

## FOOD SYSTEMS DIALOGUES (FSDs)

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VIENNA

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## Executive Summary

On 13 December 2019 a Food Systems Dialogues (FSDs) event took place in Vienna, Austria co-organized as part of the university course “Geographies of Food – Global Food Systems at a Crossroads between Food Security and Sustainability” at the Department of Geography and Regional Research of the University of Vienna. The FSD was held in the form of a role play, 20 students attended, playing stakeholders working in Food Systems (e.g. farmworker union officer, procurement officer of a supermarket chain, officer of government regulation body, journalist, ...). The course lecturer drafted the different roles and students drew their role two months before the event. Students were then requested to prepare role descriptions, developing their character for the event.

The FSD Dialogues in a Box tool was used to prepare the event and ensure diversity around the three different tables.

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

The discussion topics for dialogues at this event were oriented along selected Red Threat Themes of the Food Systems Dialogues and addressed the following areas: (1) Involve all stakeholders in the transition: e.g. farmers, food processors, retailers, carers, chefs, etc., (2) Incentivize production and consumption of nutritious and healthy food products, (3) Ensure financial incentives encourage the production of healthy and nutritious food. 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.

Tables were requested to come up with a proposal, an indicator to measure success of the proposal, actions to ensure collaboration on the proposal as well as to collect voluntary commitments from table participants. 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

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Table 1

Access to Food Systems: Involve all stakeholders in the transition: e.g. farmers, food processors, retailers, carers, chefs, etc.

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## **Proposal: Shift EU subsidies on agrarian land towards organic, plant-based food production.**

A considerable amount of EU subsidies to farmers is linked to the size of the agrarian land farmers possess, independent of their production methods. We suggest linking subsidies to organic food production, with a further emphasis on plant-based foods. This step should motivate European farmers to change their production to an environmentally less harmful one.

Indicator:

- Statistical data on share of organic production within the EU.

Collaboration:

- Provision of funding for farmers to change production towards organic and plant-based production.
- Encourage public education on sustainable and healthy nutrition.

Commitments of Participants:

- Conduct NGO campaign on new subsidy regulations for farmers.
- Teach about sustainable food in cooking school.
- Direct financial investments to sustainable production.
- Research impact of more plant-based diets on global fish stocks.
- Producing a film discussing land-grabbing and sustainable and healthy food production.

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Table 2

Nutritious and Healthy Food Products: Incentivize production and consumption of nutritious and healthy food products

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## **Proposal: Establish a ladder quality seal based on the planetary boundaries framework enabling consumers to take healthy nutritional decisions.**

At the moment there is the European quality seal for organic produce, which does not include, e.g. the distance of transportation, the amount of water being used for the production of the produce or the social standards of the workers on a farm. Our proposal is to establish a

universal seal which includes both ecological and social standards, which is on every food package (or on the price tag) and is as easy to read as the colorful EU-energy label that already exists, showing, organic or not, all consumers how the purchased product is ranked. This would ensure transparency and allow consumer sustainable product choices. Farmers and food processors would be encouraged to develop their products according to better ecological and social standards.

Indicator:

- Increase in food sales of highest rated products according to the quality seal indicators based on the planetary boundaries framework.
- Consumer questionnaire verifying intentions of quality seal.

Collaboration:

- Collaborate with existing quality seal bodies such as AMA, FairTrade, etc.
- Convince supermarkets to be sustainability pioneers by adoption of the quality seal.

Commitments of Participants:

- Educate farmers on quality seal standards.
- Educate consumers through workshops with teachers, parents in schools, involving farmers and food businesses.
- Provide information on impact of food production on wildlife.
- Integrating quality seal in marketing campaign of adopting businesses.
- Provide research into a communication strategy towards consumers regarding quality seal.

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Table 3

Financing Desired Food Systems: Ensure financial incentives encourage the production of healthy and nutritious food

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**Proposal: Introduce a tax on luxury-foods (e.g. meat) step-by-step over a certain period (e.g. 1 year) and subsidize producers of organic and sustainable food.**

In order to address the harmful environmental effects of meat consumption we propose a “luxury-food”-tax in order to internalize external environmental costs, particularly of meat consumption. Income from the tax would be used to sufficiently subsidize organic and sustainable food.

One challenge is that enough income is generated through the tax in order to sufficiently subsidize organic and sustainable food in order to avoid the need for budget transfers from other government departments/budgets.

Indicator:

- Income generated by luxury tax.
- Monitoring mechanism operated by independent NGO checking on reinvestment of tax income.

Collaboration:

- Provision of financial incentives to food producers through a process informed by the monitoring mechanism.
- Government risk is minimized, and collaboration hence encouraged due to the fiscal zero-sum basis of the action.

Commitments:

- Support to develop sustainability indicators by a science body.
- Inform and advise public about the action through media work.
- Include indicators of the monitoring mechanism into consumer regulations discussions.
- Change smallholder farming practices within our network.