

# OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

<b>DIALOGUE DATE</b>	Wednesday, 11 August 2021 13:00 GMT +03:00
<b>DIALOGUE TITLE</b>	Resilient Rural livelihoods for food and for future generations
<b>CONVENED BY</b>	Councillor Mr.Aivars Lapins
<b>DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE</b>	<a href="https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/34605/">https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/34605/</a>
<b>DIALOGUE TYPE</b>	Member State
<b>GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS</b>	Latvia

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

394

## PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

## PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

145 Male

249 Female

0 Prefer not to say or Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

Trade and commerce

Education

Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

Food industry

Financial Services

Health care

Nutrition

National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

47 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

28 Small-scale farmer

28 Medium-scale farmer

8 Large-scale farmer

87 Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

28 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

20 Local authority

79 Government and national institution

28 Regional economic community

United Nations

International financial institution

Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

41 Other

## 2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The National dialogue was organized by the Latvian rural advisory and training center which was selected because it serves wide range of public across entire Latvia and serves as a network for rural development, fisheries and rural innovation as well provides advice in rural development, agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Professional coaches from Riga Coaching School were moderating expert groups. They are independent from any of the Food systems stakeholders. Politician's discussion group was composed of a wider range of Ministries related to the Food systems. The public group was open to any member of the public. The event was in hybrid format and was broadcasted in live in a dedicated interactive webpage developed by 3k.lv. The national dialogue had a Plenary introduction followed by three kinds of discussion groups in parallel: 8 groups of invited expert groups, one group politicians and one public group.

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

For the summary of the work and conclusions we looked at issues holistically.

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

Engage the Head of State in this work to provide his/her political guidance. Have multiple ministries not just agriculture directly contributing the resources of the dialogue in order to have a balanced outcome. Be inspired by the Guidelines but do not bind and limit yourself literally.

# 3. METHOD

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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

Resilient Rural areas and Food systems for future generations was the focus of this National dialogue, first of this kind in the history.

President of the Republic of Latvia H.E. Mr. Egils Levits in his opening speech emphasized that:

- Over the past decades Latvia has successfully transformed itself into a food exporter country. We have integrated into the global food production chain.
- The latest UN calculations show that nearly 700 million people or 9% of the world population still live in hunger, while 2 billion people or 25% do not have regular access to safe and healthy food.
- Biological diversity continues to decrease. Pesticides are still harming nature, reducing its diversity, accumulating inside living organisms and entering the food chain, as well as the human body.
- Agriculture is one of the sectors contributing most, in the medium-term, to humanity threatening climate change, the adverse effects of which can already be seen today and the grave consequences expected by the end of this century.
- People's diets throughout the world are becoming increasingly unvaried. It means that we receive less nutrients, thus harming our health.

There are three levels of issues:

### 1. Farm structure

Over the last 10 years the number of large and wealthy farms in Latvia has increased, as has the area of land they cultivate, however, they still constitute only a small portion of the total number of farms in Latvia, employing the smallest portion of agricultural workers. Only 3% of economically active farms produce more than 100 000 EUR in goods. In turn, medium, small and micro farms, which constitute 90% of the total, employ 76% of the total workforce in agriculture.

Over the last three decades Latvia has undergone two major agricultural reforms.

The first one was in the second half of the 1990s, when Soviet kolkhozes and sovkhoses were liquidated and land was restored to its former owners.

The second reform occurred rapidly since Latvia's accession to the European Union in line with the European Union policy which started in the mid-1990s. It has been a turning point towards economic efficiency, industrialisation, product unification and monopolisation.

Is this the agricultural structure that our society really wants? Is this something to just be taken as a given or do we, in fact, have more or less power over it to drive it one way or another? Is the current structure and the policy supporting it truly the best choice for Latvia and its countryside? This really calls for an in-depth public discussion going beyond just a conversation among stakeholders.

### 2. Effects of agriculture on the environment

Harmful effects of agriculture on the environment are constantly being reduced. But the rate at which this is being done is too slow. We will have to radically alter our agricultural practices in order to continue to receive EU subsidies, maintain competitiveness on the EU single market or even just continue to work in agriculture.

Obviously a major role here will fall to organic farming. In order to increase its role, technological innovations, as well as new skills and shifts in consumer preferences will be needed.

### 3. Social and cultural dimension of agriculture and rural areas

It is an issue of what we want our countryside, our agriculture to look like. It is an issue of the Latvian identity, which is rooted in our countryside. It is an issue of lifestyle. It is an issue of farmers as the upholders of a special lifestyle.

But what is a farmer today? Is it an agricultural company, its shareholders, managers, workers – are they all farmers? What the so-called genuine farmer?

One new trend in the development of the countryside as a cultural space has occurred lately, especially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The attractiveness of the countryside as a living space has increased for city-dwellers and also new families. This could, possibly, lead to a rapid increase of the number of people living in rural areas, maybe even on small farms, but not engaging in agriculture.

## 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

These are the main findings on which the majority of participants had a broad agreement:

1. Changes in the behavior of the society and individuals have high potential in transforming the food systems.
2. Minister of Agriculture Mr. Kaspars Gerhards in his concluding remarks emphasized that the national dialogue will be continued. Holistic and multidisciplinary approach with well-developed dialogue methodology will facilitate the future work.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/10

Fair and transparent cooperation at all stages of food supply chains in order to ensure the long-term resilience of all actors:

1. ensuring traceability of food: full information available to the consumer on the cultivation, production, logistics, storage, marketing of the product;
2. ensuring fair competition, including in public procurement;
3. professionalism in smart and evidence-based decision-making.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/10

Environmentally friendly and responsible practices in food product production:

1. educating the public and raising awareness of food production;
2. educating all parts of the food chain, especially farmers via vocational, higher and life-long education;
3. mobilizing farmers to change policies;
4. financial support for organic farming, i.a. support to start-up for young families to set-up small and average size farms.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/10

Meaningful and sustainable use of agricultural land for food production and the maintenance of a diverse rural livelihood

1. at least 85% of household should consume healthy locally produced food;
2. maintaining the balance of interests (population, farmers, environment) in land use;
3. educated and motivated farmers, processors, consumers;
4. financing system to finance sustainable business solutions;
5. decisions are made from the holistic point of view;

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/10

Promoting the development of food producers for local and foreign markets

1. strengthening cooperation among producers and between producers and consumers, cooperatives;
2. understandable and focused financial support based on clear national strategy;
3. education and promotion;

Do it step by step! If everyone of us would eat just locally produced food every Saturday it would be already a good start.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/10

Responsible consumer for the environment and food to ensure resilience at all stages of the food chain

1. to become smarter consumer and to reduce overconsumption: educating professionals; listening to youth, their needs and views;

2. reduction of food waste: identifying food waste in catering and households, data-based household planning;

3. reduce the amount of food packaging using it only to the extent necessary for food safety.

Start with yourself as an example: replace bottled water on the table with water in carafe.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 6/10

Rural territory for livelihood and food production:

1. exchanging with the information and knowledge;
2. improvement of practical skills at all levels;
3. the reduction of food waste along all the steps of the value chain, the development of the circular economy;
4. development of economic activities basis of which cultural environment and infrastructure can be developed.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 7/10

Fair competitiveness and the market - when small gets big and big becomes small:

1. educating the public on food production at all stages of the chain;
2. the same conditions in international trade, both in terms of financial support and in terms of restrictions.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 8/10

Food safety and traceability: solutions for sustainability:

1. education of consumers: to have information about product from the very beginning to the plate;
2. a common understanding of the objectives of the policy, surveillance, production, consumption;
3. a rapid process of safety and traceability checks.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 9/10

Results of the discussion of politicians:

1. changes in the education system to provide basis for new production systems;
2. promoting healthy food consumption;
3. sustainable agricultural production systems: transition to environmentally friendly methods with appropriate transition and financial support.

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## OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 10/10

### Public Discussion:

1. to close supermarkets on Sundays;
2. higher VAT on products of animal origin and lower VAT for bio-products;
3. each citizen should start by at least one change in his/her own food consumption pattern, e.g. one missed meal per week;
4. a common food policy across agriculture, environment and health - the food system is a complex issue;
5. environmental impact needs to be improved;
6. the use of fertilizers and pesticides must be significantly reduced;
7. improve the quality of products, meaning healthier ingredients, ecologically sustainable;

Online survey results showed that the majority of respondents had voted for the need to transform the Latvian food system (74%) (i.e. to lower the impact on the environment 33%, health concerns 20%, and significant reduction of mineral fertilizers and pesticides 21%). On the other hand, 5% were of an opinion that everything is well and that it is still safe to continue production without thinking about the environment, but more profit is needed.

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## AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Latvian farmers work hard to enhance the Latvian countryside, maintain habitats for native plants and animals, maintain landscapes, protect watercourses and support wildlife species. Agriculture provides a population with one of the most important need – food. In spite of this, the farming is still one of the biggest sources of environment pollution. Divergence appears whether and at what scale farmers should transform their practices.

Whether Latvian food is safe and traceable? How much information should be made available to consumers? The complex nature of the food supply chain and the economic motivation to provide cheaper food products increase the likelihood of fraud. If on one side there are regulations, control authorities and opinions that everything is under control, on the other side opinions emerge that the systems are losing credibility, consumers are being misled, food quality is lost, food safety is threatened and unfair commercial practices are being pursued harming environment and public health.

Self-sufficiency and external trade - if on one side higher productivity and export of food products above self-sufficiency levels is good for economy, on other side it has high load and risks towards environment.

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# ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

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## RELEVANT LINKS

- **Opening speech of President of the Republic of Latvia H.E. Mr. Egils Levits**  
[https://www.president.lv/en/article/address-president-latvia-egils-levits-national-dialogue-resilience-latvian-countrysid e-fo  
d-and-future-generations](https://www.president.lv/en/article/address-president-latvia-egils-levits-national-dialogue-resilience-latvian-countrysid-e-fo<br/>d-and-future-generations)
- **Official webpage of the organiser**  
<http://llkc.lv/lv/nozares/lauku-attistiba/valsts-prezidents-atklas-dialogu-par-latvijas-lauku-un-partikas-sistemu>
- **Official webpage of the Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia**  
<http://www.zm.gov.lv>