

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Tuesday, 27 July 2021 08:00 GMT +10:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Fair and Healthy Food for All: Victorian Independent Food Systems Dialogue
CONVENED BY	Nicholas Rose, William Angliss Institute; Madeline Tolson, Sustain: The Australian Food Network; Vivien Yii, Right to Food Coalition; Amy Carrad, University of Wollongong; Belinda Reeve, University of Sydney
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/32047/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Australia

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

76

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

22

19-30

35

31-50

18

51-65

1

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

10 Male

63 Female

2 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

6 Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

2 Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

15 Education

1 Communication

Food processing

5 Food retail, markets

2 Food industry

Financial Services

12 Health care

9 Nutrition

11 National or local government

1 Utilities

Industrial

Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

10 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

2 Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

17 Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

13 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

11 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

1 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

19 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

Throughout the organisation and planning of our independent Dialogue participants were made aware of the United Nations Food Systems Summit and the Principles of Engagement. The Principles of Engagement were considered and acted on in the following ways: Act With Urgency. Presentations and discussions at the Dialogue were expressly focused on emphasising the urgency of addressing food systems issues. Commit to the Summit. In planning and delivering the Dialogue our team ensured that the values and processes of the Summit were considered at all points and communicated effectively. Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity and complement the work of others. When inviting attendees and organising group discussions our team intentionally ensured a diverse selection of people across different sectors and experiences were included. Coming together to collaborate, debate and discuss ideas respectfully and transparently was crucial to the success of our Dialogue. Be Respectful and Build Trust. Participants were given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their interest in the Dialogue and Chatham House Rules were explained. They were also encouraged to connect via a live online whiteboard, Miro, that provided referrals to initiatives and programs as well as resources and research linked by participants. Discussions were moderated by a team of facilitators who encouraged constructive analysis and free critical thinking through empathic understanding of the diversity between participants. Recognise Complexity. The facilitators also guided the discussion with structured and organised questions relating to current issues in the food system, as well as solutions and calls to action in the Victorian and Australian context. Nuances of the food system and the interconnectedness of sectors were discussed in breakout groups where participants expressed the absence of cross-sectoral collaboration and involvement from all people working toward a better food system. Further, the strengths of having diverse visions for food justice and food security were discussed.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Act with Urgency - Euahlayi elder Uncle Gillhar and First Nations Senator Lidia Thorpe opened the Dialogue with an urgent call to action to include Indigenous voices and understandings in all food systems and food security work. As detailed below, Senator Thorpe powerfully made the point that First Nations peoples, especially in remote communities but also in urban centres, are disproportionately impacted by high levels of food insecurity, dietary-related disease and ill-health, and early death. She stated that Australia must urgently achieve a Treaty with First Nations peoples, recognising their sovereignty and stewardship of Australia for thousands of generations, and that this Treaty will be the basis of the healing of both country and people, in all respects. Recognise Complexity/ Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity - The number of participants (120) and varied presentations from First Nations representatives, research groups, civil society initiatives, and publicly-funded organisations fostered discussions in the Dialogue to see the nuances and complexities in the food system. The participants were from a range of food system backgrounds that meant the plenary had diverse and disparate themes. Complement the Work of Others - Participants were encouraged to share what was currently working within the food system when in breakout groups. When participants felt there were initiatives others may not have insight of, they linked these through the Zoom Chat and onto the resources in the live Miro board. Further, the presentation of both Australian Research Council's Strengthening Local Food Systems Governance research and the release of the VicHealth Local Government Partnership program portrayed the systems level work already being undertaken.

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

Recognise the settler-colonial reality and history of Australia (and similar countries) and the impacts this has on First Nations communities as well as the citizenry more broadly. Foreground First Nations leaders and representatives in the Dialogue. Clearly communicate the purpose of the UN Food Systems Summit and the Principles of Engagement. If delivering online make sure to provide attendees with opportunities to network, share their thoughts and feel comfortable. At our Dialogue this was done by including breakout room sessions with smaller group numbers to encourage fair discussion as well as using the application Miro to provide an online space for people to write down their thoughts. Ensure a diverse range of people are invited with differing backgrounds, positions and understandings of the food system. Acknowledge the critiques made of the Dialogue process and be sure these are addressed.

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 Dialogue (titled Fair and Healthy Food for All) was organised online via zoom, with a series of plenary presentations (see below) followed by breakout rooms in which 6-8 participants engaged in small-group discussions with a facilitator, using a structured conversation guide. Facilitators then reported back the substance of the discussions to a reconvened plenary. The report backs were simultaneously recorded on an online whiteboard using Miro software. The dialogue plenaries were recorded.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

Fair and Healthy Food For All was executed with a focus of providing a comprehensive exploration of Australian food systems. Exploring areas of First Nations food sovereignty, food security, Victoria's food system, and the role of local governments in enacting positive change, this Dialogue provided a well-rounded analysis of food systems issues, as well as an exploration of the concrete actions that need to be taken to move forward an agenda of progressive change. The Dialogue was opened with Euahlayi Elder Uncle Ghillar and Gunnai, Gunditjmara and Djab Wurrung Senator for Victoria, Lidia Thorpe. Uncle Ghillar and Senator Thorpe called for immediate recognition of First Nations culture and sovereignty as essential to address the serious disadvantage experienced by First Nations peoples as a result of dispossession and colonisation. Sen Thorpe commenced by stating that all participants are living and working on stolen land, and until there is a Treaty to address the issue of First Nations sovereignty the issues regarding health and food systems could not be truly addressed. She said that 'My ancestors have lived sustainably on these lands for thousands and thousands of generations. Our country is a part of us, it's in us, it's who we are; and we rely on country for our basic survival needs.' She noted that, as a result of living under a system imposed by colonisation 'my people are the most likely in this country to run out of food. Aboriginal people experience food insecurity and go hungry in 2021, particularly those in remote communities'. Sen Thorpe called for decolonising the food system, and stated that 'everyone can do their bit to decolonise.' Uncle Michael Ghillar shared with attendees this story about the food cultures of First Nations peoples: "When the creators came and they created our society, we, the Euahlayi, the Gomeri and the Wiradjeri, we were the same skin groups, and they all connected to an ecosystem and within that ecosystem, everything that lives within that single system, is family. In our case, we have the Nyungar, the Kurrajong tree - and that's the mother of that ecosystem, and it grows on rocky ridges, on rocky soil. Within that system, we have all the food - not only do the humans have a relationship there, but all the different plants, and animals and birds down to the rivers." Vivien Yii represented Australia's Right to Food Coalition, formed in 2014, a civil society group that works towards integrated food policy that can ensure the right to food for all. The Coalition brings people together to challenge the norms perpetuating food insecurity and other inequities related to food and nutrition in Australia. Vivien also referred to important critiques of the UN Food Systems Summit, regarding the corporate-led agenda, the lack of transparency and appropriate accountability mechanisms; and that counter mobilisations were taking place foreground the vision of small-scale producers and workers for a 'human rights-based and agroecological transformation of food systems'. Nick Rose from Sustain: The Australian Food Network, a national sustainable food systems organisation and health promotion charity, provided an overview of the work of the Victorian Food Systems and Food Security Working Group, which formed in 2020 and brought together representatives of over 15 leading organisations, facilitated by VicHealth. Nick shared an overview of the Working Group's efforts on the development of a consensus statement for food systems reform in Victoria, focusing on the role of local government, land use planning, and governance. These presentations provided the context for participants to engage in the breakout rooms, exploring the food system's current strengths. In the afternoon, both The Australian Research Council presenting research on a Strengthening Local Food Systems Governance Discovery Project, and VicHealth introducing the Local Government Partnership program, provided an opportunity for focus on system-level work. Thus, there was a focus on cross-sectorial food systems work which advocates for what is already functioning, as well as focusing on methods for improvement and knowledge sharing.

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

From this Victorian Independent Dialogue there came a number of findings and further issues to explore. The differing perspectives of presenters and participants allowed for small group discussion sessions to diverge and converge. Most consistent across the Dialogue was a recognised need for greater attention to be paid to sharing knowledge among food systems actors and establishing a common language which all food systems discussions can be founded in. Made apparent by Uncle Ghillar and Lidia Thorpe is the importance of telling people's stories, especially those from diverse backgrounds and communities, with a strong focus as noted on First Nations sovereignty. There was great interest amongst many participants in addressing the knowledge gaps in food literacy education as a means to empower young people and marginalised groups to join the food systems conversation. Contributing to this, was the outcome of needing to create spaces where actors and activists can come together more regularly to ensure Australia's food system organisations, individuals and communities can continue to collaborate and share. Other findings included the importance of community-led initiatives, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic as these localised responses to food systems issues are more flexible than larger scale government and charity structures which often do not reach isolated communities. Among the attendees there was a recognised need to empower local governments to take a direct role in food systems governance issues. Presentations from the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project and the VicHealth initiative Strengthening Local Government Partnerships further contributed to the discussion of local councils. The ARC discovery project revealed a number of barriers and enablers to local governments contributing to healthy, fair and equitable food systems. The main obstacle for local governments is the lack of funding and guidance provided to address state government plans and objectives. Presenting a solution to this issue is the VicHealth Strengthening Local Government Partnerships program which has been developed to support the improvement of children's and young people's health and wellbeing through the planning and delivery of municipal plans. This program has a central focus of implementing realistic changes in Victorian councils by delivering actionable modules geared towards healthy eating, physical activity and social connection. The Dialogue provided an opportunity for an in-depth exploration of the above issues and space to brainstorm solutions. Positive food systems action is multifaceted and requires a diverse approach from a wide variety of actors. It is not possible for one Dialogue to produce all of the solutions necessary to enact change. What is needed are further opportunities for all food systems voices to come together, share their experiences and thoughtfully consider Australia's food system and the challenges it presents. There needs to be increased attention paid to First Nations led solutions and authority as well as other marginalised communities whose perspectives are often not included.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/2

Strengths and challenges facing the Victorian and Australian food system.

Community initiatives and local solutions are recognised as key strengths in Victoria. They provide examples of diverse programs, projects and activities across sectors. These programs demonstrate how the food movement can be interdisciplinary at the grassroots level.

Needs to be a greater effort to collaboratively develop and define food systems language, therefore addressing the issue of different sectors holding different understandings of terms making it difficult to unify projects and initiatives.

In food security discussions the voices of those who have experienced it are often excluded. There is a vital need to incorporate and empower the stories of people who have lived through food insecurity and faced barriers to fair food access. At the Dialogue we were privileged to have participants who had experienced these challenges, providing invaluable insight.

Local governments are often disempowered by state government policies, especially in regard to land use planning to prevent the over-representation of fast food outlets in both existing areas and new developments. Local governments lack time and capacity to conduct projects and actively address the food systems issues facing their community.

State governments are considered to be a solution to issues facing local governments including providing more support, funding and commitment to addressing food systems challenges. They are most often absent from Victorian discussions of food systems policy and governance issues.

A recognised gap in food education and literacy, children and young people are not provided with opportunities to engage meaningfully with food systems issues. A need for stronger advocacy for education programs that empower children and young people.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/2

Strongest players, addressing imbalances of power and working collaboratively to enact positive change.

Some of the strongest players recognised included large food relief charities, supermarkets, governments of all levels, academic institutions and researchers, multinational food and agriculture companies, small businesses and community initiatives, consumers (especially those with buying power), fast food businesses, transport companies and water companies.

It was recognised that some actors in the above list have created imbalances of power in Australia's food system. As had been touched on previously, the Dialogue conversations revealed that if we are to address this inequitable distribution of power then we need to recognise the ecosystem of actors contributing to positively affecting different aspects of the food system. Food systems change currently occurs in silos with groups acting individually, there needs to be a shift to working strategically and in partnership.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

The diversity of participants allowed a thorough and all-encompassing conversation about the challenges, positives, and opportunities for change within the Australian food system. Some participants felt that the movement is all too nice, and nothing is being disrupted, so long-term change cannot be achieved. The role of charity was felt to be always necessary by some participants and others felt big charities were unstable with supply and did not play enough of an advocacy role where they contributed to reproducing rather than addressing root causes. There was consensus among participants that had engaged in the discourse surrounding the UN Food Systems Summit that it may not in its entirety reflect the values, needs and opinions of smallholder farmers and producers. Instead, the summit is at risk of enclosing the conversation to technology-based solutions and intensification.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Dialogue Agenda**
https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Online-Agenda_Sustain-UN-Food-Systems-Dialogue-2021-2.pdf