

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 3 May 2021 08:30 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	DIALOGUES FOR NEGOTIATED TRADE-OFFS AND SYNERGIES IN SMALLHOLDER FARMER FOOD SYSTEMS IN MALAWI
CONVENED BY	Dr Daimon Kambewa (Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/33956/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Malawi

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

140

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0 0-18

21 19-30

91 31-50

18 51-65

10 66-80

054 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

79 Male

61 Female

0 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

53 Agriculture/crops

8 Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

20 Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

59 Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

100 Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

10 Local Non-Governmental Organization

1 International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

10 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

19 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

Act with Urgency The workshop process was designed to motivate stakeholders to act now. Stakeholders were asked to develop action points for transforming food systems in the short and long term. Commit to the Summit We committed to the vision, objectives and final outcomes of the Food Systems Summit were shared with stakeholders at community, district and national dialogues. Stakeholders committed to implement outcomes of the Summit. Be Respectful Participants were encouraged to contribute views and preferences on the foods and activities for making available their preferred foods. Views from women, youth and elderly were accommodated and used to influence the discussions. Recognize Complexity Different options for transforming the way food is produced and consumed were debated. The debates highlighted tradeoffs and synergies for options. All ideas and solutions were recognized. Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity We engaged with multiple actors from producers, programmers, policy framers, researchers, academicians. Complement the work of others In Malawi, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with development partners has facilitated dialogues at national and district level. Our dialogues started from the community to engage local structures representing agriculture, nutrition and environment. Build Trust The evidence, issues and options generated in dialogues were discussed in an open environment. The summaries and conclusions were shared and endorsed by participants.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

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

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 process The dialogue sessions were designed as follow: • bring together community and district stakeholder groups (environment, agriculture, nutrition) to engage and discuss their agriculture & food systems, • bring together national multi-stakeholder group (with different perspectives and positions on agricultural & food systems) comprising stakeholders in agriculture, nutrition and environment onto dialogue table to share their different perspectives on agriculture and food systems in Malawi. • Facilitate stakeholders (community, district, national) to learn each other's perspective, discuss their aspirations on what agriculture and food systems they would like to see and they would love to see, • To create an environment for stakeholders to reflect on changes (positions, investments, priorities, policy, plans) they should make in order to achieve sustainable, healthier and equitable agriculture and food systems Steps for the dialogue The steps in the dialogue deliberations were as follows: 1. Link to existing initiative: Agrifood systems Multi criteria Decision Making Tool. 2. Enable participants to understand/articulate existing ag-food systems – identify different visions for subgroups. Start with Malawi's six food groups (related to people's context, build on different perspectives of food, what's available including local foods). 3. Map food systems – past, current, future vision (elements of the system e.g. fruit trees, local vegetables, connections, food in/out flows, seasonality. o used soft systems approach to draw a "rich picture" showing the elements of the system from the perspective of those drawing the picture. Those drawing the picture explained the drawing to provide a lot more detail. 4. Vision healthy, equitable, sustainable ag-food systems – expect it to be, like it to be, love it to be (Outcome mapping pathways – linked to stakeholders) 5. Identify blockages/constraining factors in transforming food systems 6. What needs to change at different levels: Levels of the dialogue The dialogue is a multi-stage process involving different stakeholders and decision makers in agriculture, nutrition and the environment. Three levels have been suggested and these are: • Community – In the districts of Kasungu and Ntcheu we worked with three local structures (Farmer Research Network-FRN, Community Care Group-CCG and Village Natural Resources Management Committee-VNRMC). The FRN represented the agriculture sector; the CCG represented the nutrition sector; and the VNRMC represented the environment sector. We used the Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) tool to engage with the participants. The MCA tool does not focus on the environmental element. We therefore added the environment sector in the dialogue session to capture interests and perspectives of environmental advocates in regards to sustainable food systems and agro-ecological elements. • District – we engaged with stakeholder forums on agriculture, nutrition and the environment. These forums comprise public sector, NGO and private sector. • National – we engaged dialogue sessions with stakeholders from Department of Nutrition, Department of Agricultural Extension, the Planning Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, development partners, academicians, researchers, NOGs, media. Stakeholders shared their perspectives and examined synergies and tradeoffs in agricultural, environmental and nutrition policies.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The dialogues contributed to sustainable, healthier and equitable agriculture and food systems in Malawi by:

- Informing:
 - o programming for on-going and new programs and projects on agriculture, nutrition and environment;
 - o policy processes and policy investments and priorities in agriculture (e.g. Agricultural Input Program, Extension), nutrition, environment;
 - o institutions and institutional structures in nutrition, agriculture, environment.
- Appraising stakeholders on trade-offs to minimize and synergies to maximize in achieving agriculture, food and environmental objectives.
- Inculcating a culture of integrated decision making process and planning in stakeholders (environment, agriculture, nutrition/health) at all levels to make better informed and inclusive decisions that will:
 - o strengthen food security,
 - o improve income,
 - o enhance health and nutrition security and
 - o enhance environmental objectives.

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

1. Actors vision for diversified food systems

When asked to envision sustainable and resilient agricultural and food systems that should exist in Malawi, all groups indicated that there should be diverse food systems that not only focus on exotic foods but promote production and consumption of indigenous crop and animal products. Some of the indigenous foods mentioned by the different actors include green grams, chick peas, velvet beans, lima beans, bambara nuts, baobab, tamarind, indian plum, prickly cucumber and wild animals (e.g., insects, caterpillars and mice). The findings on the diverse foods and agricultural enterprises mentioned at the national level is consistent with the findings from the community and district level dialogues. Actors at the community and district level also mentioned different foods that are cultivated, whilst some foods are from the wild. Some foods are also accessed from the markets. Surprisingly, when asked about what foods should be promoted in their areas, the actors at community level mostly mentioned the foods that are usually promoted by the programmers and public and non-state agricultural extension organisations.

2. Diversified food systems require agricultural investments and policies that embrace biodiversity

The national participants observed that the national agricultural policies did not promote diversity as they equate food to maize. People are declared food insecure simply because they do not have enough maize, even when they have access to other foods such as potatoes, millet and cassava, just to mention a few. The narrative: "food is equal to maize" has also influenced agricultural policy investments such as the input subsidies that focuses on maize productivity. The narrow diversity was also exposed at the community level, where the participants mostly mentioned exotic crops and animals as their food of choice, mainly those promoted by agricultural research and development policies and programmes. Rarely or no effort is there to promote production and consumption of indigenous foods. Furthermore, there is insufficient investments to support the diversity, for example, the country does not have technologies for production and processing of indigenous fruits.

3. Capacity of actors is crucial to achieving sustainable food systems

The different participants were in agreement that food systems are complex and require multi and interdisciplinary efforts. Food systems should be understood as systems comprising different actors (e.g., the academia, research, private sector, government, media, development partners), activities (i.e., production, storage, processing, distribution and consumption) and fields (i.e., agriculture, nutrition, economics, environment, society). Therefore, achieving sustainable and healthy food systems demands that different sectors play their roles. Development partners are key in mobilising resources and financing the strategic activities for the food systems. The government should ensure that there are policies that can support research and development and also invest in building the capacity, physical infrastructure and human capacity of actors in the food systems, promulgating activities that nudge appropriate behaviour change. Research and academia are challenged to transform the education systems as well as the research agenda setting to recognise and promote production, storage, processing and consumption of the crops and livestock species which are not in the mainstream agriculture and nutrition programmes. The research and academia should produce technologies, innovations, education programmes, and evidence which in turn can be applied by the food systems actors, used to train students, and used to enrich evidence-based advocacy.

While each actor in the food system has important roles to play for the food system to perform, a question arises related to the capacity of the concerned actors to carry out their roles effectively and efficiently. Do the actors have the required knowledge and skills? Do they have the right attitudes and motivation? Are opportunities available? Can the actors seize the opportunities? What kind of support is available to the actors? Addressing these questions is paramount to the food systems performance since a malfunction of a single component in a system leads to failure of the whole system. For example, it was learned during the national and district level discussions that even though some actors (e.g., nutrition) promote the consumption of some indigenous vegetables for improved nutrition (e.g., amaranth), the availability of the such vegetables was limited to seasons. Unfortunately, agricultural research and extension activities pay minimal attention to promoting indigenous vegetables. Similarly, the environment group added that there is a need to promote the consumption of insects. However, they also observed that this required different sectors to be working hand in hand to make sure that the insects are available in all seasons.

In appreciation of the complexity of the food systems, especially with regards to the multiplicity of the actors in the system, the participants to national dialogue noted the challenges to reach consensus on the foods to prioritize for consumption and production or investments. The challenges are due to differences in the interests and objectives to pursue in the food system.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC

ACTION TRACKS

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KEYWORDS

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Policy |
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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

1. A call to provide space to local communities and indigenous knowledge in food systems transformation processes. The participants indicated that food transformation process pays little attention to local/ indigenous knowledge about how food is traditionally produced, processed, distributed and consumed. The process to transform food systems in the country is top down. The development partners, programmers, practitioners and scholars- “experts” design, implement and evaluate the food systems projects, programmes and policies. The communities are often placed at the receiving end. As such, the food preferences as well as the enterprises and activities for making the foods available, accessible and utilized are imposed on the local people. In other words, there is no collaboration with the local communities on food systems.

The national participants noted issues with respect to culture and food traditions. The different communities value different foods differently such that “what is food to one culture is not food to another culture”. For example, communities valued finger millet, mice, and wild insects as food, while the district participants had reservations on some of the foods. But these foods play significant roles in cultural activities such as weddings. A case in point is finger millet that is an ingredient for sweet beer and is consumed during traditional ceremonies. The differences in the values attached makes some of the foods not recognized and supported in the mainstream policies, programmes and projects that often focus on the so called main crops, maize in particular. Moreover, the multi-national profit or non-profit making organisations that support agricultural research and development projects and programmes rarely focus on locally available foods that are valued by communities. Consequently, seeds for some indigenous crops have become scarce.

2. Negotiating and integrating diverging perspectives a challenge to multidisciplinary approach
The discussions at all levels revealed that the participants representing different sectors understand the food systems concept differently. For instance, when asked to define food systems, the definitions reflected different predispositions or professional backgrounds. Definitions by nutritionists, gender activists, and environmentalists for example, leaned more towards nutrition, inclusion, and environment, respectively. Whilst the definition of agriculturalists leans towards outcome of the food systems in terms of food security and income or livelihoods. The participants agreed that the differences in the definitions affect the efforts and investments in agriculture and food systems. The differences are also the reason why the outcomes of the agriculture and food systems are inefficient and insufficient because the existing synergies are not maximized.

During discussions, the trade-offs came out clear in the multiple criteria that the participants at different levels and from different sectors applied to select foods and the farm enterprises for making the selected foods available. The criteria included: used to food type, nutrients availability, easy to produce/rear, availability / accessibility, multiple benefits, provision of farm inputs, seasonality, productivity, income/for sale. The criteria vary across sites and across stakeholders. Observations of the discussions within the sectors and between the sectors revealed that reaching a consensus on the criteria was an uphill task.

Participants debated the differences and conceded that it was difficult to reach consensus on ranking the criterion even within the group. The ranking exercise revealed the objectives and priorities different stakeholders have when promoting crops to be grown. They acknowledged that in practice it is not easy to decide on what crop to focus on and even the investments to make in terms of research, policy effort and support. They further realized that if an agriculture and food system is to meet different objectives by different stakeholders a lot of trade-offs have to be minimized. It would also require stakeholders working together to make decision together. This is unlike the current situation where stakeholder works in silos and planning for agriculture and food systems does not pay attention to the objectives of other stakeholders.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Action points and stakeholder roles**
https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Action-points-and-stakeholder-roles_UN.docx