barriers. Additionally, relatively expensive and inaccessible foods, such as whole vegetables and fruits that are recommended by the 2019 Canada's Food Guide, should be subsidized in order for the food system to reflect accessibility to a nutrient-diverse, healthy range of food for consumers.

Diversity in people working within the food system calls for their appreciation, namely towards farmers and temporary foreign migrant workers. The voices of such food system workers, especially marginalized and racialized workers, must be prioritized and listened to for the food system to be just. Participants stated that this can be achieved through a democratic system where workers have a platform for their voices, concerns, and suggestions for improvement. Their voices should be considered when decisions are made regarding the food system and policy, instead of prioritizing the voices of those not directly affected by the food system. Fair compensation, living wages for farmers and food system workers, and land access for farmers are also necessary for a just food system, and can be made more attainable with a democratic system. Appreciation to farmers and food system workers should also be given by consumers.

It was also commented that a just food system is one that works parallel to nature and regenerates soil. As soil health is often neglected and is far from a renewable resource, regenerative agriculture should be a primary aim towards a just food system that supports future generations of farming.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/8

What are the challenges/barriers youth face in food systems in contributing towards food systems that prioritize food justice?

Lack of education around food systems in schools is a barrier to Canadian youth getting involved in the food system. Participants commented that in Canadian schools, food systems and agriculture careers are presented as unappealing because they are associated with poverty, lower-class and large investments of time and money. Participants called for schools to provide a robust education on food system careers and how the food system works. Participants identified that opportunities to get on the land and hands-on experience in nature or gardens are an important part of building an appreciation for food and the people who work in the food system. In addition, participants noted that taking students out on the land is particularly important for urban and low-income neighbourhoods where the youth may have few other opportunities. The curriculum should also cover social justice issues and exploitation of marginalized communities in the food system, such as foreign temporary migrant workers and Indigenous people. To achieve this, participants suggested that leaders in food system reform, including Indigenous elders, should be consulted during the curriculum revision process. The food system curriculum should be universal instead of being taught by a non-profit so that everyone has the same level of access. Participants identified that it can be daunting to participate in a discussion because often the vocabulary is unfamiliar to people who do not have a formal education regarding the discussion topic, therefore education is key for youth to get involved and participate in the discussion around food systems.

Representation is an important aspect of encouraging youth to engage in the food system. Participants commented on seeing few people of colour, women and young people in the food system. In Canada, approximately 2% of the population are farmers and the typical image of farmers are "old white men". The involvement of youth in agriculture could be increased if youth can "see themselves" in the food system. A fair and equal food system needs to represent the community that is participating in it. Additionally, it was noted that less than 2% of the 2% of farmers in Canada are involved in the National Farmers Union. As this was described as the most progressive farmers union in Canada which supports all the values that Dialogue participants discussed, there must be greater incentives and encouragement for farmers and youth interested in farming to get involved with this union. Unity of people with shared beliefs and power in number is imperative for food system policy changes.

Unpaid work is a barrier to youth participating in the food system. Many internships in agriculture and food systems are unpaid, which makes them inaccessible to many students. Unpaid labour can result in "burnout" if students have to financially support themselves while balancing internships, school, and extracurricular activities. It is discouraging for youth who are interested in getting involved if they are not fairly compensated. Furthermore, participants commented that intergenerational wealth is almost a necessity to afford land and start-up costs in Canadian agriculture. In addition, working on farms requires long hours of hard work which is not always compensated with fair wages. It is imperative that youth are compensated fairly for their hard work so that they are able to take part in the food system.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/8

What opportunities do you see to create a more just food system?

Indigenous communities face many inequities in the Canadian food system. There are numerous Indigenous communities in Ontario and across Canada that still have boil water advisories and do not have reliable or easy access to safe drinking water. In Northern Canada, food prices are much higher than in the Southern provinces, which makes it very difficult for families to afford food. In addition, some areas in Canada have hunting bans, which prohibit access to traditional hunting grounds and limit the food sovereignty of Indigenous communities. Participants identified that in order to create a just food system we need to reform our food system to address the inequities that Indigenous communities face. Participants also expressed the need to involve and listen to the voices of Indigenous people in the food system.

Food insecurity is often addressed by the use of food charity in Canada. Participants identified that there are areas of improvement in Canada's food charity system. Individuals can be more comfortable using food charities, such as food banks, when they are certain the organization is non-judgemental and confidential. Food charities also need to be accessible so that individuals can easily locate them and that they are able to access them. Participants identified that some individuals who could benefit from food charities may not access the services because they do not think they fit the criteria or feel shame in accessing the services. To help lessen the negative stigma attached to food charities, the participants suggested these services advertise that they are open to all people without requirements. Food charities also need to have good quality and healthy food available. Participants identified that a barrier to individuals accessing a food charity such as a food bank may be that food is served on a first-come-first-serve basis and people arriving late will get the "ugly-looking" produce.

Temporary foreign migrant workers are essential to food and agriculture production in Canada, yet face discriminatory policies. Migrant workers' visas are often tied to their employer therefore employers hold power over job security. This can cause workers to be hesitant to speak up about injustices. Participants identified that it is important for migrant workers to receive "landed status" upon arrival in Canada and for workers to have access to the same rights that any Canadian employee would have. Legislative changes are needed to create equity among the people who work in the production and agriculture sector of our food system.

The introduction of Bill 216, Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020 into the Ontario education system in Canada presents an opportunity for curriculum change. Supporting the bill as a youth group would support other youth from grade 1 to 12 to receive food literacy education in the classroom, which currently is not mandated or permanent across the system. The amendment to the current school curriculum states that "Food literacy, including experiential or hands-on skills learned in gardens and kitchens, is critical for making healthy food choices that enable self-reliance and improve human health" in the Food Literacy for Students Act, 2020. The approval of the Act which is currently under-review will help us in applying educational change to youth in Ontario, Canada.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/8

What does sustainability and a sustainable food system mean/look like to you?

A sustainable food system is one that does not harm the environment, is economically viable and promotes justice for all its workers.

Environmental sustainability involves the system as a whole to ensure that no harm is being done to the environment. This can be achieved by ensuring the food system is low waste and that individual daily habits demonstrate sustainable practices. The Seventh Generation Principle was appreciated by participants, which is a concept by the Haudenosaunee in that “the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.”^[1] Participants identified how the understanding of sustainability has been altered to seeing surface-level changes, such as using paper straws or bamboo cutlery, as methods to maintain sustainability; In reality, it is the system as a whole that needs to change. Participants also identified the ethical dilemma for grassroots organizations to secure funding. For example, grants for grassroots movements, such as youth food policy councils, may come from corporations with activities that result in environmental degradation. This is a double-edged sword that allows companies to “greenwash” themselves and hide the damage they are doing to the environment. Participants also noted food waste as a major sustainability issue that should be addressed on an individual and corporate level. People should be encouraged to be mindful of their food waste and take steps to mitigate it. Moreover, corporations should also be held accountable.

Economic sustainability is essential to ensure that companies in the food system are able to use sustainable practices. For example, while regenerative agriculture on farms is ideal, it may be a financial risk that farmers are not able to take or invest in. Participants identified that it is important to create legislative changes that incentivize farmers to move towards sustainable practices.

Equity and justice need to be at the forefront of a sustainable food system. Participants identified that there is an inequity of access to and availability of food across the world where some communities have an abundance and others do not have enough. Participants also suggested the importance of “Treating others the way you want to be treated” in that we have a responsibility to take care of the environment and take only what we need. These values were also reflected in the conversation of fair financial compensation for individuals working across the food system.

[1] <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/seventh-generation-principle>

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/8

How to get youth leaders involved in sustainable food systems?

Education and opportunities for engagement are critical for getting youth leaders involved in sustainable food systems. Participants identified that learning can take many forms such as through school programs, urban gardens and eco-tourism.

Schools can implement seed education programs or teach science and numeracy through food. It is important for students to get the opportunity to spend time out on the land, such as through school gardens, where they can build an appreciation for nature. Furthermore, youth should learn about critical issues in the food system and should be encouraged to take action. One participant shared an example of youths at their university who had organized a climate strike where youth gathered and led a large group of their peers to walk out of class in support of climate justice. Youth need to see examples of successful change so that they are not discouraged about standing up for issues they believe in.

Urban farms and urban gardens can be a gateway for youth to learn more about food systems issues and to connect with farmers. These spaces can expose youth to different career prospects and build an appreciation for nature. These spaces are especially important in urban areas where youth may not have other opportunities.

Participants identified that eco-tourism can have numerous benefits such as exposing youth to nature, helping to build a convention with Indigenous communities in the area and strengthening the local economy. Eco-tourism is a form of tourism involving responsible travel to natural areas. Participants also identified that eco-tourism does pose some challenges as it can result in damage to the ecosystem. For example, some of the Canadian and American national parks are treated like a theme park instead of with the respect and understanding that it is a living ecosystem.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
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KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Women & Youth Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade-offs
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 6/8

What barriers do youth face in getting involved in a sustainable food system?

Educational barriers prevent youth from being aware of issues in the food system. Participants identified that unless you are exposed to the food system field, you would not know about the people, organizations or the challenges that are faced. Participants identified that curriculum about food systems in Canadian schools and exposure through hands-on experience are currently limited.

Financial barriers prevent youth from getting involved in food systems or from developing sustainable practices and lifestyles. Intergenerational wealth is almost a necessity to be able to afford land and start-up costs in Canadian agriculture. In addition, shifting agricultural, diets and food system practices to be more sustainable is costly and a financial risk. Youth who are just starting in the agriculture or food systems sector may not be able to risk changing their practices for fear they do not work and do not produce enough product to break even. Participants identified that perhaps the government could provide financial incentives to landowners who own land not used for agriculture and share the land use with youth or other farms for regenerative agriculture purposes.

Youth can feel powerless to create change when working with limited resources. Participants identified that big corporations can be intimidating since they have vast financial resources and power. It can be discouraging because youth may believe they need extensive resources to accomplish impactful change. Participants also identified that “greenwashing” can further complicate youth’s ability to take part in sustainable initiatives. Participants identified that it is important to move away from commercialization and focus on local and resilient change. On the other hand, it was emphasized that a barrier to facilitating sustainable food systems at the local and individual level includes housing without a garden or a green space to grow your own food (e.g. apartments without balconies and housing with unusable or inaccessible backyard space). Therefore, community-level initiatives such as community garden spaces are essential for sustainable food systems to be accessible to all youth.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 7/8

What does a sustainable diet look like for you? What values does a sustainable diet need to display?

A sustainable diet should take into account the use of production and natural resources. Participants identified that plant-based or vegan diets can be beneficial in that alternative proteins require fewer resources to produce (e.g. water, feed, land). There are also options for more sustainable animal proteins, such as pasture-raised cows for beef or accessing alternative low waste protein sources such as crickets. However, there are many challenges to some of these practices. For example, pasture-raised cows are significantly expensive and take up more land than conventional industrial beef farms.

A sustainable diet should be financially accessible to everyone. Participants identified that vegan or plant-based diets are becoming trendy and have become a “rich person diet” despite numerous communities across the world that have been eating plant-based diets for generations. Vegan or plant-based foods and products are often marketed to and enjoyed by middle and upper-class citizens as they are relatively expensive and more prevalent in exclusionary grocery stores such as health food stores and premium grocery chains. Excluding such foods from people of lower socioeconomic status limits the number of people adopting sustainable diets and can consequently increase the population forced to adopt unsustainable, non-nutritive diets. Therefore as sustainable diets become more financially accessible (for instance, through government subsidies), such diets can become easier to adopt and more widespread. It is also important that food is produced locally. Participants recognize that certain plant-based foods and ingredients eaten in North America have been shipped great distances, which increases their carbon footprint (e.g. coconut oil, cashews).

Working alongside Indigenous communities is important because they have been using sustainable growing and hunting practices for centuries. For example, when Indigenous communities hunt, they make sure to use the entire animal and let nothing go to waste and show that there are ways to incorporate animal protein into a sustainable diet. In addition, Indigenous communities have been using a Three Sisters growing technique for generations, in which they plant corn, bean and squash crops together that all benefit each other’s growth. Indigenous growing techniques are very different from the conventional monoculture crops grown at a large scale today. However, it is important to ensure we work alongside these communities to create sustainable change by utilizing their methods of sustainable agriculture and not taking their ideas without credit.

There are many chemicals used in food production that end up in our diet and it can be very difficult to remove these from one’s diet. Participants identified examples such as bleach used to clean produce that ends up in the food we eat and mycotoxins secreted from fungi (moulds). Furthermore, antibiotics that are injected into animals to keep them free from disease also harm the human microbiome.

Overall, participants identified that a sustainable diet should be locally sourced, financially accessible and culturally appropriate. In order to improve our diets, it will require collaboration among different communities, governments, and stakeholders across different sectors.

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

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> | Policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Data & Evidence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Human rights | <input type="checkbox"/> | Governance |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Women & Youth Empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> | Trade-offs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environment and Climate |

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 8/8

How to break down barriers for youth in the food system?

Youth are key players in creating change in food systems, thus it is important to create incentives to encourage youth to get involved and pursue careers in the food system sector. Representation and education are critical factors in supporting youth involvement.

In order to improve representation in the food system, the idea of agriculture as a viable career path needs to actively be shared with youth. Students should be exposed to farming as a career path while in school and food system sector careers should be portrayed in a positive and encouraging light. There are opportunities to use social media, such as Instagram, to share information about careers in the food system.

Education, both in school curriculums and outside of school, should focus on how we can transform the food system and alternatives to current practices. Financial incentives such as grants and scholarships should be made to support youth performing internships or other forms of education needed for careers in the food system. In addition, more opportunities and student placements should be created so that students can get experience and have the opportunity to try out this career field. Many farming jobs require 2-3 seasons of prior experience, which can make it very difficult for someone who does not have family connections or the necessary resources to get into the industry.

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

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Overall, Dialogue participants came from a diversity of experiences in the food system, which led to a rich and vibrant discussion. Despite many different ideas and thoughts being expressed, there were no large points of contention in the group discussions.

One area of divergence among the planning committee was on the decision to host the Independent Dialogue. The current structure of the Independent Dialogues for the Food Systems Summit works very well for corporations and governments, but we also believe that it neglects grassroots voices and voices of those who operate on the small-scale in the food system. The group discussed the critiques and counter events to the Food Systems Summit that have been taking place around the world, such as the one hosted by The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM). We decided to participate in the Food Systems Summit's Independent Dialogue as a youth group because we were curious and wanted to give our voice, but we demand that voices of youth globally be incorporated through the UN Food Systems Summit. We hold the UN Food System Summit accountable in practicing anti-oppression approaches to collaboration and supporting under-represented voices to be heard, especially if they challenge the status quo.

In the process of planning the Independent Dialogue, the planning committee has recognized some areas of improvement for the Summit Dialogue Method. While a standardized approach allowed for efficiency in organizing and implementing the Dialogue, there was a lack of flexibility and originality during the planning process. Following the Dialogue, it was evident that participants required food systems language and vocabulary to be a part of these conversations. It is difficult to attract a youth audience if youth do not have a basic understanding of concepts and terms the Summit uses, e.g. equity. Youth with a lack of food systems education, a discussion theme that emerged (see Main Findings), may not view these Dialogues as an entry to food systems discussion. The language and communication methods used by the Summit create a barrier to participation for youth.

In regards to the Participation data collected for the Official Feedback Form (OFF), we found that it does not uphold the "Be Respectful" Principle. The 3 options available to choose a gender (Male, Female, Prefer not to say, and other) are not inclusive to trans, two-spirit, non-binary and gender non-conforming peoples. This method of data collection perpetuates the gender binary and literally "others" people into a separate group that is not male/female. We disagree with the marginalization of people based on their gender for the sole purpose of collecting participant information.

Lastly, the 'Number of participants from each stakeholder group' section in the OFF Participation does not uphold the "Embrace Multi-stakeholder Inclusivity" Principle. It is disappointing that Youth is not included as an option for stakeholder groups in the OFF, yet there are 3 international organization options. If the Summit recognizes youth as stakeholders, this should be reflected in its processes. The Summit needs to acknowledge that many youths are interested in joining stakeholder groups like 'Farmer' but face barriers to entering this group, and thus, a student or youth option is necessary.

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

ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

RELEVANT LINKS

- To learn more about the York Region Youth Food Committee and access our post dialogue resource manual https://linktr.ee/yrfn_youthfoodcommittee/