

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Wednesday, 28 April 2021 09:00 GMT -05:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Advancing food systems transformation to nourish the health of future generations and enable a sustainable planet
CONVENED BY	Global Child Nutrition Foundation, National Dairy Council, The Nature Conservancy and U.S. Dairy Export Council
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8433/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	United States of America

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

107

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

8 0-18 7 19-30 31 31-50 15 51-65 4 66-80 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

17 Male 55 Female 35 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

1	Agriculture/crops	10	Education	4	Health care
	Fish and aquaculture	5	Communication		Nutrition
17	Livestock	3	Food processing	4	National or local government
	Agro-forestry		Food retail, markets		Utilities
6	Environment and ecology	12	Food industry		Industrial
	Trade and commerce		Financial Services	45	Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

1	Small/medium enterprise/artisan		Workers and trade union
4	Large national business		Member of Parliament
6	Multi-national corporation	1	Local authority
	Small-scale farmer	6	Government and national institution
14	Medium-scale farmer		Regional economic community
	Large-scale farmer		United Nations
2	Local Non-Governmental Organization		International financial institution
12	International Non-Governmental Organization	4	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
	Indigenous People	2	Consumer group
11	Science and academia	44	Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

This Food Systems Summit Dialogue – “Advancing food systems transformation to nourish the health of future generations and enable a sustainable planet” – explored how society can better nourish future generations in more sustainable ways. Conducted virtually via Zoom, the Dialogue included keynote speakers and interactive, breakout discussions with diverse participants from various sectors across the food system. Prior to the Dialogue, the convenors distributed the link to the “Dialogue Principles of Engagement” to ensure all participants would have the opportunity to read and embrace the Principles throughout the conversation. The Dialogue Curator also opened the meeting with a reading of the Principles and reminded all participants that following these principles is core to the discussion. This Dialogue benefitted from robust discussion across nine different breakout groups for small group discussions around three topics (3 groups/topic): • Topic 1: Dairy’s role in child health, school nutrition and food security • Topic 2: Responsible production • Topic 3: Farm stewardship and animal care. Each small group discussion was structured in a similar way and guided by a trained facilitator. Participants started broad by reflecting on a vision statement related to their discussion topic and food systems transformation. Then, they worked to identify stakeholders to involve, opportunities and barriers to address, and specific actions they’d recommend taking to make that vision statement a reality. Throughout all nine discussions, the Principles were applied.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The Dialogue followed the “Principles of Engagement,” with a significant focus on embracing multi-stakeholder inclusivity. The four convenors – The Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF), National Dairy Council (NDC), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) – worked to ensure the event included stakeholders from various sectors across the food system. This included experts and advocates for child nutrition, students, researchers, representatives from governmental, non-governmental and private sector organizations, farmers, academics, economists, supply chain and packaging experts, and more. Particular attention was paid toward the inclusion of youth leaders and farmers. While young people are the future of agriculture, many have never been on a farm and don’t know the story behind their food. The convenors also recognized that conversations about agriculture policies and practices among decision-makers often exclude those most directly impacted by decisions (e.g., farmers and youth). Therefore, the convenors ensured that each breakout group included at least one farmer and youth representative, as well as people with high levels of subject matter expertise and lived experience to enable a rich discussion. Additionally, the convenors abided by the Chatham House Rule to further ensure participants would feel comfortable sharing their open and honest opinions.

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

No. The convenors felt that the guidance provided in the Food Systems Summit Dialogues Reference Manual was informative, thorough, and helpful throughout Dialogue planning and implementation. This conversation made clear that willingness to deliver on food systems transformation is abundant. This Dialogue forum empowered farmers, youth, scientists, civil servants, nutrition educators, medical professionals and more to share their lived experiences and hopes for the future, and collectively work to make those visions a reality.

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

Convened by organizations united in their commitment to advancing sustainable food systems and improving the health and wellbeing of children, the major focus of this Dialogue was to explore how society can better nourish future generations in more sustainable ways. This Dialogue provided an opportunity for participants from various sectors across the food system to brainstorm opportunities, find common ground, identify solutions, and work through complexities and challenges to achieve food systems transformation.

The conversation focused on the following topics and the links between them:

- Better ensuring food security and nutrition for children through sustainable school meal programs
- Identifying ways to advance environmentally responsible food production, including efforts that can achieve carbon neutrality, enhance farm and water stewardship and more
- Exploring U.S. dairy's role in advancing sustainable food systems through commitments to environmental stewardship and carbon neutrality, child nutrition and social/community impact

Participants heard from keynote speakers who highlighted their organization's respective efforts to help achieve food systems transformation for future generations.

- Ron Kleinman, MD (GCNF) emphasized the importance of school meal programs and the roles schools can play in delivering nutritious, safe, sustainable and affordable meals. He also noted that a recent GCNF report, School Meal Programs Around the World, demonstrated that when country governments prioritize nutritious, healthy foods, the market follows. School feeding programs create demand for diverse, nutritious, locally sourced food while promoting local agricultural development and government ownership. He emphasized that by providing a predictable, structured market for these healthy school foods, farmers, producers, distributors - actors all along the value chain - are benefiting from a reliable income source, allowing for increased production and quality year after year.
- Lynn Scarlett (TNC) shared ongoing initiatives from the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance around advancing recommendations to help guide U.S. climate policy. She also underscored the critical need to scale up integrative regenerative practices that restore habitat and protect biodiversity while reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).
- Greg Miller, PhD (NDC) highlighted the importance of working holistically across the four domains of sustainability - nutrition, environment, economic and social. He shared the U.S. dairy industry's commitment to achieve "carbon neutral or better" status for GHG, optimize water use and improve water quality by 2050, and also highlighted the FARM Program -- an effort that drives the dairy community to reach the highest environmental and animal care standards, while supporting safe and stable livelihoods.
- Janya Green, Action Track #1 vice chair, spoke to the importance of Dialogues for identifying game-changing and systemic solutions and spoke to her own anti-hunger work in her community.

Participants were divided into nine breakout groups; each discussion began with a vision statement based on one of the topics. Participants discussed opportunities and barriers, identified stakeholders to involve and brainstormed actions to take within the next three years to make the vision a reality.

While this Dialogue focused on the role of U.S. dairy farmers and dairy products, this sector's experiences can serve as an example for food system actors in general as the world collectively moves towards more sustainable food systems.

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

Across nine groups, several themes emerged:

- **Enhance accountability & transparency:** This was considered essential in building confidence in food systems. Participants highlighted the importance of metrics that transparently report on progress, reveal priorities, and collect/share environmental and animal care data.
- **Ensure equity, dignity & inclusion:** Participants emphasized these as cross-cutting themes. They shared how to involve stakeholders in food systems solutions, particularly farmers and students, who have historically been omitted from the conversation. Participants urged coherent strategies to eliminate the stigma of receiving free and reduced-price school meals and other forms of food assistance.
- **Elevate voices of young people:** Having youth leaders in each discussion enhanced the Dialogue and underscored the importance of including the next generation in these conversations. Young people should be afforded more opportunities to interact with food systems stakeholders and have their perspectives heard.
- **Elevate voices of farmers:** As many discussions around food systems and agriculture have excluded the very people responsible for food production and resource management, it was imperative that farmers be represented in all group discussions. In some cases, that meant increasing the groups, but this was necessary for adequate farmer representation.
- **Improve communication & education:** Participants saw a role for better communication between farmers and the public, so that the public has a better appreciation for on-farm conditions. They urged more prevalent food/nutrition education to improve public health and combat unreliable information about food production. They also wanted young people to gain better access to and understanding of where food comes from and how it is produced.
- **Work towards multisector solutions:** Participants saw an abundance of willingness from food systems actors to find solutions. They agreed transformation is possible through collective, multidisciplinary action. Dialogues like these are needed to bring stakeholders together who may not otherwise share learnings, opportunities and discuss trade-offs.
- **Recognize interconnections:** Multisector solutions depend on identifying interconnections across the food system. Participants wanted to bolster connections between farmers, schools, food banks and urban communities to build mutual support, understanding and resiliency. Specific to dairy, participants recognized the strong connections between animal welfare, environmental sustainability and social science to enhance consumer trust and support farmers' livelihoods.
- **Reimagine existing policies & programs:** Participants recognized that the U.S. has many programs to support farmers' livelihoods, low-income families, nutritious meal programs, etc.; but they saw a need to evolve and improve them to be more inclusive and effective. They highlighted policy opportunities to financially incentivize ecosystem services and support farmers as they seek out and scale sustainable practices. They also recommended updating school food procurement practices to incentivize local food purchases.
- **Strive for innovations:** Research and funding are needed to address environmental challenges – including identifying and measuring the impact of specific innovations. Small farmers in particular need access to this research and funding. Governments can incentivize and invest in researching sustainable and innovative practices.

These themes show that responsibility for making food systems sustainable from an environmental, health, social and economic perspective must be shared throughout the supply chain and society:

- **Farmers acknowledge their role in applying responsible production practices and have made tremendous strides to do so.** Continuous improvement requires stronger support from public research and better mechanisms for knowledge-sharing to bolster innovation and make operations more sustainable.
- **Schools have an important role to play in educating/engaging young people in how foods can nourish people and protect the planet and in serving nutritious, sustainable, affordable and culturally relevant meals to all children.** Financial resources, staffing and regulatory hurdles are challenges to overcome. In addition, students must be made aware of the diverse career opportunities in agricultural, whether through school curriculum or expansion of national programs (e.g., 4-H).
- **The public wants more information about how to eat nutritiously, sustainably and affordably.** They would be better served through ongoing education about how/where food is produced, and how a diverse food supply supports food systems sustainability from an environmental, health, social and economic perspective.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

Three groups reflected on this vision: “A future where all children across the U.S. have equitable access to affordable, nutrient-rich, culturally-acceptable, and environmentally-friendly foods.”

Participants discussed how schools are trusted food environments that can help drive food system transformation via school meal programs and more education on food/nutrition, farming and agriculture.

Overcoming financial challenges through policy changes to provide universal free meals for all students was considered essential. Participants noted that this includes providing adequate funding to the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, while addressing the fact that some families are food insecure yet have incomes that disqualify them from this assistance. Immigration status can also be a barrier.

The U.S. is a multicultural country and school nutrition staff need training to prepare culturally relevant food for diverse student populations. A lack of funding, skilled staff and infrastructure often means these advancements are deprioritized. School meals present an opportunity to identify and prevent food waste along the whole value chain. The burden of preventing food waste sits with all actors, including producers, processors, transporters, and consumers.

Schools can also enhance food systems education. Nutrition education is imperative when seeking to improve children's diets, while life skills and applied science and technology (e.g., STEM) should be incorporated as well. School gardens, farm tours and farmer visits can raise awareness of fresh and local foods among children and families. Participants saw a disconnect between these educational opportunities and current policy. The U.S. does not require nutrition education in schools and school meals are considered separate from the educational portion of the school day. These policy barriers, combined with lacking resource support, pose barriers to overcome.

Procurement and distribution flexibility were also seen as opportunities to deliver on this vision. Participants stated that U.S. school food procurement practices must evolve to better support local food purchases.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants identified emerging challenges and insights, including food insecurity among children. Many children have been cut off from access to food because of the pandemic. Participants noted how some school districts innovated quickly to distribute school meals to the community; they piloted new meal delivery options like school bus drop-offs, grab-and-go options, and car line pick-ups. The U.S. government also launched the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer option, which afforded families the ability to purchase healthy foods at retail locations during school disruptions.

Participants recognized how dairy can support this vision. For example, children consume most of their dairy intake in schools, helping to achieve three daily servings of non-fat or low-fat dairy per day as recommended in the United States Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Participants also observed that children's diets often include overconsumption of foods that are nutrient poor and supplant nutrient-rich options like dairy foods, fruits and vegetables. Additionally, they observed that bulk milk dispensers in the cafeteria have been proven to help reduce food waste. Lastly, dairy farmers have a long history of hosting farm tours and serving as “farm ambassadors” to generations of school children. They can continue to serve in this capacity to bridge the gap between farm to school.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

Three groups discussed how to achieve this vision: “A future where U.S. agricultural production is more resilient and supports clean water, land conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation, and protects biodiversity.”

Participants cited significant concern about methane emissions and its impact on global warming, alongside the pressing issue of food loss and waste. Dairy farmers referenced the extensive environmental gains made throughout the dairy supply chain and felt there is a lack of awareness of these efforts among decisionmakers and the public. Educating consumers and other food systems stakeholders around dairy farmer initiatives could help build greater awareness among the public and stronger partnerships between rural and urban communities. They saw an opportunity to elevate understanding around the U.S. dairy sector’s work on ensuring high animal care standards through the implementation of the FARM Program (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) and establishing ambitious environmental commitments via the U.S. Dairy Environmental Stewardship goals, the industry’s commitment to be “carbon neutral or better,” optimize water use and improve water quality by 2050.

Farmers noted that dairy community members pioneered and continue to be receptive to adopting new sustainability technologies and practices, but they must be economically and ecologically feasible. Anerobic digesters are one example of a proven technology that could be scaled.

Unfortunately, many innovative practices are cost prohibitive. Public sector investment in research or pre-competitive research were considered key to identify and scale, but that information must be available publicly so that all farmers can benefit. Sharing best practices among farmers globally could be another opportunity to support farms of all sizes, but participants recognized that regional and local differences must be considered. Other recommendations discussed to support farmers in understanding and implementing ecological practices include Ecosystem Services Market and Field to Market.

Participants also discussed the need for more engagement with consumers and younger generations, noting their understanding of cow’s milk production and the unique nutrient profile dairy foods provide (compared to non-dairy, plant-based alternatives). Targeted nutrition education efforts, focused on helping consumers understand date labels (e.g., differentiating between “use by” and “best if used by”), were referenced as ways to help reduce food waste.

Like the child nutrition-focused groups, these breakout discussions also emphasized the importance of farm tours, including virtual farm tours, to build awareness and appreciation for on-farm practices and connect with young people to give them a voice in the future of sustainable food production.

Finally, this group also touched on food production and food insecurity. While millions of people across the United States go hungry each day, there are times when farmers are forced to dispose of surplus food. Participants cited the need for a cohesive system (vs. present ad hoc models) that connects farmers with hunger coalitions to identify mutually beneficial options that get surplus food into the hands of those that need it most. Dairy farmers expressed their strong and historical support for participating in such systems and referenced the work undertaken by the U.S. dairy community to support address food insecurity when COVID-19 disrupted the food system.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

Three groups reflected on how to achieve this vision: “A future where those involved in farming and animal husbandry are rewarded for their efforts while contributing to sustainability goals benefitting the natural environment and society at large.” Specific discussion focused on engaging with the public and youth specifically; building economic and government support; scaling the use of digesters; and providing support for small producers.

Participants emphasized the importance of educating the public and younger generations on how their food is produced. They felt the public doesn't fully grasp the significant investments farmers put into their work and there is little awareness about the economic reality that farmers face. The U.S. dairy community has done a great deal in terms of environmental sustainability across the supply chain (from farm gate, processing facility, transportation, retail and consumer-level), but participants encouraged the sector to continue to share with consumers what is being done and why. In addition, the younger generation may not fully appreciate the extensive career opportunities available in agriculture. Participants suggested land grant colleges and extension services can help to reach youth and build awareness and excitement for these career paths.

Building greater economic stability for farmers was also viewed as essential. Participants reflected on the difficult economic situation that farmers face, coupled with demands to innovate and improve up environmental stewardship efforts and animal welfare standards. Farmers largely share these goals and are eager to play their role in supporting them, but often lack the capital and capabilities needed to introduce them. They discussed several opportunities to help address this need: cost-share programs, economic assessments, social support and knowledge-sharing amongst farmers, technical assistance and financial incentives. Importantly, they also encouraged the public to get curious about the great strides farmers have made and will continue to make; farmers work tirelessly to meet environmental targets and continually improve practices, despite difficult circumstances.

Participants also pointed to the use of anaerobic digesters as a unique opportunity to share the story of how the food system can provide alternative energy sources. Digesters are closed tanks which are used to break down organic matter such as cow manure and/or food waste through anaerobic digestion, creating biogas, which can be used to power the farm and communities, as well as to produce other materials. Participants believed it should be a priority to scale up the use of digesters and introduce them across the country for farms of all sizes and to look to community digesters.

Finally, there was discussion of producers at all levels – but particularly small producers – trying to keep their farms running in addition to working towards enhanced environmental sustainability practices and animal care. These individuals need better support, including access to research and proven best practices. Within supply chains, corporations, cooperatives and processors can help create tracking systems, share expertise and incentivize farmers both within the U.S. and globally.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

There were relatively few areas of divergence between participants in this Dialogue. In many instances, these resolved themselves as participants evolved their opinions over the course of the discussion. However, specific and unresolved areas of divergence are listed below.

- **School meals:** While participants agreed on the important role of schools for mitigating food insecurity and supporting growth and development, there were differing opinions and perspectives on the nutritional value and quality of the meals.
- **Digestors:** It was also suggested by some participants that the use of digestors as a potential opportunity for food waste reduction has been done before and isn't always successful, so greater research and experimentation was needed to make this a more effectively scaled solution.
- **Domains of sustainable food systems:** Additional questions were raised by participants around the inherent tensions that exist amongst the four domains of sustainable food systems. While consumers may want more environmentally friendly foods, they may not be willing to pay more for those foods. Wages for those working on the farm must be balanced against investments in farm infrastructure and trainings. The discussions around culturally relevant meals for school children need to be considered alongside the desire for more localized food systems which – considering regionality and seasonality – may not be able to support diversity and selection of foods. Further, the necessary financial investments into equipment and training for schools to act on the Dialogue suggestions must not compete with funding used to offer free and reduced priced meals to students.
- **Funding:** As more consumers and governments demand a more sustainable food system, funding for research and conservation efforts must be employed in addition to policy and regulations. As monetary resources are limited, recommendations must be prioritized which will inevitably mean lower priority recommendations remain unfunded and unrealized. A particular discussion was around whether the focus should be on legislation and policymakers to mandate changes, or for the farmers, researchers and school meal programs to receive more funding and investment ahead of legislation. Additionally, there was significant discussion around the role of compensation and incentive structures for ecosystem services; participants deemed this essential to increase the sustainability practices, improve farm economics and support livelihoods. But, there is tension with this goal and limited monetary resources.
- **Education:** While there was much agreement on the topic of education, there was less agreement regarding who should be the target of the education efforts. As discussed above, audiences may need to be prioritized due to limited funding and resources as consumers, policymakers, children and health care professionals cannot all be top priority.
- **Animal welfare:** While animal welfare is a priority for farmers, it was noted that actual legislation or mandates around welfare can be challenging and prevent farmers from responding quickly to changing science that would allow them to provide better care for their animals.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans Executive Summary**
https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/DGA_2020-2025_ExecutiveSummary_English.pdf
- **U.S. Dairy Environmental Stewardship goals**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Earth-Day-Fact-SheetV8.pdf>
- **Food System Disruptions and Solutions**
<https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Game-Changer-Food-Security.pdf>

RELEVANT LINKS

- **The Global Child Nutrition Foundation**
<https://gcnf.org/>
- **National Dairy Council**
<https://www.usdairy.com/about-us/national-dairy-council>
- **The Nature Conservancy**
<https://www.nature.org/en-us/>
- **U.S. Dairy Export Council**
<https://www.usdec.org/>
- **Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance**
<https://agclimatealliance.com/>
- **Food System Sustainability: A Dairy Perspective**
<https://www.mendeley.com/catalogue/d34a305a-5cba-3624-b636-3eaf250b0a57/>
- **FARM Program (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management)**
<https://nationaldairyfarm.com/>
- **Methane yields during anaerobic co-digestion of animal manure with other feedstocks: A meta-analysis**
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32361106/>
- **Ecosystem Services Market**
<https://ecosystems-servicesmarket.org/>
- **Field to Market**
<https://fieldtomarket.org/>