

FOOD SYSTEMS DIALOGUES (FSDs)
MONTPELLIER, 07 OCTOBER 2019

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

Executive Summary

On 07 October 2019 a Food Systems Dialogues (FSDs) event took place in Montpellier, France. This FSDs event was held in the context of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact 5th Annual Gathering and Mayors' Summit. Approximately 80 participants attended, reflecting a range of actors working in Food Systems, with a focus on decision makers in global cities. Participants ranged from mayors to policy makers, to technical staff of local governments, to researchers, and to international non-governmental organizations.

Tables were asked to present one or more proposals to address a specific area of food systems. The event focused on actions that can be taken by cities worldwide to frame local, national and international food policies. Ideally, the proposals were to be achievable within 3 years. The prompt themes for dialogue at this event addressed the following areas: food production, food supply and distribution, social and economic equity, sustainable diets and nutrition, food waste and governance.

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

'Urban food systems promote health and regenerate the environment.'

Proposal 1: Generate demand for healthy and sustainably-produced food

In order to create an urban food environment in which there is support for a market for healthy and sustainably-produced food, it is important to foster the demand side. The question for urban governments to consider is: how do we incentivize people to eat more healthy food?

Proposal 2: Find incentives for local farmers to produce healthy food

Strategies should be devised which incentivize farmers to produce healthy food at the local level. Without adequate perceived gain, the friction and cost for farmers in relation to adapting their processes is too great to induce change.

'Local leadership brings multiple stakeholders together for better functioning food systems.'

Proposal 3: Foster good local leadership to support multi stakeholder collaboration

Bringing multiple stakeholders together for better functioning food systems requires good leadership; therefore, local governments should reflect on what good leadership looks like, and build capacity to foster good leadership internally.

An important component of good leadership is putting emphasis on collaboration. This encompasses collaboration within local government, and also broader collaboration across stakeholders in the food systems community. It is important to involve both local government and civil society across the food system to be involved in collaboration structures.

Concretely, collaborative structures should include institutionalized multi stakeholder groups, as well as leadership groups and local action groups. These structures should be connected to political decision-makers so that they can act as a driver of policy change.

Leadership within food systems extends beyond local government; it should also be fostered among other food systems stakeholders. Nonetheless, local authorities have an important role as leaders themselves, and in promoting leadership development among other stakeholders.

Proposal 4: Conduct a stakeholder mapping process

To promote collaboration, a stakeholder mapping process should be carried out. This mapping process would be most valuable if it created visibility not merely on the type of actors involved in food systems, but also on links between them. It should show who works with whom, what each group's interests and motivations are, and the way the groups work.

An effective stakeholder mapping process would be built through interviews with all stakeholder groups, focusing on leaders of key organizations, because these individuals will likely have a holistic and strategic view on the role played by each stakeholder in the food system.

Participants in Food Systems Dialogues events could potentially provide resources to conduct the stakeholder mapping process, by assisting to gain access to leaders and key organizations for interviews. Participants could also assist with information dissemination and communication between stakeholders, as required.

Once the mapping process has been conducted, it would be valuable for local leaders to work with civil society groups and universities to support members of the community who are commonly voiceless in the food system. It is important for those who have less power in the food system to be represented and have an opportunity to contribute their point of view.

'All city dwellers have access to affordable, healthy and sustainable foods.'

Proposal 5: Integrate healthy food into welfare services and public procurement

To promote equal access for all residents of cities to healthy and sustainable food, city governments should integrate healthy food into welfare services and public procurement.

Access to healthy and sustainable food should be framed as a right of all city residents, and prioritized accordingly.

Public procurement can play a large role in supplying healthy and sustainable food to city residents. It carries in-built scale insofar as it concerns the provision of food for multiple public institutions. Additionally, governments have considerable influence on how food is provided in these programs; as such, procurement can be used as a lever to generate demand and establish

The goal of this public procurement approach is ultimately to drive a shift in residents' eating habits; changes in the overall nutrition level of food consumed, and the proportion of ingredients which are sustainable, could be assessed as a metric of success. Another useful metric would be to observe positive health outcomes such as a decrease in the incidence of malnutrition and NCDs.

Public procurement and other initiatives involve navigating complex trade-offs, such as the tension between affordability and quality of food. Therefore, individuals in decision-making roles should prioritize scientific evidence when determining procurement policy and building local programs. Data-based evidence, and expert input should be sought as a way of working through these trade-offs.

Proposal 6: Strengthen infrastructure to connect producers and consumers

Cities should consider strengthening infrastructure to better connect regional producers with local businesses and consumers. The objective of this would be to help create a more circular and sustainable system within cities, by making it easier and more cost effective for producers to supply their food locally, in turn making products cheaper for consumers to purchase.

'All cities procure sustainably produced food from local farmers.'

Proposal 7: Make it easier for local producers to participate in city procurement

Dynamic procurement systems should be established, in order to facilitate access for a greater number of farmers to city public procurement calls. Introducing procurement initiatives alone is not adequate as a solution to support local farmers; planning must take place to ensure that farmers can respond to procurement.

In particular, the quantity of produce required from farmers in order to participate in procurement programs could be reduced, so that more farmers are in a position to apply.

Cities could look to the example of Bristol, UK, for lessons in relation to this initiative.

For farmers to answer to public procurement, they have to be organized. We have an Arusha (Tanzania) inspired proposal to create food banks for farmers to collaborate all together, along with a system that institutionalizes the middle man so that it is less wide, in trade.

Proposal 8: Create opportunities for cities to share best practices for procurement

Cities would benefit from more formal and frequent collaboration in regards to public procurement policy. They could create a thematic group on procurement, to share best practices and inspire new ideas.

Proposal 9: Organize farmers' markets to connect producers with consumers

Cities should consider supporting farmers' markets. This can be an effective approach to enabling farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers at fair prices.

The city of Lima, Peru, has introduced farmers' markets; its example could prove useful to observers in other cities. Lima has demonstrated how gains can be made by re-organizing the middle step between farmers and consumers; consumers benefit in terms of prices and access, while farmers benefit by receiving direct access to market.

'The food environments encourage sustainable, nutritious and healthy choices that are affordable.'

Proposal 10: Support diversification in agriculture

There should be a focus on diversification of agriculture in areas surrounding cities. Currently, in many cases, farmers' own produce and entire regions are focused on relatively homogenous crop types.

Related to initiatives to support diversification, cities should enable greater connections between agricultural producers in their areas, to global market.

Proposal 11: Enable farmers to participate in policy planning

Cities should consider enabling farmers to have direct input to planning, laws and regulations that concern them.

Proposal 12: Establish a tax on unhealthy food, along with other regulation

Cities should consider regulating the public space to promote healthy eating. Specifically, they could prohibit advertisements for unhealthy food or establish a tax on unhealthy food. Ideally, cities would reinvest the income from these taxes into subsidies and other support for producing and distributing healthy food.

Finally, cities could consider new guidelines and regulations for street food vending and food markets. This should be designed with the objective of improving safety and nutritional quality of the food sold in markets and of supporting the sale of fresh fruit and vegetables.

'There is no more urban food waste.'

Proposal 13: Assess the relative impact of a producer- or consumer-focused approach to reducing food waste

When considering how to reduce food waste, it is important to acknowledge that there are two angles from which to address the problem: the producer side, and the consumer side.

In devising a strategy to reduce food waste, the relative impact of combating the problem from each side should be considered. Should resources be focused on the producer side only, or should the consumer side be addressed simultaneously, with initiatives such as recycling and composting?

Proposal 14: Create a tax scheme as a disincentive for private individuals to waste food

A tax scheme could be implemented to penalize individuals who produce food waste. In this way, every incremental amount of waste generated by an individual would be taxed, creating a clear financial disincentive to waste food.

Proposal 15: Educate children about how to cook while minimizing food waste

A consumer-side education campaign should be undertaken to create change in the way that people prepare food, and to simultaneously encourage a reduction in food waste. Children should be the target of this education campaign, so that they are able to learn positive habits early in life.

Specifically, children should be taught how to cook and prepare food at school. Experiences at the school canteen can also be shaped to inform children's habits, which endure into later.

'Food producers from peri-urban areas have decent resilient livelihoods.'

Proposal 16: Ensure farmers have access to land close to cities

Cities should take steps to ensure that farmers have access to land within the vicinity of the city center. This approach serves to ensure adequate productive land for farmers to generate a decent income, and also promotes easier and more affordable access to local markets, in terms of transporting food.

Examples of this policy can be taken from Montpellier and Lyon in France, from Portland in the USA, and from Mexico. These cities have put legal measures and protections in place to protect land from development, to ensure it can be accessible to agriculture producers.

As a complement to this land-protection strategy, programs to develop and stimulate markets within cities are important to support farmers. Experience from places such as Mexico City show that through certification and special market-based opportunities, a more robust and reliable market can be created for growers.

'The private sector is fully involved in sustainable urban food systems.'

Proposal 17: Encourage retailers to play a role in raising awareness among consumers

Retailers should be encouraged to actively promote information to consumers about healthy and sustainable eating. For example, retailers could provide information on the ingredients in food on its shelves. They could implement screens showing what is and is not included in each food. Or, alternatively, they could convey this information by creating an app to guide consumers through stores, showing the ingredients, and the health profile of products.

Retailers are uniquely positioned to influence consumers. But currently, they do not have great enough incentive to promote a positive message in terms of healthy and sustainable food systems. Cities should focus on devising incentives for supermarkets and other food retailers to do this.

Incentives could take the form of regulation, or could be fostered through involvement in food systems dialogues events, to give retailers access to best practice and to create a sense of responsibility to the public interest.

'Nutritional needs of school children are reflected in school meals.'

Proposal 18: Develop a more targeted understanding of childrens' health needs

It is important to undertake further research to develop a more targeted understanding of the nutritional needs of children. This research should be tied to actionable recommendations for cities.

For example, it could include recommendations about the type of food to supply children in school, or other initiatives which are proven to promote good nutrition for children.

Schools could prioritize serving children food that is as fresh as possible; additionally, classes could be organized to enable children to prepare a subset of meals themselves, to enable them to learn positive habits early in life.

'Consumers understand the ingredients in their food, and its sources.'

Proposal 19: Provide education for children on healthy eating

Cities should assess the opportunities that can be made available to educate children about healthy eating. This could be done through creating school programs or commissioning television shows on the subject of health. Training programs for parents could also be considered, to provide them with advice on creating positive food environments and education for their children.

Children should be equipped with an understanding about what it means to have a healthy and balanced diet. For example, they should be aware that, if they eat a snack from McDonalds, they should do their best to compensate for this at another moment by consuming healthy food.