

FOOD SYSTEMS DIALOGUES (FSDs)
LUXEMBOURG, 22 MAY 2019
CO-ORGANIZED BY WORLD FARMERS' ORGANIZATION

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

Executive Summary

On 22 May 2019 a Food Systems Dialogues (FSDs) event took place in Luxembourg City, Luxembourg co-organized by the World Farmers' Organization (WFO). This FSDs event was held in the context of the 2019 WFO General Assembly. Approximately 90 participants attended, reflecting a range of actors working in Food Systems globally, ranging from national farmers' associations and agricultural cooperatives, to private sector companies, to major intergovernmental organizations.

Tables were asked to present one or more proposals to address a specific area of food systems, with a global focus. Ideally, the proposals were to be achievable within 3 years. An indicative sample of the prompt themes for dialogues is as follows: eliminating food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition; reducing food waste; compensation for farmer contributions and expertise in regards to retaining biodiversity; sustainability of the agricultural sector; involvement of farmers in policy-making; adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change; farmers driven approach to enhance resilience in agricultural practices; and innovative technologies.

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: Major intergovernmental organizations should highlight the problem of food loss and waste

The United Nations, together with global organizations such as the WEF, the Champions 12.3 and Consumers' Good Forums, should work to create a movement to shine a light on the scale of the problem of food loss and waste. This movement should challenge every actor in the food value chain, from producer to consumer to reduce their individual food waste and post-harvest loss. A platform could be created for all the actors in the food chain from producers to consumers, including retailers, input providers and other, to pledge to reduce waste and share techniques.

This movement could spread awareness amongst consumers and through school curricula to demonstrate the financial and other impacts of food waste and loss.

Proposal 2: Farmers should receive a compensation for supporting land conservation

Farmers should receive a greater portion of the sale price of the commodities they produce, as compensation for supporting land conservation.

There is a disconnect between the price consumers pay for food and the price at which farmers sell their produce: farmers receive too small a portion of the consumer price. Farmers are in a position to have a significant impact towards land conservation, provided that they are equipped with the resources to farm effectively and are in a secure financial position.

Additionally, farmers need support to face the challenge of land ownership and to preserve land titles for family farms.

If farmers were compensated at higher rates for the food they produce agriculture would likely become more sustainable; farmers would be in a stronger financial position to invest in techniques and practices which preserve the land.

Proposal 3: Farmers should be more closely involved in political decision-making to create their own solutions

There should be more support for farmers to devise their own solutions to the challenges associated with sustainable agriculture. There should also be opportunities for farmers to contribute these ideas to the policy-making process; to “have a seat at the table.”

Farmers are an essential part of the food value chain. Their ability and propensity to implement sustainable practices is key to food systems transformation. However, often farmers are simply being asked to produce greater quantities and to follow standards, while these standards are continuously changing without them being part of the decision-making.

Greater farmer involvement in global decision making could result in more effective policies, as well as regulations that are more sustainable and better support farmers’ livelihoods.

Closer involvement of farmers in political decision-making could be complemented by more farmers demand driven research, involvement in the review of global best practices, endorsing international codes, and direct input into drafting international standards.

Challenges to this approach include regional differentiation between farmers, as well as the cost to farmers of being away from their farms.

Proposal 4: There should be increased knowledge and training for farmers

In order to drive the implementation of change, beyond simply ideas and commitments, there should be an initiative to create a greater level of knowledge about techniques that are available to support sustainable development, complemented by skills development opportunities.

The idea is that by generating curiosity through awareness, widespread action is more likely to take place. Dialogues in local communities could be used as a strategy to generate awareness.

In regards to skills development, committees of experts could travel to specific farming areas to conduct training programs in close connection with Farmers’ Organizations. If farmers are expected to change their behavior, they need support. It would be valuable for them to know that training is available and which one.

Proposal 5: Create an inventory of policies that link agriculture and food security

Governments need to link food security and agriculture in policy development. A global inventory of policies and practices which link food security to agriculture (taking a holistic food systems approach) could be created to assist national governments to create suitable solutions.

Currently, many governments have food security policies in place; however, these are not adequate to respond to incidents of drought or other natural phenomena caused by climate change, and their effects on farming.

Creating an inventory of current policies and practices would be particularly useful for developing countries, insofar as there would be a broad range of information available about policies which have been effective (and why), and how they were implemented.

Farmers should work closely with Governments, in particular with each Ministry that can have an impact in the agricultural sector, not only Ministry for Agriculture, but also Health, Education, Environment and Economics....

Proposal 6: Financial support should be provided to enable farmers to access innovative technology

Farmers are unlikely to adopt new practices if the investment required for this puts their livelihood at risk; therefore, financial support to test and adopt technologies should be provided.

New innovations and technologies are available to farmers, but uptake of these is not as large as it could be, for example in areas such as vaccines and safer feed to prevent the need for antibiotics. When innovation responds to farmers real needs, it is more likely that farmers implement them in their farming practices.

Farmers should be able to adopt new technologies and practices while maintaining productivity and protecting their livelihoods and the environment. When the economic pillar of the sustainability is ensured for the farmers and their families, the other two follow naturally.

Proposal 7: Strengthen farmer associations to ensure greater collective power

Farmer associations, at all levels, should have the ability to improve the situation of farmers; stronger collective action could help in areas such as negotiating, increasing bargaining power, and mediation with banks and investors.

Farmers should work directly with Ministry of Health, as Farmers are those who produce nutrition value of the food. These may change according to the country and the region. But it is also thanks to the Farmers that everybody's right to access healthy and nutritious diets is ensured.

Promotion of farming practices that have proven to be successful in terms of food systems transformation should be granted, in view of potential scale up or replication in other regions or countries.

Equally, farmers and the organizations that support them should not be afraid of strikes or other forms of nonviolent pressure to obtain their economic rights; this option is more easily unlocked when acting in association with other farmers. Creating problems for consumers and corporations will better enable farmers' voices heard.