

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Tuesday, 25 May 2021
DIALOGUE TITLE	Policy and governance issues to transform food systems in Europe and Central Asia
CONVENED BY	UN Issue Based Coalition for Sustainable Food Systems in Europe and Central Asia (FAO UNICEF WHO WFP UNECE WMO UNDP IFAD)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/17447/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	No borders

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

259

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

19-30

31-50

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

131 Male

117 Female

11 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

5 Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

4 Environment and ecology

5 Trade and commerce

8 Education

13 Communication

Food processing

Food retail, markets

1 Food industry

Financial Services

1 Health care

6 Nutrition

51 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

165 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Small/medium enterprise/artisan

Large national business

Multi-national corporation

1 Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

1 Large-scale farmer

10 Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

8 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

Local authority

51 Government and national institution

2 Regional economic community

156 United Nations

2 International financial institution

6 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

22 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

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

The Regional Dialogue for Europe and Central Asia (ECA) was convened by the Issue-Based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems (IBC-SFS) recognizing the complexity of the food systems challenges and actions. The Dialogue was organised and convened through a multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder approach that capitalized on the expertise of several UN agencies - FAO, UNICEF, WHO, IFAD, UNDP, UNECE, WFP, WMO - as an important element of the 2030 Agenda, with a strong focus on the most vulnerable groups. The IBC-SFS plays a key role in the Region to ensure inclusive, diverse, decision-making processes and also to enhance and promote multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholders approach in policy development. The Regional Dialogue was fully aligned to the principles of engagement of the UNFSS Summit as outlined in the Convenor's manual. In the PLANNING PHASE of the Dialogue, the convenor made sure to create an interactive, diverse, inclusive and people-centred, solutions-oriented dialogue that could represent a diverse range of stakeholders in the food systems to allow the audience to gain a more complete view of the key policy and governance issues related to sustainable food systems, with the focus on i) improving the equitability of food systems by empowering all consumers and protecting the most vulnerable, and ii) improving the sustainability of agri-food systems by protecting the natural resource base, through nature positive actions, and re-shaping financing for greener outcomes. The dialogue was set up to also allow participants to share information and experiences on opportunities, challenges, and appropriate policy actions for sustainable transformation of the food systems. There were several ACTIVE ONLINE EXCHANGES to identify speakers to ensure REGIONAL/GEOGRAPHICAL, GENDER_BALANCED as well as STAKEHOLDERS/SECTORIAL representation, including INDEPENDENT DIALOGUES, aiming at BUILDING TRUST, making sure all parties were comfortable with the focus, scope, format of the dialogue. We have established a UNFSS Community for the ECA region.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

ACT OF URGENCY: Prior to the dialogue, a general analysis of the major issues and challenges to be covered on an Independent Dialogue basis, to complement the Member State Dialogue support, was conducted among IBC-SFS Secretariat, chairs and members and all the relevant stakeholders in the Region. The nature of the Dialogue resulted from a consideration of where the Dialogue could add value through a regional exchange on specific aspects, particularly focusing on the policy and governance. **COMMIT TO THE SUMMIT:** The IBC-SFS is fully committed to supporting the UNFSS, as is reflected across the advocacy work throughout 2021 and over. The Dialogue complemented ongoing member state dialogues, by facilitating a regional discussion and exchange of information on key policy and governance issues important to transform food systems in the ECA region. **BE RESPECTFUL:** Speakers and participants from the region and all over the world were invited to attend. In preparing the Dialogue programme and content, different viewpoints and perspectives were considered both in English and Russian. **RECOGNISE COMPLEXITY:** This was acknowledged by the curator, the facilitators and the participants. The dialogue included two dedicated panel discussions to allow deeper discussions and analysis of complex issues inherent to transforming food systems, and recognize the diversity of food systems in the region. **EMBRACE MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS' INCLUSIVITY:** Participants were invited, from across the whole food system. In order to maximize the participation in a limited time of the event, and to include concrete actions and experiences from countries, we have also included video contributions and major highlights from other Independent Dialogues. **COMPLEMENT THE WORK OF THE OTHERS:** The IBC-SFS believes strongly in working complementarily with the food systems sectors and actors. **BUILD TRUST:** The dialogue was convened with a transparent approach. One to one meetings and a general rehearsal was organized prior to the event.

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

When PLANNING the Dialogue, it is important to research and learn from the Gateway website how other Dialogues have been organized, developed and what are the key issues in your region/country. It is crucial also to identify in the Dialogue a DIVERSE POOL OF SPEAKERS AND PARTICIPANTS from different sectors, different geographies, with a gender balance and people-centred approach. The STRUCTURE of the Dialogue is very important and it is key to have a clear definition of the sessions, committed leaders for the opening, panel discussions and closing remarks. It is important to allow ample time for the panel discussion sessions, experiences and the information sharing. Communicating and publicizing the event widely is advantageous to ensure a wide participation. In order to provide the statistics required in the Official Feedback Form, registration process with all relevant information is key. CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION AFTER the Dialogue on the Community of the UNFSS is vital to ensure that the major outcomes and discussions can have an echo on the digital platform, through IBC-SFS and country level.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

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

Yes

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

Policy and Governance can drive the transformation for a systemic change in food systems in the ECA region. Policy makers in the ECA region face challenges which may be common to many countries, such as the need to improve the nutritional status for all, and stem the tide of overweight and obesity; providing an equitable, sustainable food system, while minimizing negative effects on the environment and reducing the contribution to climate change and GHG emissions.

Determining how to ensure a balanced, just, and fair food systems transition – economically, socially and environmentally - to provide safe, nutritious food for all, protect the environment, support livelihoods, and address inequalities, requires policy-makers to foster multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration and cooperation.

AS A RESULT OF THE DISCUSSIONS, KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES WERE SHARED ON:

- appropriate measures to address the specific nutritional challenges of the most vulnerable members of our society, focusing on children, youth and women;
- means to shape food demand through actions of government and civil society, including consumers, to drive sustainability through their food choices and actions;
- building equitable, inclusive food systems which allow small-holders and small and medium-sized enterprises to reach their maximum potential, and contribute to sustainable value chains;
- drivers for adjusting food systems and incentivizing actors to adopt more sustainable models which meet food and nutrition security needs, with reduced depletion of natural resources and negative environmental impacts;
- aligning policies with nature positive production, including financial support to incentivize a just transition to sustainable agriculture and greening of value chains.

KEY PRIORITY POLICY/GOVERNANCE ISSUES ON NUTRITION AND FOOD VALUE CHAINS DISCUSSES:

- Addressing nutritional needs and vulnerabilities of the most vulnerable in food systems both in urban and rural areas (including small-holders, children, youth, women) and how food systems can be more targeted to their nutritional needs
- Providing the most vulnerable actors in food systems (focus on children and youth) with the tools and knowledge to access healthy diets, make healthy and sustainable food choices, and fulfill their aspirations and vision of sustainable food systems in the future
- Improving value chains and market opportunity: supporting small-holders and SMEs – linking them to VCs, markets, improving the supply of nutritious, diverse foods
- Ensuring smallholders, and SMEs have access to resources, finance, services, information, innovation, technologies, digital solutions

ENVIRONMENT-RELATED POLICY ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Agri-food policy decisions and approaches to reverse and/or prevent biodiversity loss, manage natural resources, including water, for sustainable agri-food production.
- Greening value chains, reducing environmental and climate impacts, climate smart agriculture, reducing food loss and waste, circular economy, technologies and innovation, reduce contribution to GHG emissions, public subsidies (more in the VCs, compared to previous point on policy)
- Economic incentives and policies for SFS, greening VCs: Targeting finances, subsidies, grants, for agri-food sectors, for better nutrition, food safety, environmental outcomes. Responsible investment. Public and private financing options.

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

STRONG GOVERNANCE and holistic policies in ECA are needed to develop, test and prove solutions to the challenges of a systemic transformation of food systems, particularly considering the post-COVID-19 recovery. Better food systems data will allow policy-makers make sound decisions to guide, navigate, and provide incentives for all other actors in the system, leading to better public health, a protected environment, while balancing social and economic needs. Food systems are key to accelerating changes and reaching Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 2.

Food systems need to be **EQUITABLE** and promote the livelihoods and **NUTRITIONAL STATUS** of the **MOST VULNERABLE** in food systems both in urban and rural areas (including smallholders, children, youth, and women) with a view to addressing their specific needs, access to safe, nutritious food, and enabling them to catalyze income generation to be drivers of change through their food choices. Investing in agri-food systems which make nutrient-rich foods available, at affordable prices for all, is needed in the region. Studies conducted in the region show that both consumers and producers must be further educated about the importance of different aspects of sustainability of food systems, and the effect of individual's actions and food choices. More research is needed in this area to monitor new and potential trends. Special attention needs to be paid to nutrition, especially among young people who will bring the habit of healthy eating to the next generations.

Small-holders and other actors responsible for producing and supplying our food can also be **VULNERABLE**. Young farmers continue to face many challenges including access to land, finance and income; affordable knowledge and innovation. **INVESTMENTS** and policies need to be tailored to build an agri-food system which creates good conditions for people who are producing our food. This includes overcoming the digital divide, improving access to technology, knowledge and skills, and allowing farmers to work collectively, including peer to peer learning.

BOOSTING NATURE POSITIVE production and building **CLIMATE-RESILIENT** solutions, including financing greening of agricultural production and value chains. Policymakers need to get as much information as possible to make sound decisions and see possible trade-offs. Such information and data is not always available in the region. It is therefore important to enhance research studies aimed at collecting data on food systems and model data for the future. Win-wins will not only depend on good governance, solid investment but also data driven decision-making processes.

More must be done to scale up efforts to develop **CIRCULAR ECONOMY** approaches which promote food security by dealing with food loss and waste. One of the ways to shift the food systems towards sustainability is closing material loops, optimizing recycling opportunities and designing loss and waste out of the system.

INNOVATION can change not only the way how the food system works and make it much more efficient, but also, make consumers healthier. ECA however still faces significant digital divides and millions of people are disconnected. There are areas where there's no investment in the fast broadband and there is a challenge of exclusion of the end user. The emerging technologies offer great opportunities for the efficiency to the food systems. Innovation in all its forms is important, not only technological but social as well. Additionally innovation has many pathways, sometimes it can also mean going "back" to producing local heritage plants, such as Georgian wheats.

It is important to promote a **MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH** to the food system so all agencies can work together including governments, the private sector, civil society and academia. Some governments in the regions -- adopted an approach which ensures inclusive value change development and cooperation between the government and private sector. The efforts also need to enable people engagement and empowerment. People, including smallholders, food business operators, and consumers, should be empowered to innovate, empowered to contribute to healthier diets, green solutions.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/2

The key outcomes of the discussed topics prioritize the need to:

1. Strengthen common understanding of and political commitment towards sustainable food system development at regional and country levels, through a holistic and multi-sectoral approach

Actions in making food systems more sustainable, based on research and local knowledge should be prepared and taken up by stakeholders, including policymakers in a collaborative and coherent manner.

The Eurasian Economic Commission is an example of a regional institution that develops projects to improve trade logistics to make food more affordable and accessible. It is currently discussing a policy document on food security and has created a platform to help secure food accessibility during emergency situations, such as COVID-19. The much needed policy coherence for sustainable food systems, will only happen when action is taken at country level to facilitate cooperation between the line Ministries and other actors. The Republic of Armenia (Ministry of Economy) adopted such a system approach and created two platforms to ensure inclusive value change development and cooperation between the government and private sector.

2. Improve nutrition among vulnerable consumers, especially children and women

Despite regulations on school feeding programmes, many schoolchildren make unhealthy and unsustainable food choices. Research shows that in the Western Balkans food taste is the most important determinant of food choice followed by purchase convenience, health and price. The power of consumer choice in shaping food systems should not be underestimated.

3. Encourage collaboration between government, farmers, academia and civil society organizations to develop concrete policies, including financial incentives, so that the transition to more sustainable – from the biodiversity and climate point of view – greening agriculture and food sector becomes a reality

In many countries in the region, such as the Republic of Uzbekistan incentives (or programmes) to “green” food systems are being implemented. These include water saving technologies, smart cultivation and harvesting technologies, organic production, investment in targeted sorting, grading, storage and processing technologies as well as minimizing food loss and waste (i.e. Let’s do Macedonia). Matching knowledge transfer with financial incentives or subsidies was also highlighted. For example in Azerbaijan subsidies are offered to farmer cooperatives to stimulate application of modern technologies, such as irrigation systems.

The EU Green Deal and its Farm to Fork strategy is a crucial part of the significant transition that countries in the region are embarking upon.

The role of NGOs in the food system’s transformation should be advocated and promoted (i.e. Let’s do Macedonia - an initiative on food waste prevention).

4. Invest in inclusive value chain development

Value chains can play a key role in driving transformation within the food system. Governments and the private sector need to work together to support small-holders and SMEs engage in functioning value chains, which lead to increased market access and household income generation. Sustainable value chains need investments in roads and infrastructure, uptake of technologies, safe use of agricultural inputs, and production practices which do not pollute the environment. In parallel, enabling policy to allow for innovation, appropriate use of financial instruments for greening of value chains, and ensuring foods produced are safe and nutritious. Evidently, there can be multiple gains for human and planetary health, and economic growth.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/2

5. Protecting natural resources, minimizing degradation of the environment and resilience to climate change impacts

Transitioning to more sustainable approaches and to greener economy needs to have climate and environmental dimensions at the centre, involving both human capital, investments and innovation technologies (ICTs). Many of these investments can also enhance agricultural productivity right now, under current climate conditions, and the latest techniques and technologies are useful to share the information on the innovations that drive sustainable agriculture and make the farm operation more profitable.

To address climate impacts effectively, it is first necessary to understand the incidence and scale of possible impacts, and then to look for appropriate adaptation strategies. These strategies will build the resilience of the sector in different agro-climatic conditions.

Droughts and other weather shocks, loss of biodiversity, and balancing agri-food systems with reducing GHGs were all discussed. Work is ongoing in the region at different levels to discuss appropriate policies, ways to incentivize sustainable agri-food production, building data and early warning information systems, including on agro-metrology (joint initiative of WMO, FAO, EUMETSAT and MeteoRomania).

Climate change impacts on agriculture rely on the modeling of long-term observations and agro-climatic data in order to establish risk assessment and to highlight areas with high vulnerability to extreme climate events. The data on climate change, crop production and water demand indices can be integrated in GIS techniques in order to identify areas with high vulnerability to water scarcity and drought. Organizations, such as National Hydrological and Meteorological Services in Romania, do long-term observations, store, exchange and process data and provide tailored information and services.

6. Develop and apply innovative methods of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) use within the food system in ECA

E-agriculture in many parts of ECA still suffers from underinvestment. The younger generation is the bearer of IT skills and knowledge and "loosing" more youth from the countryside will constitute a big problem for modernizing agriculture. The digital gender divide in the region also remains a reality, with still fewer women than men benefiting from Internet use. The ITU which is involved in monitoring and changing this situation called for more action in building an equal digital future.

7. Support people, including the young to get involved in activities to transform food systems

Central to the notion of an inclusive food system, is ensuring people can participate in discussions on how to transform the food system and what type of food system should exist in their community and country. Good governance and policies should create the conditions for this to happen. Generation Z, the first generation to have grown up with access to the Internet and portable digital technology from a young age, in the region are becoming more interested and engaged in the food systems shift towards sustainability. (CEJA and Act4Change).

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<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
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Women & Youth Empowerment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Trade-offs
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment and Climate

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

No real areas of divergence of opinion among panelists during the Dialogue, but some areas of divergence on the ground were highlighted:

During the ECA Regional Dialogue young activists from the Republic of Kazakhstan representing children's rights highlighted that there is a discrepancy between what is "good" food (distributed in schools) and what is desirable and attractive for youngsters - sweets, fast foods, etc.

Another areas of divergence identified during the Dialogue was the need for a balance between affordable food prices for the consumer, and decent income for farmers, which also depends on access to finance (including for young farmers).

The factors influencing consumer's food choices also vary in different countries, and regions within a country. At times consumers are influenced by messages and education on healthy food, the desire for tasty food, or convenience, while at other times the cost of food is the main driver.

Achieving sustainability in our food systems, needs action to create a more level playing field, so that sustainable practices are adopted and the profit margin values it, and avoid that the polluter is still getting away with polluting the environment. Coupled with fiscal incentives to prevent damage to water, soil, climate so that these costs are not to be externalised to future generations.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

ATTACHMENTS

- **Concept Note and Agenda**
https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/agenda_25may-ECA-Regional-Dialogue.pdf

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems**
<https://unece.org/issue-based-coalition-sustainable-food-systems>
- **ECA Regional Dialogue Webpage**
<http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/1397986/>
- **YouTube video**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qdR8YgR5cY&feature=youtu.be
- **ECA Community of Practice - UNFSS Communities**
<https://foodsystems.community/communities/food-systems-in-europe-and-central-asia/>
- **Europe and Central Asia: “economic and agricultural powerhouse” with solutions at hand**
<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1402087/icode/>
- **ITU Status of Digital Agriculture**
<https://www.itu.int/en/myitu/Publications/2020/07/09/15/27/Status-of-Digital-Agriculture-in-Europe-and-Central-Asia>
- **ITU Digital Trends**
https://www.itu.int/pub/D-IND-DIG_TRENDS_EUR.01-2021
- **ITU Digital Trends in the Commonwealth of Independent States Region**
<https://www.itu.int/en/myitu/Publications/2021/04/19/15/12/Digital-trends-in-the-Commonwealth-of-Independent-States-region-2021>