

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Thursday, 4 March 2021 08:30 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Towards Sustainable Food Systems
CONVENED BY	Mr Jyri Ollila, National Convenor, Adviser at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/5032/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Finland

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 58 31-50 55 51-65 5 66-80 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

25 Male 101 Female Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

11	Agriculture/crops	7	Education	9	Health care
3	Fish and aquaculture	5	Communication		Nutrition
13	Livestock	10	Food processing	12	National or local government
4	Agro-forestry	10	Food retail, markets	3	Utilities
13	Environment and ecology	6	Food industry		Industrial
5	Trade and commerce	9	Financial Services	6	Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

5	Small/medium enterprise/artisan	1	Workers and trade union
9	Large national business	2	Member of Parliament
0	Multi-national corporation	7	Local authority
4	Small-scale farmer	32	Government and national institution
12	Medium-scale farmer	3	Regional economic community
0	Large-scale farmer		United Nations
15	Local Non-Governmental Organization		International financial institution
7	International Non-Governmental Organization	3	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
2	Indigenous People	3	Consumer group
14	Science and academia	7	Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The timeliness of the dialogue was highlighted in the invitation letter/email as well as in the various interventions in events preceding the webinar. It was also stressed that through the dialogue discussions people have an opportunity to get their voice heard in national policy work and also in the international fora. All parties were invited and the invitation was free; further distribution to colleagues was encouraged. The invitation was also distributed via the existing network of the research program on food systems operated by the Academy of Science. The key researchers of that program were engaged in the dialogue planning and implementation.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Food systems issues are largely discussed among the stakeholders and also in public. Thus, there is a readiness and experience for such discussion. There is an overall tradition of civil society consultation in any field of policy planning.

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

It was made clear that this dialogue does not necessarily aim at reaching a national consensus or government position, but aims at listening views of different parties and angles. The government position will be prepared within the government and this dialogue is taken into consideration. This was important in order to free the dialogue from the political process.

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

This was the main event of the national dialogue in Finland. It is considered as phase 2 dialogue: looking for ideas and innovative solutions for the food system. This time, no regional (subnational) dialogue events were organized: the relatively small country is rather homogeneous in consumption patterns, food markets, farming and natural resources.

All five aspects (Action Tracks) were considered and the WGs were divided accordingly.

The dialogue webinar was structured as follows:

1. Opening by the top administrator of the two ministries (Min of For. Affairs and Min of Ag&For) and three introductory speeches: FSS process and the dialogue (Dr David Nabarro), systems approach (Dr Elina Lehtikoinen), EU-framework (Director General Minna-Mari Kaila)
2. The meeting was split into five AT working groups, led by top experts from the academia and administration; Introduction by the chair, open input discussion, targeted discussion on 3 to 5 central topics picked up from the discussion by the chair; drafting of the report by the chair and his/her assistant expert).
3. Reporting of the WGs; supplementary comments; synthesis by the curator

All five AT-base working groups were given four questions:

1. What are the special strengths of Finland on which future food systems could be built?
2. What kind of (painful) choices we may need to make, when approaching more sustainable food systems and more healthy diets?
3. Are there opportunities or potential solutions, which could provide with an utter change or a giant leap towards sustainable systems?
4. What do we have in our model or in our practices that could serve as an example or a benchmark for the rest of the world?

The members of the working groups either spoke to the group or provided answers in the chat column of the video meeting. Chat discussions in the five working groups produced more than 40 pages of ideas/opinions. It was saved and will be analyzed afterwards. A synthesis is made available for all participants, and for the organizing ministries.

Chairs of the WGs made a quick compilation of the discussion and crystallized the views expressed in 3 to 5 main points that were discussed further. Upon those discussions, the chairs, together with the nominated expert assistants edited a report for the plenary session of the afternoon.

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 division in 5 AT groups helped discussion of this vast range of questions. Still, the chairs of WGs were advised not to be too strict in limiting discussion under one headline: this is a matter of systems analysis. After all, several remarks were mentioned in many WGs and merit to be raised as main findings:

- Stability, trust and tradition of cooperation in the society supports the good functioning of the food system, and vice versa. This includes a well established system of food safety control, plant and animal health and wealth standards, high veterinary standards, consumer protection and equal opportunities.
- Existing structures and natural strengths of a community provide with a starting point in building sustainability. It would be risky to force something that does not fit to the tradition and circumstances.
- Holistic approach is necessary: One Health; nexus thinking (food-forest-water-energy); all aspects of sustainability (Economic, environmental, social and cultural); local-national-regional-global.
- School, preschool and early childhood meal service and nutritional education are the key for healthier eating habits. Finland has a long record and evidence on this.
- In short: More fruits&vegetables and less meat for sustainable diets. In Finland, the comparative advantage of agriculture lies in ruminants and especially dairy. This controversy needs to be tackled through improving the carbon balance of dairy production and shifting to less meat and dairy but concentrating on sustainably produced quality produce.
- consumer awareness, climate conscience is increasing. We need better tool for providing credible information for the consumer in making informed decisions. Furthermore, the consumer should be motivated and ready to pay a fair (=higher) price for sustainable products.
- Diversity is the solution, not only in terms of biodiversity, but also diversity in production, diversity in income sources, diversity of marketing and procurement channels, diversity in diets, diversity of solutions in general.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/5

AT1 Outcome - focus areas 1) Zero Hunger 2) Access to Nutritious Food ja 3) Food Safety.

Hunger and nutrition problems globally are enormous. However, hunger is also present in Finland, there are weekly around 20 000 people in receiving food assistance and well over half of Finnish adults are overweight; children's overweight is especially worrisome.

Finland's strengths are food safety and one of the special features is the successful implementation of the One Health concept. Food is traceable and the use of antibiotics is low. However, there aren't systematic practices to identify and combat food fraud in Finland. So far, confidence in food quality and safety is high in Finland, but food fraud is a big trend globally.

Nutritionally, Finland's strengths are catering systems in the public sector (schools, public services). Comprehensive public food services reduce nutrition inequalities. Nutrition education (e.g. so-called one plate model) and home economics education (cooking classes, etc.) at schools are important.

Resource efficiency (e.g. in livestock farming) was considered a strength in primary production. Many considered the co-operation and trust between actors in the entire food chain creates good basis for efficient work, although there are also challenges in terms of income distribution between actors. Cooperation between the authorities is excellent, and has helped to improve food safety. Digital innovations are used to increase resource efficiency and cooperation.

Solutions are needed for the use of peatlands (which account for 10 % of Finnish agricultural land) and research on this is being carried out actively. Circular economy and biogas production would help reduce the food system's dependency on fossil fuels. Dependency on protein imports could be reduced, for example, by increasing the cultivation of peas and fava beans, but on the other hand, the cultivation of oilseeds has decreased and the need for imports for feed has increased. It would be important to secure economic opportunities and incentives for domestic protein and oilseed production.

Reducing meat production was highlighted and it was considered important to switch to plant-based, so-called 'one planet' diet. Systemic changes are needed in Finland, especially to reduce meat consumption. Meat can still be consumed but it is important to decrease the amount. Increasing fish consumption was highlighted as important. Aquaculture has developed enormously and, for example, the Finnish 'Baltic Sea feed' is an example of good innovation. New innovations and consumer-friendly products are needed. Reducing food waste (at the consumer end in Finland) is also necessary.

Nexus thinking. For example, forest, water, food and energy are all related. Land use plays a key role in all of these and sensible land use solutions are needed.

Finland could set an example globally through One Health activities. Many Finnish strengths (food safety, cooperation, etc.) are combined in the One Health approach. At the same time, the approach forces to break the silos between operators, as cooperation is essential. Plant-based food innovations, school nutrition education, publicly supported school meals and home economics education were also mentioned. Food traceability, digital solutions and land use solutions were also highlighted.

In addition, the reduction of food waste (discount products in grocery stores, etc.), the transfer of know-how and investment to the global south, nature education, circular aquaculture (aquaponics) and vertical cultivation were mentioned.

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KEYWORDS

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/5

The members of the group were first invited to mention one specific feature related to the four questions given (look the "Main findings"). The chair proposed five aggregated topics upon the answers, to be elaborated further:

1. National dietary recommendations and their implementation. Derived from the Nordic recommendations, the national recommendations clearly are a strength in the endeavor to strive for better diets. The population, especially men, eat too little fruits and vegetables, too much red meat and saturated fats, use too much salt. A consensus among food chain actors helps in guiding the consumers towards better diets. Sustainability needs to be considered together with health aspects in renewing recommendations. The recommendations should be guiding principle for the processing industry, trade, public procurement and in the institutional catering (schools, pre-school, university, working place etc). The recommendations have credibility and authority in the consumers' eyes.

2. Nutritional education for children and youth. The whole package of a) birth&child counseling bureau b) preschool meal&nutritional education, c) free school meal&education d) subsidized meals for students in higher education provides with an effective tool for dietary guidance. More attention needed in improving quality of vegetable-based meals. The curricula on primary and secondary level school includes home economics, health&nutrition education and sustainability studies. Aggressive marketing of junk food is difficult to combat; new social media could be the channel to reach young people. School&home&leisure activities must work together. Socio-economic background of children plays a role in adaptation of healthy habits.

3. Product innovations and the quality of food. New innovations, such as vegetable protein foods, low salt products, avoidance of saturated fats are showing the way: product development advances very fast now. Voluntary nutritional commitments of the processing industry is a promising way for healthy meals. Healthy products need to be more attractive, affordable and easily to consumed.

4. Strengthening research & capitalizing its results. Open access & transparency of science is necessary. Political decision must base on science. More research and data is needed in the field of carbon&water footprint, environmental impact in order to give clear and simple guidance.

5. Improving co-operation between food actors. National®ional characteristics need to be considered. Civil society/non-governmental organisations, schools, state authorities etc. working together.

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KEYWORDS

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/5

AT3 outcome

The tradition of dialogue and cooperation among actors, including cooperation between farmers, is a considerable strength in the Finnish society. It creates trust. Furthermore, there is a well established system of production control; rules are followed and therefore products are safe (no antibiotic residues, free from salmonella etc) and traceable. Animal wealth meets high standards. Also, there is a good preparedness for adapting new standards, technologies and market opportunities.

Farmers and other actors are well educated and therefore the ability to place oneself in a larger context is good; understanding food systems framework, One Health thinking and food-water-forest-energy-nexus of natural resources, for instance.

Animal production and especially ruminant husbandry, based on home grown grass, is a strength. There is room for improvement in regard to climate and environment challenges, but cattle husbandry is the sector where Finland has comparative advantages.

Sweet water fisheries is another strength. It needs further development work. The Baltic Sea herring is largely underutilized resource of protein and fish oil.

Digitalisation and data, comprising data on clients, research, technology, meteorological information, quality systems, labeling, monitoring of return and profitability, measurement of carbon balance and foot print etc. Decisions for better economic efficiency and risk management can be made only based on accurate information. A comprehensive extension and consultancy for farmers, based on research, is the way to improve both economy and efficiency of natural resource use. A concrete example is the burning issue of peatland fields; improvement can only be reached by thorough scientific analysis and locally tailored solutions.

Sustainability has its price. Accountability, ethical and fair production practices will be reflected in food prices, and this needs to be accepted. Raising food prices would make possible a path different from the conventional model of getting bigger.

Making smaller units viable would improve the regional balance and counteract segregation of animal husbandry and plant production. This, on its part, would work for better animal health, state of our nature through improved possibilities of outdoor grazing.

If sustainability is to be a criterion of consumer choice, information for such choice needs to be easily available. Various labeling systems on sustainability and environmental impact do provide with information, but there are open questions on the cost distribution of such systems. Often such systems are administratively very heavy.

It is plausible to develop agricultural production practices towards sustainability, no doubt. All agricultural production models could benefit from adapting best practices of circular economy, organic and regenerative farming.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/5

Outcome AT4

One of the important things behind the well-functioning food system in Finland is the overall stability of the society, trust, gender equality and women's role in the society, the world's best school system, investments in knowledge and research. All this makes possible a well-functioning food system. Thus, societal stability is both a prerequisite for and a result of well-functioning food system.

The tradition of working together and agricultural co-operative movement is a strength of the society.

Combating climate change and policy measures in the field of land use – especially on peatland use – are impacting agriculture, with regional variations; certain regions are under a heavy pressure.

The centralized model needs on its side a decentralized and local model of production. Food systems need to be more versatile. This would improve consumer choice and would increase resilience.

The traditional food systems and cultures of the indigenous peoples must be supported and given change to evolve.

The revolution of food technologies might not have much impact within 10 to 15 years, but in the longer term, we might need to reconsider our conventional perception on food.

Improving equitability of income distribution means also that some parts of the society need to surcease their privileges.

A sentiment of social depreciation is linked with resistance against change.

Finland would have to offer to other countries its experience in knowledge systems, education and research. Know-how in plant breeding is a specific expertise, as well as the high level skills in blue bioeconomy.

The model of equal partnerships could serve as a benchmark for other countries. Trust and cooperation lead to efficient use of resources and equitable distribution of profit. This model does not necessarily need big entities nor heavy technologies.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/5

AT5 output

There is a long tradition of collaboration amongst various actors of the society, and between the actors along the food chain as well. Good examples are the strong position of the co-operative movement in agriculture and food, and the sophisticated system of national security of supply across the value chain. Resilience is an issue of the society at large: the structure of the economy need to cheer sustainability and resilience, take account of externalities and invest in trust, diversity and innovation.

Large sweet water and groundwater resources, suitable climate for efficient grass production, and, as a result of them, strong ruminant-based animal production; attention for animal wealth and health, including non-existence of salmonella, sophisticated veterinary control; relatively small scale of enterprises: this is a combination to success. Use of veterinary medication, antibiotics in particular, is very restricted, but still, combatting AMR needs targeted effort, nationally and internationally.

Equal treatment, dialogue, symmetric availability of information, transparency and negotiation structures on prices creates trust and provides with opportunities for learning and innovation. Here lies also a weak point in Finland: fair distribution of added value along the food chain – better rules are needed.

Poor profitability and future perspectives in agriculture are linked with difficulties in attracting young people to agricultural education and jobs, and also the increasing need to recruit foreign labor for seasonal work. There is an imminent need to decrease the dependence on imported production inputs and their price fluctuation. In addition to foreign labor, feed protein and feed additives are increasingly risky dependences of imports. At least partial solutions to avoid dependency and vulnerability could be a better functioning circular markets of nutrients, improved systems of waste management, decentralized biogas production and alike.

Animal and plant breeding needs to aim at changes that are not easily predictable. Diversity as a principle of breeding must be present, together with productivity objectives.

Diversity of the rural landscape contribute to biodiversity and help to combat climate change. A diverse rural landscape is better apt for resisting harmful insects and pests.

Nutritional recommendations and public awareness of healthy diets, including school meals, nutritional education, mother and child counseling system provide with a holistic system for sustainable eating habits. A global benchmark.

Most important thing is to reduce externalization of the resource use footprint, environmental footprint and social footprint of our food system, i.e. impact of imports must be included in the calculation. Therefore, local production, based on local inputs and comparative advantage is an important opportunity in the global division of labor. An example: comparative advantage of ruminant-based production, efficient silage-based feed, in spite of relatively short growing season, resulting self-sufficiency in protein, abundant water resources, high level of animal wealth and health, contributing to energy independence, climate resilience and biodiversity.

The social impact of the Finnish food system (rights of the workers and farmers) needs special attention. Due diligence principles, social responsibility, rule-based criteria of contracting and transparent market information can together improve the social resilience of the food chain.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There are clearly points of controversy, but this dialogue did not suffer from the existence and awareness of them. It was about finding solutions for complex problems.

Areas of divergence:

- reduction of climate impact of meat&dairy and peatland culture vs. importance and comparative advantage of dairy production in Finland and especially in certain regions with peatland, importance and nutritional value of meat&dairy in traditional diets.
- traditional eating habits vs. vegetarian/vegan diets
- economies of scale in agriculture vs. diversity, social and environmental concerns
- strict rules in sustainability&traceability of domestic foods vs. cheap imported food with lacking information of origin

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Program**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/FSS-National-dialogue-Finland-program.pdf>