

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 7 June 2021 10:00 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	EU dialogue for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit - Meeting with Stakeholders
CONVENED BY	Mr Miko, EU dialogue Convenor for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/23280/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	European Union

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

103

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

Male

Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

9 Agriculture/crops

19 Fish and aquaculture

12 Livestock

Agro-forestry

3 Environment and ecology

3 Trade and commerce

Education

2 Communication

3 Food processing

5 Food retail, markets

3 Food industry

Financial Services

3 Health care

Nutrition

21 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

12 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

4 Large national business

4 Multi-national corporation

9 Small-scale farmer

10 Medium-scale farmer

10 Large-scale farmer

3 Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

1 Science and academia

1 Workers and trade union

1 Member of Parliament

Local authority

22 Government and national institution

1 Regional economic community

4 United Nations

International financial institution

3 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

1 Consumer group

9 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

DG SANTE of the European Commission organised the online stakeholder meeting on 7 June 2021, from 10.00 to 15.30. Three topics were discussed: challenges and opportunities in the development of a policy framework on sustainable food systems, how aquaculture and fisheries can contribute to sustainable food systems, and boosting nature-positive production. The event was first advertised a week before the event, giving interested parties enough time to prepare their contributions. A total of 103 participants took part. They represented a broad spectrum of sectors (see tables above), 17 in total, including: national or local government (20 %), fish and aquaculture (18 %) and livestock (12 %) and crops (9 %). They came from a diversity of sectors, the top three being: government and national institutions (22 participants), small, medium or large-scale fish farmers (19 participants) and small, medium or large enterprises (12 participants).

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

All the Principles of Engagement of the Food Systems Summit were followed. In particular the principles of recognising complexity, embracing multi-stakeholder inclusivity and complementing the work of others were reflected in the dialogue. After each presentation, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, either by raising their hands or in the chat function. The presenters responded to these questions and comments. The moderator read out most of the comments on the chat function, especially those made by people who were unable to speak after raising their hand. The audience interaction tool Slido was used on several occasions to gather the participants' opinions.

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

I would advise to keep enough time to allow participants to discuss and interact. The use of slido and other interactive tools (such as the chat function) turned out to be a success. I would recommend these tools within these initiatives.

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 dialogue was divided into three sessions. The first one focused on the challenges and opportunities related to development of a policy framework on sustainable food systems. The second delved into the contribution of aquaculture and fisheries to sustainable food systems. The third addressed how the EU could contribute to the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit's (UN FSS) objective to boost nature-positive production.

Particularly, the first session dealt with the question of an appropriate legal framework to help ensure sustainable and resilient food systems in the EU. A presentation by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) highlighted the essential elements of such a framework. DG SANTE's presentation added to this by addressing the importance of framework legislation and its goals.

The second session dealt with the relevant role of aquaculture and fisheries. Sustainable aquaculture focused on the untapped potential of blue food production, its advantages over land-based agriculture, and the challenges facing it. DG MARE's presentation gave an overview of the sector and how it can make a greater contribution to feeding a growing world population and as animal feed.

The discussion about nature-positive production, the third of the UN's five action tracks, centred on the role of agroecology – farming in harmony with nature – and its contribution to food security. Three linked approaches to human interaction with ecosystems were discussed: protect, manage and restore. Other EU concepts and policies, such as regenerative agriculture and One Health, were also mentioned.

DG AGRI discussed actions the EU can take to boost nature-positive production, mentioned in section C below.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
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MAIN FINDINGS

Many of the speakers emphasised the need to approach sustainable food systems not only from an EU perspective, but from an international one, too. The food system makes up nearly one-third of the human activities that are responsible for climate change and thus needs to be addressed in its entirety. Developing sustainable, resilient food systems is vital to ensuring an effective response to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Opportunities to developing more nature-friendly food production and consumption patterns need to be identified, and the best available scientific knowledge used to define appropriate policy actions. Urgent collective effort is needed, to transform food systems and achieve a greener, sustainable planet. The EU's Farm to Fork Strategy requires an integrated approach that puts citizens at its centre and includes actors at local, national, EU and international level. The UN FSS is a good opportunity to collect views from stakeholders and citizens on key topics.

A framework law governing food systems is required to set out general principles for an integrated approach to sustainability of food systems. This framework legislation will be key in shifting the paradigm of placing food products on the Union market from mainly safety-based considerations to a wider approach integrating sustainability aspects. It will define the notion and objectives of sustainable food system.

Given its 'framework' nature, this legislation will create an enabling environment for future policy and legislation to support the transformation of the current EU food system into a sustainable one. It will raise the political and legal profile of the food sustainability concept and place it at the heart of the EU and national decision-making processes.

The process to achieve these aims is still in its early stages and requires continuous discussion with the public and private sectors. It is important to remember that there is no precedent in legislation for such a framework law. Consultations will begin as soon as an 'inception impact assessment' has been published.

Aquaculture frequently comes under threat from agricultural practices – for example, when soil from maize fields is flushed into lakes, impacting activities like carp production, which is a very sustainable source of food.

Therefore, it is vital not only to be aware of how various food systems affect one another, but also to ensure that efforts are made to strike a balance between them and to monitor the effects of actions taken.

To promote and grow the seafood sector, consumers have to be better informed, and a robust legal framework must be put in place that regulates the issuing of licences and allocation of farming and fishing areas. This will in turn help to attract investment.

Aquaculture and agriculture face similar challenges and it is important to see the links between sectors, monitor them and address trade-offs. The EU's One Health approach encourages systemic thinking about the interrelations between nature and culture, production and consumption. This concept maps out the interrelationship between the health of the environment and that of humans and animals.

An accelerated shift to sustainable fish and seafood production is needed, in line with the EU's agenda for sustainable food systems.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

The policy framework on sustainable food systems

The food system is a 'complex compendium' of laws, according to one FAO participant. A food systems framework law should have as its overarching goal the constitutional protection of the right to adequate food, the right to health and a healthy environment, while possibly taking into consideration gender and vulnerable groups.

A framework law should include elements like general roles and responsibilities for public and private bodies, institutional coordination and participation mechanisms, and ways of ensuring compliance, enforcement and monitoring.

A DG SANTE representative pointed out that the EU has no framework law on food sustainability. While EU food laws do include elements of sustainability, there is fragmentation. This is why the need for a framework law is vital.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

Aquaculture and 'blue food'

Blue food plays an important role in providing nutrition and food security to the world population. Over 3 billion people rely on blue food as their primary source of protein. There is a need to increase aquatic food production. Such growth will have to rely mostly on aquaculture growth. Molluscs and seaweed are especially important food sources that are underexploited. The development of aquatic resources has the potential to create new economic activity and contribute to a healthier planet. The development of blue food is present in the preparatory work of the UN FSS, especially in action area 3.2. The EU's Farm to Fork Strategy recognised the potential of fish and seafood to contribute to sustainable food systems by providing a low-carbon food and feed. It seeks to accelerate the shift towards sustainable fish and seafood production and confirms the need to bring fish stocks to sustainable levels via the Common Fisheries Policy.

The EU has published new strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021–2030. It has four objectives: building resilience and competitiveness, participating in the green transition, ensuring social acceptance and information to consumers, and increasing knowledge and innovation.

Taking into consideration the situation of EU aquaculture, they can become a useful reference more globally. The Commission invites EU MS to promote the principles underlying the guidelines in the context of external action. The Commission has already proposed the guidelines as a reference document in the context of regional consultations for the preparation of FAO Guidelines on Sustainable Aquaculture. Aquaculture can contribute to a circular economy – for example, by using waste from fisheries as animal feed. There is vast potential in using algae as animal feed and food.

One participant pointed out how sustainability is generally understood as environmental sustainability. However, it is important to look at the economic sustainability of such activities. SMEs are the primary actors in the field of aquaculture and their numbers are decreasing.

While they would like to become 'food system heroes', these SMEs are struggling to survive for reasons that include water pollution. Although the EU has a Water Framework Directive, coastal waters are in poor health, which is threatening activities such as mollusc farming. To reverse this, greater protection of coastal waters is essential.

The FAO indicated that an aquaculture workshop will be convened, during which an aquaculture legislation revision tool will be introduced. It will look at various issues, including biosecurity. In this respect, a robust, clear framework legislation and a discussion based on scientific evidence is needed to achieve radical transformation.

Blue food has several advantages over land-grown food, and this can be promoted through better consumer information, rebalancing of the playing field with regards to imports, and by creating a robust and clear legal framework.

Participants were asked for their opinions via two Slido polls. The public considered that the most important aspects to ensure an appropriate role of fisheries and aquaculture in building a more sustainable food systems are: eliminating overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (41%), growth of aquaculture (36%), reducing the environmental/biodiversity/climate impact of fisheries and aquaculture (32%), diversification to underexploited and lower trophic species (algae, molluscs) (27%) and encouraging the development of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture (27%). They considered that the two best means to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture contribute to more sustainable food systems are consumer information (46%) and greater regional cooperation (46%).

More attention should be paid to the role of producers in the food system. Too often, the focus is on managing an oversupply of food while no due regard is paid to rewarding producers. A sustainable food system must ensure that producers are rewarded for their efforts. There can be no sustainability without profits for producers and vice

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

Nature-positive production

The UN proposes three approaches to nature-positive production: protecting ecosystems from biodiversity loss, managing existing food-production systems sustainably, and restoring degraded ecosystems and rehabilitating soil function.

For the EU situation, participants recognised the importance of all three action areas of Action Track 3. They indicated that sustainably managing the existing food production systems on land and water was more relevant to the EU than protecting natural ecosystems and restoring degraded ecosystems.

Within the management approach, stakeholders were somewhat divided, with only a small majority indicating that, for their organisation, agro-ecological approaches will be the main focus of attention in coming years.

The discussion was dominated by many aquaculture stakeholders who, while explaining the potential for aquaculture to contribute to sustainable food systems of the future, pointed to the environmental challenges for the sector. This includes water pollution and the need to adopt production models that ensure fair incomes for producers. There were calls for a One Health approach and socially acceptable conditions for workers in the food chain.

An interesting outcome of the session was the clear need to establish new connections between terrestrial and aquatic farming stakeholder groups. They share a mutual dependence on healthy, functioning ecosystems, and share challenges such as ensuring the economic and social sustainability of their farms.

One participant said that while nature-positive production is very ambitious, it is difficult to achieve because of modern society and its current production model: there are few consequences for our actions and their impact on society and the environment.

In a Slido poll, participants were asked whether they agreed with the statement: 'Going forward, agro-ecology would be the main focus of the work of my organisation.' Most participants said they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, followed by 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree'.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

One speaker said he had expected more critical inputs and questions from participants on achieving nature-positive production, given the urgency and broad nature of the issue. He reminded the audience of a Farm to Fork Strategy Communication of May 2020 which stated that food systems are one of the main causes of climate change and environmental degradation. Dependence on pesticides and antimicrobials must be reduced, excessive use of fertilisers avoided, organic farming increased and biodiversity loss reversed.

One participant questioned whether a framework law is necessary and whether it would add anything to the existing provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. A European Commission official responded that framework law would provide an enabling environment for the mainstreaming of sustainability in all policy areas. The FAO representative said a framework agreement would enable all sectors in the food chain to better coordinate their actions.

Food labelling was another issue that participants felt was not being adequately addressed. One said that consumers do not get enough clear, reliable information on food labels, creating problems across the hospitality, food and catering industry. In response, one of the speakers said there are many ongoing initiatives on labelling, such as the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF). These will continue to be developed and efforts will be made to develop a framework on labelling that includes PEF methodology.

One participant commented that organisations such as the Slow Food movement and Civil Society Mechanism have declined to participate in the UNFSS in September. This is due to concerns about corporate influence on the event and a lack of inclusion of the voices of the most vulnerable in the food system.

More attention should be placed on the role of producers, one participant remarked. It is not enough to speak about managing abundant flows of food without considering how producers are rewarded for their work.

The matter of animal health and welfare was another topic that some felt had been neglected. One participant said the UNFSS agenda does not take animal health into consideration. The subject is often seen as being of secondary importance in discussions about sustainability. The European Commission must also pay greater attention to including animal health and the use of antibiotics.

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