

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Tuesday, 27 April 2021 09:00 GMT +04:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS THROUGH INCLUSIVE VALUE CHAINS
CONVENED BY	Mr. Arman Khojoyan, Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/6197/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Armenia

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

46

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

6

19-30

32

31-50

6

51-65

2

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

25 Male

21 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

6 Agriculture/crops

1 Fish and aquaculture

3 Livestock

1 Agro-forestry

5 Environment and ecology

3 Trade and commerce

7 Education

3 Communication

2 Food processing

1 Food retail, markets

2 Food industry

1 Financial Services

2 Health care

2 Nutrition

5 National or local government

Utilities

1 Industrial

1 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

4 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

2 Large national business

1 Multi-national corporation

1 Small-scale farmer

1 Medium-scale farmer

2 Large-scale farmer

1 Local Non-Governmental Organization

2 International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

6 Science and academia

3 Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

4 Local authority

8 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

10 United Nations

1 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?

The first Dialogue of the Republic of Armenia Dialogue (FSSD) was held as hybrid meeting with possibility of online live stream which allowed to engage more participants in discussions and enabled them to submit questions and comments in the chat of the virtual platform. The event embraced the Summit principles of engagement: Act with Urgency, Commit to the Summit, Be Respectful, Recognize Complexity, Embrace Multi-Stakeholder Inclusivity, Complement the Work of Others, and Build Trust. Therefore, comprehensive preparatory work has been done with dialogue participants for making sure that their engagement contributes to the Summit and to the elaboration of pathways to food systems transformation in adding value to SDGs. Several meetings have been organized beforehand with all dialogue participants and their relevant representatives to clearly point out the vision, objectives and expected outcomes of the Summit. The so called “pre-dialogue” or preparatory sessions helped to motivate the participants and created a respectful atmosphere as a foundation for a genuine dialogue and collective action toward the goal of the Summit. As a result, the multi-stakeholder dialogue envisaged during the event has turned to a “safe space” for promoting trust, encouraging mutual respect, and establishing an effective platform for debate, collaboration, consensus-building, and shared commitment making. In addition, The Chatham House Rule of non-attribution encouraged participants to engage in frank discussion with a collaborative approach. Only dialogue participants, a facilitator, and two note-takers were permitted in each discussion session.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The event embraced multi-stakeholder inclusivity and included stakeholders from across the food system, ranging from Armenian producers, agricultural organizations, food industry, research and academic institutions, international organizations, farm and food workers, and civil society groups. In order to address the challenges, potential and vulnerabilities of Armenian food systems through a holistic approach, multi-stakeholder group discussions were organized. The topics discussed during the dialogue were formulated in the form of short, ambitious statements, to be realized in the upcoming 10 years. During the first session of the Dialogue panelists were invited to present strategic topics in line with the national context and priorities as well as in consonant with UNFSS Action Tracks. The speakers of the first session have had specific expertise on certain topics discussed. The presentations were followed by prompt questions raised by the curator and participants. Key points were summarized by the curator. The second session of the Dialogue was comprised of group discussions on Food safety and resilience in the agri-food supply chains. The group discussions brought together a wide range of stakeholders and ensured a constructive exchange. Two note takers following the group discussions sent their anonymized notes to the Curator. Based on the key points summarized by the curator from the first part of the event and the notes of the breakout sessions, an anonymized report has been developed to be incorporated into the official feedback form.

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

Clear set of rules should be set by the dialogue convenors in line with the Summit principles of engagement. Moreover, these rules should be explained and strictly followed throughout the preparation phase and the final implementation of the event. In the case of the first Dialogue of the Republic of Armenia the Chatham House Rule of non-attribution encouraged participants to engage in frank discussion with a collaborative approach. Only dialogue participants, a facilitator, expert researcher for consultation, and two note-takers were permitted in each dialogue breakout session. International and domestic observers were invited to observe the opening and closing plenary sessions but were not invited into the breakout sessions.

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

The first two-stage National Dialogue focused on identifying challenges to: (a) ensure the availability of safe nutritious food; (b) boost nature-positive production at scale and, (c) strengthen capacities to resist vulnerabilities and the often changing economic environment; thus, building more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable food systems in Armenia. The discussions were broken into six main challenge areas aligned with the UN Food Systems Summit five “action tracks” as outlined below:

- 1. Sustainable and effective use of agricultural land. Effective mechanisms for bringing unutilized land into production. Improving farm structures. Increase productivity and efficiency. Land market development. Regulation of access and control of agricultural land.
- 2. Investment in sustainable agricultural practices. Green agriculture for sustainable food supply chain. Adoption of climate smart, resource efficient, innovative and eco-friendly technologies. Involvement of government and intermediate organizations in promoting sustainable agriculture.
- 3. The role of Public and Private investments in infrastructure and market linkages. Investment in logistics of a value chain.
- 4. Resilience and nutrition; the role of nutrition in building resilience to shocks, and practical contextual steps to ensure safe, quality, and nutritional food for all.
- 5. Promotion of inclusive agribusiness models: establishment of financially self-sustaining and diversified seed supply system. Import substitution and enhancing food security through commercialization of seed supply.
- 6. Agriculture 4.0 and food systems transformation. New stage of technological development and e-agriculture as a key enabler of agricultural and rural development.

Finally, each of the two breakout session targeting several issues related to the five “action track” challenge areas. Participants were assigned to one of these challenge areas in two parallel sessions:

- 1. Food Safety and 2. Resilience in agri-food value chains.

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

MAIN FINDINGS

Transparency, inclusiveness and ownership were of fundamental importance to guarantee successful outcomes of the first Dialogue of the Republic of Armenia. Different actors across the entire food systems were identified and selected in the preparatory phase. The expertise, past experiences and knowledge of these actors were taken into consideration in order to develop a common vision for a long-term sustainability of Armenian food systems. In total six panel discussion topics were jointly identified in accordance with the dialogue procedures and targeting the challenges that the actors of Armenian food systems are currently facing. Each topic was presented by a selected representative of governmental, international or local organization and discussed involving all panel participants for a collective sharing of reflections on each of the topics discussed. Finally, the results and outcomes of discussions were synthesized to incorporate into main findings.

The most important output is that within the frames of this Summit a food systems' transformation action plan shall be developed to stimulate the emergence of new ideas. In addition, the experience and knowledge of the parties involved will enable to unleash hidden opportunities and develop modern food systems with joined efforts.

A major finding is the cooperation especially between the government and private sector actors being ambitious in finding solutions in developing agriculture, taking into consideration environmental issues to build strong food systems. This is important for building strong agricultural production and healthy diets for the population.

In this regard, the RA Ministry of Economy presented 8 conceptual actions including the efficient use of agricultural lands. Currently, the 50% of agricultural lands in Armenia is used ineffectively, and the Ministry of Economy has initiated an inventory to find out the objective and subjective reasons of that. The ultimate goal is to ensure the development of land resources and the creation of a land bank, which is envisaged to be implemented with the support of FAO, so that the accurate information shall be provided to the potential investors.

In general, the main finding was that the international partners are conducting diverse activities for strengthening food systems in Armenia. In this regard, the European Union Green Agriculture Initiative in Armenia project was presented. The project is officially launched in March 2020 and is funded by the European Union (€ 9,7 million) and co-funded and implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (€ 2 million), the operational unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation. The Government counterpart of the project is the RA Ministry of Economy. The project is partially implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Armenia. It aims at increasing investments in sustainable agriculture – demographics, environ aspects, socio-economic aspects. Intervention areas are green ag for sustainable food supply chain; adoption of climate smart, resource efficient, innovative and eco-friendly technologies; involvement of gov and intermediate organizations in promoting sustainable agriculture. Incentives for transition from conventional to green ag – tax incentives for crops, strong extension system, international cooperation and teaching students as future actors.

In addition to international actors, the participation of actors in the logistics segment of the chain was essential, since their presence here is already a sign of dialogue. As a result of the discussions, it was important to find out how the private sector and the state can work together, because the more developed is the state, the more infrastructures are created from the private sector. In this regard, the state support programs are crucial. The private support to the state must be systematic, with the right instruments, especially at the initial stage, in order to ensure balanced and harmonious development.

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KEYWORDS

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✓	Innovation	✓	Data & Evidence
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	Women & Youth Empowerment	✓	Trade-offs
		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

Ensure the availability of safe nutritious food for all

- The importance of international cooperation and support in the sphere of food safety, compliance with international requirements to increase food export volumes, RA policy and international integration processes, the peculiarities of the RA cooperation with EU and EEU,
- Ways of cooperation development amongst government bodies, relations of state bodies with food producing and processing organizations, state policy towards business,
- The influence of COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Armenia on food producing and processing organizations, RA economic indices and food industry tendencies,
- The installation of food safety international standards and the problem of infrastructures absence, gaps in the food safety legislation and necessary amendments,
- The application of ISO22000 standard and the installation of HACCP systems in food producing and processing organizations, RA legislation and sub legislative acts, RA government decisions on and schedules of food safety systems installation, application of simplified food safety models (procedures),
- The roles and clarification of functions (risk assessment, monitoring, organizing inspections and state control over food producing and processing organizations) of the bodies responsible for the sector,
- Risk-based assessment and inspection of food safety systems,
- Agriculture automation and installation of computer technologies, installation of innovative technologies in the RA agriculture sphere and the perspectives of automation,
- Management of registration process of state registry – proper application of classifiers,
- Presentation of production plan by food producing and processing organizations,
- Establishment of databases on economic entities, need of integration of various databases in increasing food industry efficiency, need of inventory processes in agriculture,
- Digitization process in cattle breeding and ensuring traceability of food of animal origin in the whole food production chain, the system of animal numbering and census and the RA efforts in installing the system,
- Development of laboratory capacities in the food sector, establishment of reference laboratory for food industry, training of laboratory specialists in food sector,
- Animal disease prevention by means of digitization of cattle breeding, reducing threats to human health due to food safety, One health concept,
- The perspectives of animal numbering and census system installation and current problems, mapping of the pastures and the areas envisaged for animal keeping,
- Sanitary-hygienic situation of the food of animal origin and the role of slaughter houses,
- The importance of increasing computer literacy in rural communities and the problem of absence of digital technologies
- Preparing food safety specialists and organizing their training, the quality of advisory services in the sphere of food safety and the main reasons of shortcomings
- Increasing awareness of food industry workers, population (consumers) on food safety.

Since food safety is directly and indirectly interconnected with various other sectors of economy, during the dialogue much importance was attached to the coordinated approach towards solution of food safety problems as major outcome of the discussions.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

Boost nature-positive production at scale

Based on the discussions two perspectives for this outcome can be described:

Perspective 1: Improving Vulnerability and risks in Social Protection for boosting nature-positive production

Approach 1: Eligibility criteria for safety nets are enhanced and regularly updated. This could include applying food security dimensions into the safety-net measures.

Approach 2: Establish Shock Responsive Food Security Safety Nets

Short-term: Establish shock response mechanism to food insecure Armenian populations affected by the conflict and COVID-19 pandemic

Medium and long term: Social safety nets as comprehensive package

Nutrition education and awareness on healthy food choices and purchases

Apply social behavior change and teach the impacts of coping mechanisms and reduce the application of severe coping mechanisms

Approach 3: Establish early warning system components for food security Components:

Price hikes

Monitoring of shocks: economic, political, environmental risks and shocks

Natural and man-made disasters

Nutrition: Obesity and malnutrition trends (all age groups)

Rise of some Non-Communicable Diseases: Diabetes, hyper-tension

"Over consumption" of certain foods

Perspective 2: Building resilience for boosting nature-positive production

Resilience can build through investment in food systems that are nutritionally sensitive, and socially responsible yet demand driven and profitable. This requires a transformation of food systems, where food security is at the center of national development at all levels. True transformation of food systems takes a holistic approach with consumer demand and nutritional consumption patterns as the key driver. Opportunities for stable and safe food production are generated by this demand. The concept of investing in Food Systems links the most profitable and profit oriented parts of our current economic systems to those who do not seem to benefit from economic systems in their current form, or who are struggling to connect to specific parts of those systems. This is a farm to fork approach that builds networks along the value chain and fosters links between profitable activities and socially marginalized groups.

The benefits of investing in SME's along the value chain and taking a whole system approach are as follows; small businesses are strengthened, household level incomes increase, jobs are created, educational opportunities arise, people have access to nutritious and safe food, investments are made in innovative and green technologies that address climate change. This acts as a buffer when a shock hits and allow for speedy and more solid recovery (both economic, social and food security). This is a new way of thinking and doing business that leverages on the problem of malnutrition and hunger to achieve multiple-gains; economic growth, jobs, education, and a more healthy and productive population that is resilient to shocks, and recovers faster from them when they occur.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

Strengthen capacities to resist vulnerabilities and the often changing economic environment

Based on the results and findings of the discussion by this outcome focus lies on the logistic segment of the food value chains and Public and Private investments. From the point of view of the food security value chain logistic infrastructures playing serious role and government-private cooperation in this area can be considered not only mandatory and important, but also it is supposed to be an indicator for the development of harmonious government-private relationship.

Therefore, it is impossible to imagine the existence and their further development of logistic infrastructures without any state and public support especially in the Republic of Armenia. The degree of efficiency of infrastructure and necessity are determined by the level of development of market relations. It is an important component for the private sector to have the opportunity to participate in the evaluation of such a value chain.

For emerging countries like Armenia with changing economic environment the logistic infrastructures and their further development mostly depend on state regulations and subsidies aiming at:

- Encouraging investment through direct and indirect participation (subsidies, tax policy, local development projects),
- Simplify the process of permitting usage of state potential resources (land use, permissions of constructions, utility),
- Sustainable labor market development and educational policy to create new values and ensure continuity (social-public education and trainings).

The development of logistic infrastructure in Armenia would increase efficiency in the competitive markets, add great value, create new employments possibilities and thus, strengthen capacities of directly and indirectly involved value chain actors to resist vulnerabilities.

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	Human rights	✓	Governance
	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
			Environment and Climate

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

A notable area of divergence that emerged in the discussion was disagreement about the focus on different segments of the value chain. The representatives of the local private sector actors said that a stronger emphasis should be placed on the processing, transportation, and logistic segments, where the representatives of the WFP highlighted the final consumption part of the chain and achieving healthy diets of particular importance. The group’s discussion ended with a recognition that there should be a holistic and inclusive approach targeting entire food value chains for being able to build sustainable food systems in Armenia.

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