

DEFINING DISCUSSION TOPICS

Typically, a Dialogue consists of up to ten Discussion Groups, each consisting of eight to ten people per table (or online conference room). A Dialogue Facilitator is appointed to support the exploration and exchanges in each Discussion Group. The Facilitator ensures inclusive participation and encourages the development of Dialogue outcomes.

When the Dialogue breaks out into Discussion Group, **Discussion Topics** are the subject to be discussed. They address sub issues or challenges within the broader Dialogue Focus. The role of the Facilitator in the Discussion Groups is important to ensure all voices are heard and respected and are shared in relation to the Discussion Topic.

The Discussion Topic of each Discussion Group is usually **a future statement** which briefly indicates how food systems will function in 10 years' time. It is an ambitious projection of the future and it cannot be achieved through immediate action. It provokes the Participants in the Discussion Group to think beyond the current situation and to imagine something that is altogether better.

The Discussion Topic acts as a common objective for all the Participants in the Discussion Group, encouraging them to move beyond their current affiliations and preoccupations.

It offers a common challenge to members of the Discussion Group and helps encourage a shared purpose. Without an ambitious and forward-looking Discussion Topic there is a risk that Participants in a Discussion Group will simply recycle existing thoughts and restate well-established positions.

Considering pathways to a better future can, at times, be uncomfortable. It is, however, a vital step in shifting existing patterns of thought and identifying actions that are necessary.

A few examples of Discussion Topics are presented below:

- National agriculture and food policies promote the production of affordable nutritious, sustainably produced food while remunerating fairly all farmers and food workers.
- Comprehensive traceability systems and appropriate labelling ensure all consumers have access to clear, reliable information about how and where food is produced, empowering them to make informed choices.
- Nationally Determined Contributions to climate action (NDCs) are based on nature-positive agriculture practices that are developed and tested by farmers.
- Fair, safe and sustainable supply chains ensure a responsible use of natural resources and a reduction of food loss and waste, making sustainability the easy choice for consumers.
- Trade policies (import and export) facilitate access to affordable, safe and nutritious food for all, while contributing to countries' economic and commercial objectives, as well as resilient livelihoods for food producers.

Good Discussion topics:

- Move people beyond their current affiliations and preoccupations towards a common challenge.
- Help prevent the Group from recycling existing thoughts and restating positions.
- Hold a creative tension that needs resolving.
- Should relate to local realities.

PROMPT QUESTIONS

Facilitators of Discussion Groups can prepare prompt questions to help the Discussion Group to focus on what can be achieved in the current context. Without the prompt questions and careful facilitation, the members of a Discussion Group may find themselves talking at cross purposes or caught up in hypothetical scenarios. More information about the role of the Facilitators can be found on page 20.