

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 19 July 2021 18:00 GMT +01:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Rights of Small Farmers in Light of Corporate Take Over: The Deregulation of TNCs are Negatively Affecting the Rights of Small Farmers; How can both amicably coexist?
CONVENED BY	The Sikh Human Rights Group: Mr Carlos Arbuthnott - Ms Jenna Lanoil - Ms Monica Gill
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/32822/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	No borders

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

18

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

10

19-30

3

31-50

5

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

11 Male

7 Female

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

6 Education
Communication
Food processing
Food retail, markets
1 Food industry
Financial Services

1 Health care
Nutrition
2 National or local government
Utilities
Industrial
0 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan
Large national business
Multi-national corporation
1 Small-scale farmer
Medium-scale farmer
1 Large-scale farmer
2 Local Non-Governmental Organization
8 International Non-Governmental Organization
Indigenous People
2 Science and academia

2 Workers and trade union
Member of Parliament
Local authority
Government and national institution
Regional economic community
1 United Nations
International financial institution
Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
1 Consumer group
Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

In order to support the UN Food Systems Summits efforts towards eliminating hunger, and to underscore the interlinkages between SDG 2 and the rest of the 17 SDGs, the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG) hosted an independent dialogue. Specifically, targeted at unearthing the proactive steps that can be taken to deal with agribusinesses at not only a legal and policy level but also the practical steps that can be taken by small farmers around the globe to compete with agribusinesses who are currently operating within their local markets. In order to ensure that the principles were appropriately incorporated, reinforced and enhanced we invited internationally renowned experts and professionals on food systems, rural development and biodiversity to discuss this urgent and multidimensional issue as well as small farmers and members of civil society. Therefore, in order to achieve our desired outcomes we focused on six interlinked principles for sustainable development: safeguarding natural resources; sharing knowledge; building local access and capacity; protecting harvests; enabling access to markets; and prioritising research. The SHRG firmly believes that returning small farmers to the centre of policy decisions is fundamental to the sustainable food systems of the future. Consequently, State Governments, large and small businesses, scientists and civil society groups must refocus their attentions on the source of our food security and nutrition. All these groups must work together to enable the many millions of farming families, especially smallholders, to grow more productively and sustainably through effective markets, more collaborative research and committed knowledge sharing. In other words, the SHRG convened this dialogue in order to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders but also to agree upon a list of proactive steps that can be taken by every member of our global society to ensure that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not the corporate sector.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Our dialogue embraced multi-stakeholder inclusivity by including representatives of the UN system, academia, the private sector, civil society, small farmers and farmers union leaders. The participants included experts from many continents, a large proportion of women and farmers representatives from developing countries. Furthermore and amongst various other matters, the Sikh Human Rights Group exists to identify and promote a pluralistic approach to advancing sustainable agricultural development worldwide. In other words, to highlight the importance of improving farmers livelihoods as well as the important contribution that agriculture can make to the global food system, including in areas such as food security, nutrition, climate change and biodiversity. All of the participants treated one another and one another's viewpoints with the highest degree of respect and understanding. In addition to the above, the session was held under the Chatham House Rule in order to help the participants to build openness and trust. The event was held on Zoom and the participants were not only asked to make oral submissions but were also asked to make contributions via the chat box. Once again in order to ensure the widest possible engagement with the identified challenges and issues.

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

Bringing together stakeholder groups that are very different can be challenging but it is a crucial opportunity to capitalize on ideas emerging from possible areas of divergence, and to create synergies and partnerships with potentially high impact on areas of consensus. In order to build openness and trust it is of the utmost importance that you press home the need for confidentiality within the discussions. Whilst making it obvious that if a certain party does wish to form a partnership with you or your organisation then further discussions can be had outside of the dialogue. We found that an easy way to achieve this was by providing a robust definition of the Chatham House Rule at the beginning of the discussion and then providing our participants with our email address, at the end of the dialogue, inviting them to contact us regarding any follow up questions or queries that they may have. However, the circumstances and the substance of your dialogue discussions will of course dictate what is feasible. Last but not least we believe that aggressive marketing is crucial to the overall success of your dialogue. However, at all material times you must bear in mind that it is quality over quantity as a small dialogue with the right cross section of stakeholders can be just as effective as a dialogue with over 100+ participants. Therefore, the key thing to remember is the quality of the discussions is what counts rather than the number of participants you have.

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

With the introduction of corporations into agriculture, small farmers have faced many barriers to make ends meet. Monsanto's reported objective is 'No Food Shall Be Grown That We Don't Own'. Right from the seeds to the crop, agribusiness have a monopoly. They own the seed, so they own the produce. Where does the farmer fit in? How are their expenses covered and their livelihoods maintained?

Economic instability in the agricultural business has forced our youth out of farming as a way of life. What once used to be family owned farms have now become corporate enterprises often operated via machines. Pesticide and fertiliser use has contaminated the environment and unfair prices have created unending cycles of debt. Additionally the supply and demand chains are unregulated, preventing crop diversification and creating soil anaemia.

Food is a basic human right. As is access to food. Each nation has the right to produce its own food while maintaining its cultural and productive diversity. A direct democratic intervention is needed, but it must understand the issues at hand; especially those of the small farmers. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we put those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than agribusinesses.

It is an oversimplification to wish agribusiness to simply 'play nice'. More needs to be thought about. Therefore, the main focus of our dialogue was on seeking to unearth the proactive steps that can be taken to deal with agribusinesses at not only a legal and policy level but also the practical steps that can immediately be taken by small farmers around the globe to compete with agribusinesses who are currently operating within their local markets.

Therefore and in order to achieve the above, the Curator began the dialogue by giving a 15 minute oral introduction to the many challenges and common themes that have arisen out of the globalisation of our shared food systems (please see attached). After which the participants were then asked to discuss:

- The extent to which they agreed or disagreed with what he had said;
- The greatest challenges and threats posed by agribusinesses operating within our global food systems and how these identified challenges and threats can be overcome; and
- What legislative and other policy measures State Governments should adopt to ensure that TNCs and other business enterprises operating within their domestic agricultural markets are appropriately regulated and dissuaded from committing human rights violations.

However, the participants were free to discuss any other matters that they felt to be relevant and pertinent to our overarching discussions theme – food sovereignty.

The participants were then informed that by agreeing upon a list of proactive steps that can be taken to ensure that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not the corporate sector would represent a vast paradigm shift in the current rhetoric but would also help to awaken the world to the fact that we must all work together to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food.

However and going beyond the above, the participants were also informed that by attempting to find sustainable solutions to the identified challenges and issues their discussions would also help the UN Food Systems Summit to:

- Generate Significant action and measurable progress towards the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Raise awareness and elevate public discussion about how reforming our food systems can help us all to achieve the 17 SDGs by implementing reforms that are good for people and for the planet;
- Develop principles to guide Governments and other stakeholders looking to leverage their food systems to support the SDGs. It is anticipated that these principles will set an optimistic and encouraging vision in which food systems play a central role in building a fairer and more sustainable world; and
- Create a system of follow-up and review to ensure that the Summit's outcomes continue to drive new action and progress.

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

What are the greatest challenges and threats posed by agribusinesses operating within our global food systems and how can they be overcome?

Agribusinesses concentrate on profits and economies of scale in which the environment, diversification and small scale farming is often sacrificed to achieve target profits for shareholders. Therefore, small farmers cannot take on TNCs if the latter infringes upon their lands, deprives them of markets or curtails their independence.

Small farmers often lack the necessary resources to attend court and/or to advocate for themselves. Therefore, this lack of access to judicial recourse only favours large agribusinesses interests who have large funds at their disposal.

By encouraging local entrepreneurs to develop and expand their farming businesses, those farming businesses eventually develop into large agribusinesses, so we need to further define exactly what kind of businesses we are discussing. For instance, it is not uncommon in one participant's opinion for farming cooperatives to take unethical actions, in the same manner as an aggressive TNC, against small farmers who attempt to compete with them. Consequently, a concrete universally agreed definition of agribusinesses is urgently required.

We must also urgently look at the effect that agribusinesses have on the earth, the climate and the future of our planet. It is imperative that we maintain a planet that sustains human life for the next generations. Therefore, it is crucial to ask and expect multinationals and their businesses models to be conducive to that future because at the time of writing the nature of multinationals is fundamentally misaligned with the maintenance of the planet's health.

What legislative and other policy measures do you think State Governments should adopt to ensure that TNCs and other businesses enterprises, operating within domestic agricultural markets, are appropriately regulated and dissuaded from committing human rights violations?

With the help of unions, small farmers can achieve a crucial amendment to food chain law which bans the procurement of food below the cost of production.

Agroecology is weakened if small farmers do not own the land they work. Therefore, Governments must do more to ensure that the land rights are in the hands of those who work and live on the land rather than the corporate sector. However, this contention is complicated by the fact that in countries that do not have property records, the Governments (mainly postcolonial Governments) are persuaded by TNCs to digitise land records. In the process they are denying indigenous practices where there isn't one individual that owns a certain plot of land but rather a communal style of ownership. Therefore, capitalism is running against indigenous traditions to dispossess people of the land that they have lived and worked on for many centuries.

Agribusinesses are driven by profit maximisation. Therefore, Governments must do more to dissuade their populations and businesses from categorising everything within an economic context as this only serves to further disadvantage small farmers.

Governments must do more to incentivise the growth of crops that are currently imported and/or to increase the diversity of crops being grown within their borders. Only then will small farmers and corporations pay more attention to a nation's overall food security.

What practical steps do you think small farmers around the globe could take or should take to compete with agribusinesses who are currently operating within their domestic markets?

Small farmers should begin by looking at what is feasible under the current system. By asking themselves 'what can I do within the current system to grow more sustainably?'. For instance, if the farmer is reliant upon growing rice and has no other option within the current system but to grow rice, regardless of the negative consequences, then they should undertake the necessary enquiries to unearth the modern techniques or methods that would allow them to grow rice but with less water consumption and less pesticides.

Small farmers should shift towards more sustainable agriculture by looking into the alternative crops that can be grown. Specifically, those that are traditional or native to their lands. For instance, those that can be grown all year round or that thrive within their country specific environmental conditions. However, one of the limitations to this is that there may not be an easily accessible market to the small farmer for them to sell their produce.

What do you want to see coming out of the UN Food Systems Summit?

Small farming should become a protected category within international instruments and international policy.

There is a crisis of imagination - people cannot imagine another world where these identified issues and challenges have been overcome - therefore the majority of participants would like to see clear and substantive reforms that are good for small farmers and for the planet. This will only come about by the relevant stakeholders reimagining the current system but crucially sharing that new vision with their populations.

Every member of our global society must be encouraged to rise up and demand change.

Internationally agreed upon steps to guide agribusinesses towards a more sustainable future. The onus should be on the agribusiness to take all appropriate steps to ensure that their employees understand the negative effects that large scale farming can have on the rights of small farmers, the soil and the environment that we all share.

ACTION TRACKS

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/5

Action Track 1 - Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all: The participants noted that small farmers need financial and technical support to grow and sell more nutritious varieties of crops. Primarily, as it is a big risk for many farmers to change what they are currently growing without any financial support or incentive. In other words, it might not always be profitable or comparably profitable for them to grow more sustainable and environmentally friendly crops. Furthermore, different regions experience difference realities, both in terms of the agroecological and the socioeconomic conditions in which they operate. Therefore, State funded technology and innovation are essential particularly when it comes to helping small farmers grow more sustainable produce and/or reducing their food loss and waste.

The participants also noted the dire need for State Governments to refocus their attentions on educating consumers from a young age about our global food systems and the many barriers to small farmers' effective participation. Therefore, more needs to be done by State Governments and educational institutions to inform their populations about the source of the food that we see on our shelves.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/5

Action Track 2 - Shift to sustainable consumption patterns: The participants noted that farmers and consumers need to be better connected. Not only in terms of market access and availability but also in terms of practical understanding. In other words, only when the consumer innately understands the processes behind the food that they see on their shelves will they appreciate the urgent need for small farmers to be supported not only financially but also when it comes to the small farmers' environmental conservation endeavours. This will also help to inform consumers behaviours and expectations.

The participants also noted that State Governments, large and small agricultural organisations, businesses and civil society organisations need to do more to mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change which have been brought about, in part, by the increase in large scale farming. Particularly, when it comes to the automation of what once used to be human inputs and an ever increasing reliance upon the mass use of fertilisers and pesticides. However, it was also noted that this shift can only be affected by policy makers recognising the urgent need for swift and irreversible action towards more environmentally friendly policies and legislation that are targeted to incentive small farmers towards more sustainable methods and practices.

Finally, it was noted by our participants that young people are increasingly unwilling to take over what once termed the family business but are instead opting to migrate to larger cities in search of more prosperous job opportunities. That has largely been brought about by their parents being trapped in revolving cycles of debt by predatory loan management companies and the closure of local agricultural businesses. That in turn only makes it harder for young farmers to earn a reasonable standard of living. Therefore, more needs to be done by State Governments to level the playing field between small famers and large agribusinesses. Especially, when it comes to small farmers access to resources such as local markets, trading houses, abattoirs and so on...

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

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/5

Action Track 3 - Boosting nature-positive production: The participants noted that it is extremely challenging to identify clear recommendations that are scalable globally yet adaptable to local conditions. For instance, different financial incentives are needed in different economies and/or different technology is needed in different geographical regions.

Green technology is still more expensive than fossil fuels, so in the context of economics small farmers are already at a disadvantage. We need to protect small farmers – whether they are profitable or not. However, this is clearly at loggerheads with a State Government’s responsibility to feed its population. Nevertheless, this still begs the questions is producing nutrient dense food more important than simply feeding a population processed food? What will be the medical and/or health implications of this in the future? Are we simply delaying an even bigger health crisis? These are all questions that need to be redressed at an international and a State level.

State Governments need to implement financial incentives to encourage small farmers to grow more sustainable and environmentally friendly produce. However, this is not enough. Large companies purchasing and using the small farmers produce to make their products also need to be held accountable. For instance, it is common knowledge that such companies will say anything to promote their brand and/or to sell their products. However, what are they actually doing to encourage small farmers to be organic, to be environmentally conscious, to use less water and so on... These are once again issues that must be redressed by policy makers as a matter of extreme urgency. However, one solution to this issue maybe to persuade State Governments to do more to dissuade their populations and businesses from putting everything into an economic context and focusing much more on the human and environmental impacts that this current model is having.

It was suggested by participants that we need to shift from GDP focussed development to quality of life and sustainable development.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input 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 - 4/5

Action Track 4 - Advance equitable livelihoods: The participants noted that small farmers' lives, lands and livelihoods must be considered in balance with the demands of purchasers and consumers. In other words, a sustainable equilibrium must be the objective rather than an aggressive campaign to eradicate large businesses entirely from the agricultural sector. Only then will we see a positive shift towards a more sustainable future for our global food systems and for our planet.

It is an indisputable fact that farmers need increased access to markets, innovation, trading and finance in order to survive the next 20 years. However, this can only be achieved by every member of our global society taking ownership of our shared food systems and/or moving away from what is currently found under the prevailing 'get big or get out' mentality that seems to be dominating our global food systems and the manner in which we theorise them.

However, small farmers can take practical step themselves to advance their livelihoods. For instance, by collaborating with one another, via cooperatives, to have a larger more enhanced voice in policy discussions and to be able to access bigger markets and partnerships.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
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KEYWORDS

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" 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 - 5/5

Action Track 5 - Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress: The participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact upon our global food systems and/or that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the extreme vulnerabilities within our global food supply chains. Therefore, more needs to be done by all relevant stakeholders to ensure that small farmers can access markets and production products during these extremely difficult times. Nevertheless, one practical solution to this issue it was noted, may be to ensure that small farmers have access to information across the supply chain. That would not only enable them to anticipate and plan for bottlenecks but also lulls in the market for certain produce.

However, the more universal solution to this would be the implementation of more consistently applied international standards for agricultural production, supply and distribution. That can only be achieved by an international organisation, such as the United Nations, taking ownership of the many challenges and issues currently presented by the global agricultural sector and working with all of the relevant stakeholders to achieve a more sustainable future both for us and for our planet. For example, it was noted that on a global scale there is a clear lack of safety nets for small farmers, especially in developing nations, that would ensure that they are enabled to bounce back after periods of protracted uncertainty and disarray such as has been seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

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

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There was broad consensus across the dialogue participants on many of the identified issues and challenges. Nevertheless, the areas of divergence often centred around differences in regional contexts and needs rather than significant ideological differences.

However, one area of divergence was on the need to further define the term agribusiness for as one participant stated it is not uncommon for farming cooperatives to take unethical actions against small farmers who attempt to compete with them in the same manner as one would expect from an aggressive transnational corporation. However, another participant was of the opinion that the term agribusiness should be limited to transnational corporations and other agricultural businesses enterprises that operate across national borders. In other words, the definition should be limited to what might be termed the traditional understanding of the word. Nevertheless, this divergence was quickly overcome, and it did allow all of the participants to think in much broader terms around the identified issues and challenges.

ACTION TRACKS

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KEYWORDS

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

ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Curators Opening Speech**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/SHRG-Opening-Speech-Re-SHRGs-UN-Food-Systems-Summit-Dialogue.pdf>
- **Case Study: Zambia**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Zambia-Case-Study.pdf>
- **Case Study: USA**

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Sikh Human Rights Groups Website**
<https://shrg.net/>