

Online COVID-19 FOOD SYSTEMS DIALOGUES (FSDs)

Just Transition Within Livestock Production

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ORGANIZED BY [50by40](#)

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Executive Summary

The **COVID-19** pandemic has highlighted the fragility of our current food system, making resilient food pathways critical in the ‘new normal’. A *Just Transition* has to be at the core of such an equitable and resilient food system, facilitating the transition away from the most unsustainable forms of livestock production, while aiding the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Mapping pathways to an equitable transition for farmers, growers, processors, and other workers across the food supply chain is pivotal within livestock production and affiliated production systems.

To this end, on 30 June 2020, 50by40 organised and curated global COVID-19 Food Systems Dialogues (FSDs), titled ‘**A Just Transition Within Livestock Production.**’ The online event, which was the first of its kind, brought together key stakeholders across the globe to discuss how the Just Transition within livestock production strategy can be successfully embedded in the efforts to achieve a resilient food system.

With the participation of **73 experts, spanning 53 organisations**, the event hosted a range of actors working in food systems, including key international and regional organisations, foundations and research institutions, such as World Economic Forum, Food and Land Use Coalition, International Fund For Agricultural Development, UN Foundation, UN Environment Programme, Chatham House, Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa, Action Aid, Just Rural Transition, Global Forest Coalition, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, EU Food Policy Coalition, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group.

Breakout sessions were asked to draft several proposals for action to address specific food systems issues.

The discussion topics for dialogue at this event addressed the following areas:

1. A reformed, equitable approach to global food production that strengthens the implementation of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** 2 (Zero hunger), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 12 (responsible production and consumption) and 13 (Climate Action) and their intersectionality.
2. **Rural areas** are economically revitalized to ensure fair living and working conditions for smallholder farmers and become centers of food systems transformation and environmental stewardship.
3. **Research** on Just Transition within the livestock sector provides sufficient evidence to inform and incentivise governments with policy recommendations, ensuring optimal conditions for farmers, ranchers, growers, processors, and other

workers across the food supply chain.

4. Changing patterns of livestock product **consumption** support a shift towards small-scale, agroecological producers using native breeds and integrated, diverse crop-livestock systems (where possible).
5. **Post-COVID investments** (public and private) are directed at boosting resilient, climate-compatible and sustainable food systems.
6. **National governments** adopt ambitious roadmaps for equitable and more sustainable food systems, which become a major climate change mitigation and resilient economies strategy in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

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

*A reformed, equitable approach to global food production that strengthens the implementation of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 (Zero hunger), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 12 (responsible production and consumption) and 13 (Climate Action) and their intersectionality.***

Proposal 1: Use financial flows, local to global, to support regenerative, sustainable agriculture projects and programs.

There are a number of tools and levers that can be applied to existing environmental, food, agricultural, land use, forest, and trade policies to shift them towards regenerative food production and (long-term) soil carbon sequestration. Of course, such shifts should not be applied top-down, but be bolstered by science-based, context-specific extension services and open-source technologies. There could be shifts in taxes and subsidies so that converting lands currently growing animal feed to grow human-edible crops is financially viable. All of these processes should encourage transparency and disclosures (with third-party verification).

Proposal 2: Regularly bring diverse stakeholders together to ensure policies and supply chains consider power imbalances, equity, and limit negative trade offs.

The best policies will be informed by experts and stakeholders from all sectors that play a role in or are affected by food systems. There will be many entry points and perspectives, but there is a need for such expertise to impact those various entry points. Such an inclusive process is essential so that practical, joined-up policies are created that reflect a country's public health and climate goals. At the same time, regular engagement and analysis of policy implications are necessary to address any unintended consequences, and make adjustments accordingly; as well as look for power imbalances and marginalized voices.

Proposal 3: Trade regulations to incentivize good practices (climate, livelihoods, biodiversity) and disincentivize bad practices.

Given the lopsided burden on industrialized countries to reduce their emissions given their overwhelming contribution to climate change (the G20 countries contribute about 80% of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions), these countries and their

non-state actors must take the lead to establish specific trade regulations that bolster existing policies across all departments. For example, EU-based grocery stores sourcing food products from South America must create and uphold rigid standards for deforestation-free products, backed by third-party verification (as well as other standards, such as labor, biodiversity, animal welfare, etc.).

Policies that work successfully at the national level are integral to international agreements that do not threaten livelihoods, especially those of the most marginalized, biodiversity, or the success of the Paris Agreement. Countries can align fiscal measures and subsidies to further encourage ‘good’ food system practices, such as agroecology, organic farming, livestock to human-edible plant transitions, etc.

Proposal 4: Measure and explain the true costs of industrial, unsustainable livestock production in different regions and contexts (including local, national, and international contexts).

We need to build the evidence base for a Just Transition in agriculture. There has not been enough evidence to prove to policymakers that a Just Transition—especially in livestock production—is beneficial to local and national economies *and* creates jobs. It is essential to fund research into this neglected area from a variety of experts, especially researchers in countries most impacted by climate change and with low food security. This research must be available in the dominant languages of the countries and areas they represent, and be consistently re-assessed.

It must be complemented by further research on the true costs of industrial livestock and feed production, as well as other agricultural commodities, exemplified by the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) / The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Agriculture and Food (TEEBAgriFood), Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU), and others. Coupling the costs of existing production systems with the benefits of ‘better’ systems (for producers, consumers, animals, biodiversity, public health, ecosystems, etc.) holds potential to change mindsets.

***Rural areas** are economically revitalized to ensure fair living and working conditions for smallholder farmers and become centers of food systems transformation and environmental stewardship.*

Proposal 5: Reverse the trend towards intensification and industrialisation of agriculture.

To revitalize rural areas, it is important to first change the larger incentive structures in place. With the advent of globalisation, production and policy have been geared towards large mono-culture crops for international livestock and feed markets. This has meant larger, specialized, intensive farms with weak governmental oversight of environmental and labour practices along the long supply chain. The financial incentives and policies must reverse the trend, and start supporting local governance, higher farmer livelihoods and diversified farming practices.

Proposal 6: Shift financial systems to support local production and non-intensive practices.

Large-scale financial support for industrialised livestock farming, such as the European Common Agricultural Policy and other systems of subsidies, must be realigned. The financial incentive system must switch to one that accounts for the externalities of large-scale, industrialised livestock production, while rewarding small-scale, regenerative practices. Developmental support should also abandon the short-sighted narrative of scaling up industrialisation of livestock and focus on strengthening existing, local farming practices and governance.

Proposal 7: Put back pride into farming and land stewardship, with youth increasingly seeking out farming jobs.

It is essential to keep youth interested and incentivised to take up farming, in the face of increasing urbanisation and the critical narratives of environmental degradation from the current food system. Shorter, local, sustainable supply chains with fair wages and visible environmental benefits will help put pride back in the task of feeding and protecting the planet.

Proposal 8: Build bridges between farmers and environmental organisations.

When discussing, planning and creating policies for change, it is essential to include consensus-building measures, to account for the often polarized relationship between farmers and environmental organisations. Open, constructive dialogue between the relevant parties should ensure jointly supported roadmaps for transition.

Research on Just Transition within the livestock sector provides sufficient evidence to inform and incentivise governments with policy recommendations, ensuring optimal conditions for farmers, ranchers, growers, processors, and other workers across the food supply chain.

Proposal 9: Identify several areas that would benefit from additional research, including robust case studies, and better tools and planning strategies for policy makers to implement Just Transition principles within the livestock sector.

Research on Just Transition framework within the livestock sector should inform and incentivize governments with domestic finance, policy recommendations, ensuring optimal conditions for farmers, ranchers, growers, processors, and other workers across the food supply chain.

Proposal 10: Address the clear knowledge gap that exists within country specific land use plans and the connection to regenerative planetary health and diets.

The revision of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) alongside the strategic use of domestic finance sources and strategies should guide governmental policies to enable climate mitigation/adaptation outcomes towards regenerative, humane and sustainable agriculture.

Proposal 11: Establish donor collaboratives aimed at scaling the field of philanthropic investment within the Just Transition ecosystem.

Strategic funding to support the creation and development of critical infrastructure that is necessary to maintain the continued growth and, more importantly, the integrity of the Just Transition framework. This would expand the existing efforts to prioritize areas best suited for collective action but that are unlikely to be funded through typical philanthropic environmental funders.

*Changing patterns of livestock product **consumption** support a shift towards small-scale, agroecological producers using native breeds and integrated, diverse crop-livestock systems (where possible).*

Proposal 12: Institutions (universities, corporate offices, canteens, administration, work places) to play their role in a meaningful transition towards better purchasing decisions.

Although consumer pressure serves as a powerful puzzle piece in pivoting dynamics in the global food system, it is faulty to solely rely on a shift in consumer behaviour. The above-mentioned institutions are admonished to adapt institutional consumption along their supply chains towards producing agro-ecological products themselves, as well as buying and offering products from small scale farmers, and initiatives. At the same time, consumer engagement needs to be acknowledged, highlighted, and rewarded (monetary benefits, applications, gamification aspects, etc.) to make a strong case for individual power within institutions and societies. In addition, a more in-depth dialogue between decision makers and consumers is crucial to accelerate the transition process.

Proposal 13: Policy makers and food industry to highlight the benefits of buying small scale, organic, or regenerative food, as opposed to industrial agricultural products.

Further funding for independent research on environmental implications, damaging models, and certain agricultural practices is needed to highlight the multitudinous (long-term) advantages (fighting diseases, improving health conditions, strengthening local communities, richer soil ecology, faster growing rates, etc.) of organic, regenerative, healthy practices over industrial agricultural ones.

In parallel, movement-comprehensive alliances need to be assembled to intervene in the global economy's logic of producing as much as cheaply as possible. Both research, and cross collaborations play an important role in pushing the demand for plant-based choices. By demonstrating the industrial approach as being excessively unsustainable as well as politically and economically inefficient, decision and policy makers are forced to take action.

Post-COVID investments (public and private) are directed at boosting resilient, climate-compatible and sustainable food systems.

Proposal 14: Shift the narrative from ‘food security’ to ‘nutrition security’.

There is a lack of a public discussion concerning nutrition security. Nutrition security ensures that all individuals have reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable, nutritious food to have a healthy life. A new narrative around nutrition security should be included when discussing feeding the global population.

Proposal 15: Include farmers in crucial discussions about sustainable food systems.

Farmers are a key stakeholder and should be a part of every step of the decision making process. Currently, they are bearing the economic impact much more than the health impact of COVID-19. They must be able to get the credit they need, and must be included when talking about shifting to alternative proteins.

Proposal 16: Reorientate subsidies towards a plant-based future, but also those who need the subsidies.

Subsidies need to be provided to organizations and businesses making efforts to move towards plant based products and solutions. Also, subsidies should reach farmers and small businesses who need support. A shift away from subsidizing industrial meat and non-sustainable products is crucial.

Proposal 17: Localise the production of calorically rich plant-based food.

COVID-19 has disturbed supply chains. It is therefore crucial to talk about resilience and systems breakdown. Locally grown, regenerative, calorically dense foods - beans, pulses, rice - contributes to building resilient food systems. With this, vulnerable communities will be able to resist future crises.

National governments adopt ambitious roadmaps for equitable and more sustainable food systems, which become a major climate change mitigation and resilient economies strategy in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Proposal 18: Create a new vision for the livestock sector.

The new vision should be based on the starting point of meeting the needs of people, nature, and the climate; and which the public, the farming sector and governments can work towards together.

Proposal 19: Integrate Just Transition within the livestock sector in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Just Transition approaches should address inequality and vulnerability (including with regard to farmers, workers, people's access to food); map the different actors (including those that are marginalised) and brings them to the table to develop alternatives that work for those communities and the climate; provide support (including training and capacity building) to make the transition in a socially just way, that revives local towns and connects them with rural areas, and includes reforming of subsidies.

Proposal 20: Integrate newer technology and unique actors into the equation of a new food system.

Farmers, businesses, and corporations promoting sustainable food systems will be key to transforming the food system. Hearing these voices within and outside the system of policy reform will be critical to leapfrog to a new, agro-ecological, circular food system.

Conclusion

The event signifies the point of departure for the global conversation on a Just Transition within livestock production. Being the first of its kind, the event generated reassuring interest amongst a great range of actors to further engage in multidisciplinary dialogues to imbed the principles of Just Transition within livestock production in any effort to transform our food system.

The key learnings of the FSDs conversations highlight the exigency to address different levers of change, such as education and knowledge (research), policy and regulation, finance, market structures, citizen engagement and behaviour. The takeaways from this productive discussion, which will inform the next steps of our strategy, include:

- A just approach to global food production must involve international governments working together, especially when formulating trade regulations.
- To revitalize rural areas, farmers must be recognised as essential and dignified. Policies must also be context-specific, recognizing the needs and vulnerabilities of different communities.
- For research to effectively provide sufficient evidence to governments and policymakers, we must identify holes in existing research as well as how to get appropriate funding.
- There must be a shift away from factory farming. Also, work needs to be done to create a strong economic case for sustainable agro-ecological farming, especially in the light of COVID-19.
- Post COVID-19 investments play a huge role in boosting a future of food that is eco-friendly and nutritionally beneficial to humans. This involves creating innovation at the farmer level, coordinating messages to the investment community and shortening supply chains.
- COVID-19 highlights the urgency to shift towards a more resilient food system. A Just Transition dialogue must be included in upcoming policy conversations on food systems resilience to influence policymakers.

Finally, an overarching message that emerged from the different breakout sessions is that moving to a “circular economy” will be necessary to measure the success of this food systems’ transition. Before we can achieve this, however, there needs to be more and equal representation at the seat of discussion.

The participants recognized that achieving a resilient and equitable food system relies on a collective effort. To make progress, there is a need to break down the existing silos through engagement, inclusion and collaboration.

The intention behind this event was to be a conversation-starter, and, in that, we believe we have been successful. Ultimately, we aim to make Just Transition a key strategy in our global efforts to ensure the resilience of food systems for all involved, with a strong focus on livestock.

The follow-up of the FSDs event will involve the creation of a 50by40 Task Force on Just Transition to continue this crucial conversation with key stakeholders across all sectors