

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 22 March 2021 14:00 GMT +00:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Dialogue on trade-offs in meeting Ireland's climate change commitments while developing its agri-food sector.
CONVENED BY	Stewart Gee of Stewart Gee Consulting and Michael Barry of MJBConsulting
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/3894/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Ireland

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

120

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

62 Male

58 Female

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

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

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: We structured the dialogue to focus on a vision for 2030. Keynote speakers were briefed to speak about whatever they wished but to keep it future focused and positive so as to ensure participants were in a 'change mindset' before the dialogues on the trade-offs' Reinforcing this, in the two Dialogue sessions the breakout rooms were facilitated with a view to design thinking with 20 mins each on Vision, Barriers,/Trade-offs and First steps. Commit to the summit: We did ask people to share actions they would do between the first and second events but this did not work. We structured the breakout sessions using design thinking (Vision, Barrier/Trade-off, First Steps) Respectful: Everyone's opinion was heard. We stuck to timings pretty rigidly to ensure this. Principles were reinforced at the start of the initiation session. Recognise Complexity: By focusing on trade-offs we emphasised the complex interactions in the food system (global v local, cost v quality etc.). Divergent views were important in clarifying how complex the system is. Embrace Multi-Stakeholder Inclusivity: We engaged as broad a range of stakeholders as possible from producers right through to processors, retailers, civil society, environmental groups, government departments and government agencies and consultants in the food sector. Complement the work of others: We included a recap of the main outcomes of a previous independent dialogue in Ireland and we have engaged with the steering Committee for the National Dialogue to ensure outcomes feed into that process as well. Build Trust: We operated based on Chatham House Rules and made this clear in every session. Outcomes were summarised and presented back to participants for validation before writing this report.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

There was very open and robust exchanges of ideas, but everyone recognised that there was a need for change and that each stakeholder had to do something.

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

Time management is critical. Don't let any one individual dominate a discussion. Ensure everyone gets a chance to speak. Remaining future focused from the outset is critical. There is no point in having the same conversations between the same people that have been had many times before, you need new voices and perspectives in the room. Having a truly 'independent' dialogue with no financial backing or agendas worked very well, but can be limited by your own networks and your own ability/capacity to engage stakeholders Trying to pack everything into a single 2hr session gives very little time. We spread our Dialogue across 4x90 min sessions across three weeks(1 x Initiation session with key note speakers and limited discussion; 2 x Discussions sessions, with key note speaker and then break-out rooms for an hour; 1 x Consolidation session to validate findings). This allowed time for participants to reflect on what they had heard/contributed and to come back with more nuanced contributions. After each session we shared very brief outputs to encourage this reflection. We felt this worked very well as we had high repeat participation across the events.

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

We used a very similar method to the one in the manual, but with a few differences. 1. We had four sessions over three weeks. Each session was for 90 minutes. The Initiation session included 4 keynote speakers and a representative recapping on an earlier independent dialogue. There was time for some discussion, but this was limited. This was followed a week later with two dialogues, one on sustainable and equitable consumption and one on sustainable and equitable production. Each of these was opened by a key note speaker before we broke into discussion groups (x4 in each dialogue). This gave a full hour for participants to have detailed discussions with three 20 minute blocks focusing on vision, barrier/trade-off and first steps. We then drafted the findings and circulated prior to a consolidation session a week later where they were validated, before completing this form. 2. We did not structure the break-out rooms according to the 4 questions in the facilitation guide. We used the design thinking model mentioned above. We felt this worked very well. 3. However, because we kept our discussion topics very broad, so as to engage as many stakeholders as possible, it meant it was very difficult to delve in detail into any one trade-off and get commitment from participants to take action. The process was very much about setting the scene and opening people's minds. 3. We also did not collect names or details on participants. We possibly should have collected the details requested above, but as we used our own networks to invite people we felt it was not worth collecting all that information. The figures given in the first section are estimates based on total registrations for the first session. Everyone did get a chance to speak and to be heard. We were very happy with the process we followed and have received nothing but positive feedback. We had two excellent facilitators to support with the breakout sessions. Having people you trust to do that job is critical as is taking the time to run through everything and address any issues long before the sessions start. Sticking to times is critical, it does not matter who is talking.

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

Firstly we decided to focus on trade-offs as these are a great way of getting people to think about the consequences of what they are advocating for, decisions made and who they might effect rather than focusing on problems and solutions. Secondly, we split our Dialogues into two with one focused on sustainable and equitable consumption and one on sustainable and equitable production. These two topics were deliberately very broad to enable as much dialogue as possible. By having a very structured facilitation process we were able to manage the discussions without predetermining the topics.

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

The main findings are detailed in the outcomes section. Discussions were facilitated using the design thinking approach and the outcomes reflect this. There was an initial component on participant's vision of what a sustainable and equitable food system might look like. This was followed with a discussion on what the barriers/trade-offs might be in achieving this vision. Finally we asked participants what might be the first steps we could take to achieve the vision.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

The Vision

This is what a Sustainable Food System should include according to participants

- A definition of Sustainable Food based on science, that recognizes natural production and is clear and unambiguous.
- Healthy and nutritious food available at affordable prices that delivers safe and nutritious outcomes for all consumers
- A food system that is equitable to all actors (in terms of economic returns, decision making power and onus to change)
- Zero emissions and waste through a functioning circular economy
- A food system that enhances biodiversity and improves soil and water quality.
- A food system that supports socially sustainable communities
- Strong Animal welfare systems
- Increased consumption of healthy, nutrient rich foods
- Consumption of meat and dairy (animal products) linked to nutritional guidelines
- Consumers who understand the real value of food
- Clear, user friendly food labelling and credible marketing claims
- Proactive consumers demanding clarity on what they are eating, prioritising their health and safety.
- We need to have the capacity to manage and respond to the unknown, unknowns as the food system changes rapidly.
- Knowledge of the risks associated with new foods
- Moving focus from "Farm to Fork" to "Soil to Gut"

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

Barriers / Trade-Offs

The following are paraphrased from the Dialogues

- “The current absence of hard scientific evidence and baselines for sustainability makes it difficult to understand sustainability. This leaves room for ambiguity in what is ‘sustainable’ which erodes trust between food system actors”
- “Does sustainable food have to mean more expensive food?”
- “With only 37% of Irish farmers being economically viable, what might be the impact on the rural economy if food prices don’t increase?”
- “Terms like green, natural and sustainable have become hijacked, how can we build credibility for consumers?”
- “We shouldn’t assume that all fresh and locally produced foods have the same nutritional benefit”
- “Most Irish produce is targeted at the export market. What effect is Irish produce having on consumers and producers in our target markets?”
- “Will promoting local and organic provide the economic returns for Irish farmers who rely on exporting 90% of what they produce”.
- “How is animal welfare reflected in our measures of sustainability, if at all?”
- “Are the voices of Irish farmers being engaged effectively in policy discussions and are they being given equal weight to other stakeholders”.
- “What is the real price of sustainable food and will consumers be willing to pay it? If not, who will?”
- “What value do consumers place on food and is this really reflected in the cost?”
- “Should we tax highly processed low nutrient foods and if so, would this disproportionately affect consumers with lower incomes? Is this equitable?”
- “Cheap food is a driver of food waste.”
- “Ireland is taking a piecemeal approach to the Food System with multiple separate strategies and institutions doing disparate things. Do we need to take a different approach and develop a Food Systems Policy?”
- “The EU’s and Ireland’s policy debate needs more input from individuals, farmers and consumers, but policy and its jargon make participation unattractive for effective engagement”.
- “Is CAP a potential catalyst for more sustainable production practices or is it a barrier to them? What measures could be included in CAP (or other policies) to support farmers to engage in more sustainable practices at farm level?”
- “Is decreasing the national herd the only way to simultaneously reduce emissions, increase biodiversity, improve water quality and ensure food security, both in Ireland and globally and if so, how can this be reconciled with the current agri-food growth strategy?”
- “Most funding goes towards the ‘traditional’ sectors of dairy and meat. Building expertise and capacity in other sectors will take time and money.”
- “Can legislation and regulation stay ahead of new product development?”

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KEYWORDS

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

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

First Steps

These are the immediate actions identified by participants in moving towards Sustainable Food Systems

- Establish a fully representative Food Systems Council
- Create a framework that captures what we know, engages stakeholders and addresses gaps, aiming for incremental improvement.
- Develop education/awareness/behaviour change programmes for consumers as a whole (not just schools) that explain sustainable food systems from production through to consumption.
- Develop a process to manage the trade-offs to ensure progress and avoid unintended consequences.
- Identify the biggest problems and target those with ambition to tackle them first.
- Invest in research on how we can deliver affordable sustainable food
- Implement transparency in the supply chain to ensure equity to all stakeholders
- Address the issue of food waste.
- Sense of urgency is required, but we must bring all stakeholders along the journey.
- Invest in local food systems development
- Use taxation of unhealthy and unsustainable foods to finance sustainable food system initiatives
- Increase funding to horticulture and other underrepresented sectors.
- Raise awareness, educate and empower consumers on the 'value' of food
- Greater regulation of marketing and promotion of 'sustainable' foods.
- Greater investment in emerging technologies and foods to assess their sustainability credentials.
- Budgets for research need to be aligned with a vision for where our food system will be in 10 years.
- Refocus investment on nutrient content, quality (nutrition) and value addition and away from volume of production.
- Increase the production of more nutrient dense foods by exploiting new plant varieties, better animal genetics and better crop husbandry to deliver better outcomes with minimal additional cost.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

The areas of divergence are listed under outcome 2 above in the list of trade-offs identified. To summarize these two key areas of divergence were noted. It was also noted that participants felt that both of these 'divergences' could be explored further and that solutions could be found.

1. Local v Global

The majority of economic output from Irish farms is for the export market, yet there was a recognition that local production of safe and nutritious food for local consumption also needs to be addressed. Balancing trade-offs in the local v. global debate is a real challenge for Irish stakeholders.

2. Cost v. Value of sustainable food

Does sustainable food need to be more expensive? What do we need to do to ensure producers get a fair price? What value do consumers place on food and will they be willing to pay more for sustainable food? Will the cost of sustainable food place unfair barriers to access for less well off households?

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Independent Dialogue on Trade-Offs in Irelands Agri-Food growth and enviroinmental commitments Outcomes_April 2021**
https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Independent-Dialogue_Outcome_-April-20211.pdf