

FOOD SYSTEMS DIALOGUES (FSDs)

ACCRA, 05 SEPTEMBER 2019

CO-ORGANIZED BY THE FOOD AND LAND USE COALITION

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

Executive Summary

On 05 September 2019 a Food Systems Dialogues (FSDs) event took place in Accra, Ghana co-organized by the Food and Land Use Coalition. This FSDs event was held in the context of the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF). Approximately 50 participants attended, reflecting a range of actors working in Food Systems, ranging from major global philanthropic organizations, to African agricultural and development associations to a Ghana-based agricultural technology company.

Tables were asked to present one or more proposals for action to address a specific area of food systems, with a focus on Ghana and West Africa. Ideally, the proposals were to be achievable within 3 years.

The discussion topics for dialogue at this event addressed the following areas: technology, food and agriculture policy, climate change, and farmer livelihoods. Each discussion topic is shown in the report below, followed by the proposal(s) which emerged in response to that topic. Discussion topics are phrased as ambitious 'ideal future states' of food systems.

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

'Agriculture combines technology with regenerative practices to sustainably increase nutritious yields.'

Proposal 1: Conduct a mapping exercise of food systems actors in Ghana

A comprehensive mapping exercise should be undertaken in relation to the food systems landscape in Ghana, including a stakeholder analysis of all actors along the value chain. The objective of this project would be to understand and represent the different actors working in food systems in a comprehensive and accessible way. This would create an opportunity for actors to identify each other and to work together.

The mapping exercise would enable a closer look at vested interests in the landscape. Areas of particular interest include rice, soy, and other pivotal sectors which may be subject to behaviors that disregard the interests of sustainability and nutritious food.

The information developed during this exercise would likely be useful to policy makers in shaping policy, and would enable other actors to take on key agendas themselves.

Proposal 2: Create a knowledge base to support sustainable agriculture and forestry

A knowledge base should be built to promote thinking about how forests can be protected, while simultaneously improving the productivity of farmlands through agronomic practices. This knowledge base would encompass tree crops such as cocoa and palm.

The knowledge base should be shared with farmers and with other key actors.

The resource would drive towards increased action to reduce the expansion of farmlands for tree crops, and increased forest preservation, while supporting agricultural practices that are important to local economies.

Existing examples of organizations that have already undertaken this type of knowledge base could provide inputs. For example, Yara International has initiated related projects in cocoa soils.

Proposal 3: Create a consumer education campaign about healthy eating

An education campaign for consumers should be launched, seeking to shift demand towards healthier and more sustainable foods. Consumers are the key drivers of demand. Therefore, an initiative that encourages consumers to change their consumption habits would be an effective means of creating change in the market.

Education and communication channels should be chosen for their suitability to different groups (such as schools, consumer groups and extension services). Channels may include a broad-based approach through social media, creating platforms for conversation, as well as the deployment of extension officers to reach rural communities.

Organizations present at the Accra FSDs event could be part of the roll-out process of an education and communication initiative such as this, by supporting platforms such as the FSDs and by providing assistance to ensure that educative content is scientifically sound.

The ultimate objective of this education campaign is to encourage consumers to demand healthier foods, based on an awareness of the challenges which are a product of eating unhealthy foods, such as diabetes, cancer and other NCDs.

To track progress in this initiative, consumption levels of healthy food could be monitored. An increase in consumption of healthy food would be an indicator of success.

'National agriculture and food policies promote the production of nutritious, sustainably-produced food.'

Proposal 4: Enable coordination across government levels

There should be coordination at global, national and subnational levels to create incentives to produce safe nutritious foods.

At present in Ghana, there are many agencies, departments and platforms discussing matters related to agriculture, climate change and food systems, in a very fragmented manner. Ministries are not coordinated. It would be beneficial to create an integrated framework, allowing problems to be addressed from different angles.

A component of this coordination could be achieved through increasing participation in the decision-making process and promoting partnerships between actors. Multi stakeholder engagement, coordinated by leadership at the right level, can promote these types of partnerships, as well as collective action.

A core component of a coordinated approach within government should be the development of accountability measures. An accountability platform should be created; it would be managed at the highest level, but oversee action at all levels, including to grass roots action.

Finally, policy around food systems in Ghana should be aspirational; it should provide hope.

Proposal 5: Increase investment in food crops

There should be greater investment in nutritious food crops in Ghana. At present, there is significant focus on cash crops, and nutritious food crops are sometimes overlooked. For example, fruits, vegetables, beans and fish should be promoted to a greater extent than staple foods like maize and cassavas.

To truly serve the objective of increasing the production of nutritious foods, the government should direct policy to enhance the production of, and investment into nutritious food crops.

'People working in food production have decent and resilient livelihoods.'

Proposal 6: Clarify Ghana's vision for farming

Ghana must ensure that there is a clear and consistent vision for the country in relation to the structure of farming. This is a precondition for enabling Ghanaian farmers to access decent livelihoods: it is difficult to put adequate measures in place to protect farmers' and other food systems actors' standard of living without a clear articulation of the ideal direction of travel for the whole of Ghana.

Once this vision is in place, a more granular perspective can begin to be defined. At this stage, supporting farmer livelihoods should consider the services that are accessible to farmers (such as healthcare, education, electricity, water, roads), and not focus on financial returns alone.

‘Agriculture contributes to the country’s sustainable economic growth, mitigation of climate change.’

Proposal 7: Optimize Ghana’s agricultural subsidies to encourage real change

A new scheme for determining and allocating subsidies should be developed. An optimal subsidy scheme in Ghana would be one that ensures people are responsive to subsidies. At present, recipients of agriculture subsidies are not as responsive as they could be, making the system inefficient.

Given these inefficiencies in the current system, the government should consider reorienting subsidies to investment in research and extension, as these are critical components of strengthening the food system.

Proposal 8: Give a central place to soil health in food systems transformation

Planning to improve soil health should be given a central place in transforming food systems in Ghana. Soil health may seem to be a narrow technical aspect of agriculture and food, but it touches many aspects of food systems.

Food systems actors could ‘come together around the soil.’

Proposal 9: Observe successful practices in other countries and sectors

To support Ghana’s agriculture industry in increasing the production of nutritious foods, produced in a sustainable manner, it is important to observe practices which have been successful in different types of crops. For example, there are lessons to be learnt from private sector engagement in cash crop value chains in Ghana (such as cocoa).

It would be valuable to observe how business engages with agriculture value chains. Particular attention should be paid to how the private sector and small holder farmers can be incentivized to better engage in climate-smart approaches in food value chains, including creating improved links to market, and more efficient production of nutrient-rich foods.

At present, Ghana is a net importer of food. This must change in order to unlock better food security and better income for farmers (including for women and children).