

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Tuesday, 18 May 2021 15:00 GMT +03:00
<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	Multisectoral food system actions: Ensuring Africa's capacity to generate the needed evidence
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Suneetha Kadiyala, Agriculture, Nutrition & Health Academy   Francis Zotor, African Nutrition Society   John McDermott, CGIAR
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/3321/">https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/3321/</a>
<b>DIALOGUE TYPE</b>	Independent
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS</b>	Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia (Republic of The), Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

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

### PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0 0-18      8 19-30      39 31-50      15 51-65      1 66-80      1 80+

### PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

20 Male      43 Female      1 Prefer not to say or Other

### NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

6	Agriculture/crops	18	Education	8	Health care
1	Fish and aquaculture	4	Communication		Nutrition
1	Livestock	1	Food processing	4	National or local government
1	Agro-forestry		Food retail, markets		Utilities
	Environment and ecology		Food industry		Industrial
	Trade and commerce		Financial Services	20	Other

### NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

	Small/medium enterprise/artisan		Workers and trade union
	Large national business		Member of Parliament
1	Multi-national corporation		Local authority
	Small-scale farmer	6	Government and national institution
2	Medium-scale farmer		Regional economic community
	Large-scale farmer	2	United Nations
2	Local Non-Governmental Organization		International financial institution
7	International Non-Governmental Organization		Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
	Indigenous People	1	Consumer group
30	Science and academia	3	Other

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

This Dialogue was developed to be engaging and inclusive. By design – and in the interest of advancing this most pertinent of topics – the Dialogue was structured in a way to maximise interaction and encourage and accommodate diverse perspectives. This is reflected by the composition of the three convenors which together bring together large and diverse global communities of researchers, students, educators, practitioners and policymakers. The session was programmed so as to avoid long, passive segments, instead allocating most time for smaller group discussions and feeding back, so as to facilitate the emergence of ideas, the embracing of different perspectives, and the exchange of subjectively derived potential solutions. Given the challenge that this Dialogue sought to address - the shortfall in many countries for food systems research capacity, which requires long-term planning – the convenors perceive their very constituting of this meeting as a signal of the concern regarding the urgency with which this topic must be addressed.

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

- Act with Urgency As noted above, the issue of research capacity is challenge that requires urgent but long-term planning, for which progress is currently too slow. For food system policies to be steered appropriately by context-specific evidence, that evidence must be produced in-situ. This urgency was conveyed in the introductory lecture of the Dialogue and was a theme that was palpable among participants, particularly in the breakout groups where proposed solutions ranged from short-term bursts of investment to longer-term changing of norms and systems.
- Commit to the Summit By organising this Dialogue and inviting esteemed participants under the banner of UNFSS, our organisations have given a tacit endorsement of the Summit and have shown commitment to it's intended goals. We remain concerned – as is also clear from the Dialogue participants – as to whether the evidence base in all regions is sufficient to justify conclusive or overarching policies, but hope that this Dialogue will in some way stimulate progress in this area.
- Be Respectful, embracing multi-stakeholder inclusivity and complimenting the work of others A key ethos underpinning everything that the ANH Academy does is equity and fairness, which together cannot be achieved without respect. This ethos was baked into the planning and execution of this Dialogue. This was achieved through providing detailed training to facilitators so that breakout groups operated in a fair and respectful manner, thus providing the environment for all voices to be heard and appreciated for what they bring. Inviting a diverse and broad group of participants to take part in the Dialogue meant that stakeholders from a wider range of positionalities and perspectives were able to contribute to this important topic. This in turn allowed these diverse stakeholders to be exposed to ideas that may not be common among their usual circles. Selecting strong facilitators who are warm, open-minded and encouraging ensured an atmosphere of inclusiveness and openness conducive to meaningful discussion.

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

Since there are now over 1000 dialogues this may not be necessary. But essentially, we would recommend carefully selecting facilitators and ensuring that they are equipped and trained to maintain an enabling environment for fair, respectful and meaningful discussion.

# 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 curated around the adaptation and application of a novel game methodology first designed by the ANH Academy Working Group on Sustainable Diets, called 'Diet Dimensions'. This methodology was originally developed to:

- Foster interactions between groups that might otherwise not communicate
- Develop innovative policies to make food systems more sustainable
- Encourage players to think and work in an interdisciplinary way through a collaborative and reflective process.

"For the duration of the game, participants coming from a wide range of backgrounds form teams and collectively develop project ideas that aim to deliver sustainable food systems in various contexts, whilst critically engaging with ongoing debates and challenges. The idea is that the more interdisciplinary a team, the more holistic and comprehensive their proposed projects can be as they will be informed by multiple perspectives and can address issues and concerns of different disciplines and sectors." Reference: Kalamatianou, S., Yates, J., Joy, E., Vermeire, Z., Rutting, L., Vervoort, J. and the members of the ANH Academy Working Group on Sustainable Diets (2017). "Diet Dimensions": a case study on a sustainable diets policy game. Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy Sustainable Diets Working Group. Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition Actions (IMMANA) programme. London, UK. The convenors of the Dialogue have all been involved in using this methodology in different contexts, from academic conferences and universities, to major meetings such as the SUN Global Gathering. Therefore, it's utility for this Dialogue was clear. The session itself was opened/curated by Namukolo Covic, who occupies important positions as both the President of the African Nutrition Society, but also a longstanding member of the ANH Academy and a Research Coordinator with IFPRI/CGIAR. Dr. Covic also plays an important role within UNFSS processes so was very well positioned to provide the context and rationale for the Dialogue. Facilitators were all trained in the game methodology and were given very clear and comprehensive guidance and support in advance and on the day, with dedicated technical support and note-takers in each room. The session was structured as follows: OPENING Plenary: Framing and context: Research capacity to generate cross-cutting evidence is a "game-changing solution." And overview of game methodology GAME COMMENCES Formulation of ideas: Breakout groups develop ideas in response to questions (each group discussed all questions) Peer-to-peer evolution of ideas (in paired groups): Key criteria for comments and critique: Feasibility? Intersectoral / interdisciplinary? Adaptation to context and scale? Game-changing / step change? Then...with feedback, Dialogue breakout groups reconvene to fine-tune their ideas. Final plenary discussion: Breakout groups present updated ideas, incorporating the critique from peers. CLOSING Summary, close and follow up (i.e. staying in touch) The game methodology encouraged and facilitated diverse perspectives to come to the fore, and created smaller enabling environments whereby these – often disparate – ideas could be bounced-off one another, constructively critiqued and fine-tuned, before being presented back to the whole group. This approach maximised participant interaction and meaningful dialogue in a short space of time.

# 4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

## MAJOR FOCUS

The UN Food System Summit promises to “launch bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, delivering progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.” An ambitious aim that reflects the urgency needed to address the profound global and local problems linked to existing food systems – from poor diets driving malnutrition and chronic disease, to the climate crisis, environmental degradation and widening inequities eroding the safety and sustainability of livelihoods. Many of these are shared global challenges, yet significant variations exist across regions and within diverse country contexts, where levels of food and nutrition security and safety are hugely divergent.

While high level rhetoric around food system transformation is positive, it is critical to understand how the evidence-base needed to underpin, guide and re-evaluate such priorities and policies in different settings will be generated and sustained. Ambitious ideas and goals emerging from the Summit must be supported by robust types of information. The expertise to generate contextually appropriate and scientifically robust evidence (cutting across disciplines) in a timely way is arguably as important as the policies themselves. In other words... “A game changer!” But unlike statements drafted for the Summit, they cannot be produced in a matter of weeks or months. Generating evidence that spans disciplines and sectors is inherently complex, but not insurmountable. However, bottlenecks may exist in the pipeline of expertise, particularly in countries where existing capacity may not yet be sufficient.

In light of, this, investing in systems of research, learning and sharing – within and among affected regions, particularly low- and middle income settings – will be paramount to steering context-specific interventions, informed by robust evidence-bases as food systems evolve. The political and financial commitments expected to flow from the Summit should extend to these systems, to ensure that support is provided ‘upstream’ to interdisciplinary curriculums and training, alongside mechanisms for cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder research and learning collaboration.

But before this can happen, a range of important questions must be better addressed, which this Dialogue sought to respond. These include, but are not limited to:

- Both food systems and research will have to coevolve, one informed by the other in an ongoing fashion. How can we plan and invest in long-term research capacities needed to support this?
- What type of capacities are needed to prioritise policies in an evidence-informed way? I.e. to generate evidence to understand what works, what does not, how to improve, who wins, who loses, trade-offs and co-benefits across diverse outcomes of interest, as well as cost-effectiveness and financing
- How can countries identify and prioritize solutions that could be most catalytic for positive food system transformation, informed by evidence?
- Multi-disciplinary expertise is needed in all regions to help address these questions and to underpin key recommendations from the Summit and beyond. By convening stakeholders across communities of research, education and policy, with a specific focus on the African context, this Independent Dialogue will provide a space for these important questions to be discussed, and for new concerns and considerations to be shared.

### 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

- Expertise cannot be fostered overnight. Policymakers themselves require a minimum comprehension of intersectoral solutions to food, nutrition and environmental challenges. Developing the next generation of researchers and practitioners requires multi-disciplinary investment well in advance.
- Funding is central. It should be well-planned and diversified, so it's not entirely externally driven. This will allow research agendas to be formulated by African institutions and academics. Certainty around long-term funding would give universities and research institutions the confidence to invest in their own systems that support high-quality teaching, learning and research
- It is critical to develop systems for forecasting and proactively planning to fill gaps in research expertise and scientific systems. This means investing in data collection and cross-institutional information sharing (between and within governments and universities).
- Communicating with policymakers and funders is of utmost importance for the future of evidence-based food system actions. Building capacity in stakeholder engagement and scientific communications, including expertise to liaise effectively and ethically with the private sector and political leaders should be a priority.
- Linkages between research and policy should be prioritised. Involvement of researchers from myriad disciplines in designing education policy and interventions is paramount. But barriers exist in engaging with policymakers and funders. Policymaker involvement in processes of identifying capacity would instil a firmer understanding of the research process and the significance of these shortfalls for the wider economy and society.
- The significant depth of indigenous and traditional knowledge systems across Africa should be more purposely brought inside curriculums.
- Regional and international networks and platforms for teaching, learning and research are pivotal to promoting collaboration and sharing the latest evidence, technologies, lessons learnt and best practices.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

Both food systems and research will have to coevolve, one informed by the other in an ongoing fashion. How can we plan and invest in long-term research capacities needed to support this?

There was strong consensus around the need for collaboration between institutions to ensure joined-up thinking and scalable approaches to increasing research capacity. Ideas included the creation of platforms to collaborate at national, regional and global levels, as well as multi-institutional grants that could foster intra and inter country collaboration, knowledge and expertise sharing. This approach was seen as a 'multiplier' for the continent that could add value to country investments and combat 'brain drain'.

Another area of agreement concerned processes by which research capacity gaps could be identified and filled. Identifying gaps requires well-planned approaches that apply the right designs and tools, since errors could result in the misdirection of resources at the cost of other priorities. Participants suggested that robust monitoring, evaluation and feedback systems should be developed to identify research gaps, direct planning and funding.

Locating gaps in capacity for food systems research is only useful if it is effectively communication to decision makers. Therefore, a high value was placed on developing the expertise to communicate research to the right stakeholders, beyond publications and conferences, so as to promote research uptake into action.

The idea of 'multisectoral approaches' emerged among the breakout groups. This term is often used but participants questioned whether it is authentically pursued across the continent, and if not – what are the barriers? Collecting multisectoral data is an important starting point, as is the need to build and/or strengthen the capacity of national institutions to work together (example: Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture) in order to improve collaborative capacity. Upstream work is urgently needed to ensure that curriculums and research agendas at African universities are interdisciplinary and intersectoral. A debate around terminologies took place in plenary, and participants agreed on the need for coherence around the phrases: multidisciplinary; interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary.

Communicating and collaborating with policymakers and funders was deemed of utmost importance among all, with a strong emphasis on the need to articulate the value added of research and research capacity investment in each subnational/national/regional context. Linked to this was a common call to identify the relevant decision-making stakeholders and structures (i.e. donors/governments/processes) and target these with refined advocacy asks. There was broad consensus that implementation evidence is powerful in helping policymakers make decisions to change the system. Therefore, fostering research-based policies through long-term relationships between researchers and policymakers is crucial.

Involvement of researchers from myriad disciplines in designing education policy and interventions is paramount. However, Dialogue participants agreed highlighted barriers to engaging with policymakers and funders, including other sectoral priorities and bureaucracy. Bringing policymakers into the process of identifying capacity gaps early on would give them a better understanding of the research process and the significance of these shortfalls for the wider economy. Also, a wider range of stakeholders into policy dialogue processes -i.e. students, educators, beneficiaries/users– will further demonstrate how research impacts on people's lives, and thus the importance of directing resources into the pipeline of expertise.

Some outlying ideas emerged from separate groups. These included sending postgraduate students abroad to build capacity and foster ideas exchange; to place greater emphasis on indigenous knowledge and traditional systems in curriculums and policy forums; and to establish institutional sharing systems for costly equipment and resources. While these topics were not necessarily proposed by every group, they are none-the-less invaluable ideas that stimulated discussion.

### ACTION TRACKS

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

What type of capacities are needed to prioritise policies in an evidence-informed way? ? I.e. what works/does not, how to improve, who wins/who loses, trade-offs and co-benefits, cost-effectiveness and financing

Several major themes emerged under this discussion. Firstly, that strong linkages should be prioritised between research and policy. Research questions should more often be formulated by African institutions and academics, but this requires significant and urgent investment into R&D in order to bring more people into research.

Building on the discussions in question 1, there was a consistent feeling that policymakers themselves require a minimum comprehension of intersectoral solutions to food and nutrition challenges, and that the next generation of these decision-makers would therefore benefit from A) more cross-cutting curriculums and B) being incorporated into research processes from the beginning of their policy roles.

Alongside this were debates around how build capacity in stakeholder engagement and scientific communications, including expertise to liaise effectively and ethically with the private sector and political leaders. All groups agreed that collaboration is critical for ensuring the best use of resources and information, and that linking researchers with implementing organisations is critical.

Secondly, a priority is to make better use of data and technology in identifying and addressing capacity gaps in food systems research and the scientific expertise needed to undertake this. Implementing more robust data collection systems across universities, agricultural extension services, government departments and municipalities would provide more granular information about capacity shortages on the horizon. Alongside this, Africa's growth in digital technologies should be better harnessed for food systems transformation, not only for improving resilience of farmers and markets, but for increasing access to education and training for the next generation of scientists who will drive technological innovation in agriculture-food systems across the continent.

Thirdly, overarching both above is the need to develop research capacity, urgently, equitably and holistically. Participants consistently highlighted the need for interdisciplinarity to be embraced, not only for governments to place a greater emphasis on anthropology, humanities, social sciences and law as valid food system disciplines, but to incorporate traditional and indigenous knowledge which is rich and still an untapped reservoir of expertise across the continent.

The groups discussed the role of 'research informed learning'; for instance how community and local engagement, people-centred and actionable research could be championed and showcased in curriculums. These changes cannot be implemented at the individual level, they require institutional reforms alongside the strengthening of partnerships and consistent funding mechanisms. Certainty around long-term funding would give universities and research institutions the confidence to invest in their own systems that support high-quality teaching, learning and research. Only through longer term investment will a new generation of researchers and leaders emerge to generate and disseminate evidence.

The fourth theme arising was the utility and importance of networks and platforms, to promote collaboration among researchers, not just across the continent but around the world. Such platforms expose researchers, teachers and students to cutting-edge ideas and technologies, while providing opportunities for sharing best practices and lessons learnt in food systems sciences. Furthermore, platforms facilitate communication which can avoid duplication of effort and ensure that knowledge is not lost as trends in research and funding changes.

Some outlying themes emerged from separate groups. These included greater emphasis on communicating economic benefits of increasing research capacity; funding of long term feasibility studies at specific universities; and the importance of building expertise around navigating the private sector ethically to avoid and conflicts of interest.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

How can countries identify and prioritize solutions that could be most catalytic for positive food system transformation, informed by evidence?

Research capacity building was the most frequently discussed topic under this discussion point, with a strong desire for expertise to be prioritised in areas such as evidence synthesis, research innovation and leadership. Each of these would give country governments greater insights into the solutions needed their specific contexts, which in turn would reduce the need to revert to global or regional policy fixes. Mentorship emerged as an important common idea among the participants, with partnerships between researchers, alumni and their institutions as one important strategy to increase expertise within countries.

Multisectoral approaches to identifying and solving problems through multi-level governance involving food system actors on all levels, as well as community beneficiaries was a theme that arose in several groups. Opening channels of communication and collaboration with policymakers and government was seen as an important step broadening the 'expertise' considered valid for agenda setting and policymaking.

Participants agreed that funding is the elephant in the room, and would need to be diversified from multiple sources, so it's not entirely externally driven. Establishing a national, regional and/or continental system of case studies and lessons learnt could provide Finance Ministries with greater evidence for what works and what doesn't (example: using youth ambassadors for food systems awareness in the community, or introducing a new cross-cutting ag-nutrition-health curriculum module). Alongside this, was the idea of linking government frameworks and research priorities, and to prioritise the synthesis of existing evidence so as not to reinvent the wheel with unnecessary policies, or programmes that have been shown not to be effective.

There was a broad consensus around the need for locally-driven frameworks and research agendas that respond to the needs of each country and/or region. Agenda that are driven by African researchers, traditional and indigenous knowledge systems, but that also draw upon, and weigh against the global body of scientific evidence, so that priority setting is locally-driven but evidence-informed. Following this, monitoring and evaluation systems should be developed to track progress, highlight gaps/challenges and indicate whether transformation in food systems research capacity is actually happening over time.

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## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

### ACTION TRACKS

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### KEYWORDS

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| <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 type="checkbox"/> Women & Youth Empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> Trade-offs              |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and Climate |