

FOOD SYSTEMS DIALOGUES (FSDs)
NEW YORK, 05 FEBRUARY 2019
CO-ORGANIZED BY THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

SUMMARY REPORT*

Executive Summary	2
Proposals	3
Proposal 1: Focus on encouraging consumers to demand healthy and sustainable food	3
Proposal 2: Build an incentive and rewards program	3
Proposal 3: Adjust financing to focus on providing technology and training to farmers	4
Proposal 4: Increase access to sustainable food in cities	4
Proposal 5: Change the approach to food in schools	4

*The format of FSDs Summary Reports is under development. This report may be subject to change

Executive Summary

On 05 February 2019 a Food Systems Dialogues (FSDs) event took place in New York, co-organized by the World Economic Forum. This FSDs event was held in the context of the launch of the EAT Lancet Commission Report: “Our Food in the Anthropocene: Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems”. Approximately 40 participants attended, reflecting a range of actors working in Food Systems, ranging from VP of Communications of a global food & beverage company, to Senior Director of Programs for an NYC food distribution non-profit organization, to nutrition researchers for humanitarian organizations.

The following is a summary of the tables’ proposals for food systems transformation as well as the discussions that led them to their conclusions.

As is the norm at FSDs events, all Proposals outlined in this Summary Report are not attributed to any particular individual or organization. Each proposal did not necessarily receive universal support from all participants at the event; rather, the aim of this report is to capture recommendations made at the event, in order to allow continuity and consensus - a ‘red thread’ - to emerge across all FSDs events.

Proposals

Proposal 1: Focus on encouraging consumers to demand healthy and sustainable food

A crucial element to transforming food systems into a more sustainable model is to provide solutions that are enjoyable to consumers. Long term change will only occur when consumers consistently want and demand products that are good for themselves and for the planet.

Therefore, although there are a lot of other actors in the system that need to interact in the value chain, if we leave the consumer out the desired results will never be achieved.

In addition, in the US there is less of an interest in top-down solutions. So there could be a backlash if we don't bring in and support consumers to make necessary change from the very beginning of the process.

Consumer pressure could be created around introducing better food standards and food labelling standards. Currently there are a lot of existing standards but for a consumer it is difficult to wade through the mix of real standards and marketing that looks like standards.

The first step to creating this consumer pressure, is to support a better consumer relationship to food. There is already a trend towards a better relationship towards food in America so this just needs to be built on.

Proposal 2: Build an incentive and rewards program

More work needs to be done to educate businesses and related stakeholders on the importance of healthy and sustainable food. In addition to better education, there needs to be incentives that support the whole value chain shifting, because without incentives and rewards there won't be systematic impact.

Incentives and rewards for consumers could change behaviour and create more demand for healthy food.

Clearer definitions around sustainable and healthy foods would also help consumers have a better understanding about what to support in order to meet sustainable food goals.

Proposal 3: Adjust financing to focus on providing technology and training to farmers

Agriculture financing needs to be made more efficient, and more focused directly at the farm level. Currently, many farmers do not have adequate access to technology and training. Funders could aggregate the channel funding using innovative mechanisms (private, public, and joined) to provide farmers with the resources they need (with a focus on sustainability).

Funds could be used to create a food, agriculture, technology, innovation show where ideas from around the world could be crowdsourced and then financed.

Currently food companies are incentivized to maintain the status quo and produce cheap foods; instead, companies should be incentivized to develop nutritionally dense foods while being cognisant of social equity.

Proposal 4: Increase access to sustainable food in cities

In order to have a big impact, cities must play an important role. The size and diversity of cities makes it possible to create a framework to quickly accelerate ideas and projects that work.

Tools should be developed that can connect farmers to consumers, especially urban consumers. This could lead to increased access to healthier, more sustainable food that is also affordable in cities where the largest populations are.

Proposal 5: Change the approach to food in schools

Changing the way that consumers see food could start in schools. A food systems approach could be integrated into school curricula across one or more subjects (civics, history, human health etc).

The food served to students could also be changed to include local, sustainable options. It could be very powerful for students to see food coming from local communities.

There is a need to look at innovative and exciting approaches, such as a contest, to overcome existing attitudes and build momentum to meet some key challenges such as changing the current school lunch contracts.