

Food Systems Dialogue and COVID-19 in Colombia

Summary Report

Colombia, September 25, 2020

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected Colombia's agri-food systems and revealed weaknesses that could compromise the country's food and nutritional security if not addressed in a systematic and timely manner. The health crisis has posed unprecedented challenges for the sector, particularly for small producers, who represent 70% of the country's farmers, and poor consumers. Among the main bottlenecks, we can find the national level's food distribution, which is based on high rates of informality (approximately 47% in major cities), adversely affecting food supply and purchase systems. While the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragility and fragmentation already existing in the country's food systems, it has also opened up a unique space to reconsider how these systems are configured, and reconstitute them in a way that is more resilient, inclusive, sustainable, and cost-effective.

To analyze the current situation and to begin the construction of an action plan that will address the impacts on COVID-19 and will shape a new long-term vision for agri-food systems, The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Alliance between Bioversity International and CIAT, and the New Economics for Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) in Colombia organized the *Dialogue on Food Systems and COVID-19 in Colombia*, an online event that took place on August 3rd. This event served to create a space to discuss and prioritize potential responses to this crisis and opportunities to rethink the food systems of the future. The *Dialogue* gathered more than 70 leaders from government, NGOs, funders, development agencies, private sector representatives, consumers, and producers, with experience in different areas related to food systems, to understand from different perspectives the impacts of the pandemic on the Colombian food system, and to discuss potential solutions that could help the agricultural and food sector to face and recover from the crisis.

2. Proposals

A first *Food Systems Dialogue* took place in Bogotá on May 8, 2019. This Dialogue was held in the framework of the annual meeting of the Alliance for Tropical Forests (TFA 2020) and under the coordination of FOLU Colombia, EAT, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), and the Global Economic Forum (WEF). The proposals from this first Dialogue serve as a baseline for topics discussed at The *Food Systems Dialogue and COVID-19 in Colombia* (Annex 1: Agenda). Below is a summary of the topics discussed in each group session, and their connection to the Road Map agreed upon at the May 2019 Dialogue, and proposals for change.

Work Table	Connection with Roadmap	Proposal for change
Food Supply and Distribution	3. Food loss and waste	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Build and strengthen platforms or observatories for monitoring the distribution, quality, costs, and food supply in real-time. 2) Train producers on good agricultural practices to ensure food quality and safety. 3) Diversify supply channels (platforms, apps, etc.) and strengthen existing channels. 4) Promote associativity in chains and short circuits in food systems.
Nutritional Food Consumption	2. Healthy eating 6. Communication and behavior change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Advise consumers on the importance of consuming nutritious food with the government and the education sector's support. 2) Generate disincentives for the consumption of ultra-processed products high in sugar, fat, and salt 3) Unify the design of policies to have implications for the entire chain, from sustainable food production to the consumption of nutritious food. 4) Encourage the participation of civil society and other actors that are part of the food systems, through partnerships with academia and research centers, to make "eating well" fashionable and work at different scales.
Farmers' and Food Chain Actors' Livelihoods	4. Fair and efficient markets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Seek better links among all chain actors and explore ways to pool resources to address critical issues. 2) To increase agricultural efficiency in the country by training producers in good agricultural and post-harvest practices at the farm level 3) Encourage local agricultural production, for example, by establishing a social brand for family farming, to make it more visible in the cities. 4) Promote mitigation measures in the face of informality in food chains (i.e. mapping the actors in the chain, strengthening real-time information systems, reviewing labor policies or laws, promoting income stabilization). 5) Diversify complementary agricultural and economic activities.
Technologies and Innovation	5. Innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Digitize the field: Accelerate or strengthen programs for internet access and technology for producers (i.e. communication technologies -TICS).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Strengthen weaknesses in food systems, such as production, short circuits, inclusion, informality, ownership of territories, intermediaries, and business models diversification. 3) Rescue genetic materials that serve to strengthen seed breeding. 4) To innovate in the generation of capacities and the transfer of knowledge and technologies.
<p>The Role of Biodiversity</p>	<p>1. Productive and sustainable territories and aquatic systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Diversify agricultural practices and business models to recognize the value of natural resources. 2) Generate changes in consumption patterns to reduce pressure on natural resources. 3) Seek support from the private sector to help encourage more sustainable, inclusive, and biodiverse chains. 4) Highlight the value of ecosystem services in sustainable agriculture and food consumption. 5) Innovate and create capacities to strengthen the chains and seek to connect them from the global level to the local level. 6) Inform about the benefits of biodiversity conservation in relation to food systems.

*New Economy for Food and Land Use, FOLU-Colombia

3. Conclusions

The *Colombia Food Systems Dialogue and COVID-19* brought together representatives from different sectors to begin identifying actions that ultimately seek to strengthen and make Colombia's food systems more resilient to future pandemics or other types of crises. In this opportunity, five topics relevant to food systems were addressed: (1) Supply and Distribution, (2) Consumption of Nutritious Foods, (3) Livelihoods of Farmers and Actors in Food Chains, (4) Technologies and Innovation, and (5) the Role of Biodiversity. These topics are in line with the *Food Systems Dialogues* held in other countries and in Colombia itself, but now adding data on the disruption factor of the COVID-19 pandemic. This initial Dialogue aimed to mitigate the short and medium-term effects of the pandemic and the actions needed to achieve long-term recovery from this health crisis.

The conversations at each table were rich and diverse. Due to the nature of the discussions and the working groups' constitution, there were overlaps in the proposed actions. In this document, the proposed ideas have been grouped under the corresponding themes.

Among the issues discussed at the five roundtables, the most recurrent was the need to design comprehensive solutions throughout the agri-food chains and avoid fragmentation of interventions that focus only on certain links without considering the whole picture. The importance of considering all the elements of the chain, from sustainable food production to the consumption of nutritious foods, was stressed. Also, participants mention the need to keep having interdisciplinary dialogues so that proposed actions cover all stakeholders and elements of the food systems.

Following the guidelines defined by the Food Systems Dialogue Secretariat, actions will be prioritized by calling on the appropriate actors in each case to promote rapid action while incorporating ideas into the FOLU 2030 Road Map.

Annex 1: Agenda

Date: August 3, 2020, Time: 9:30 - 11:40 am

5 min	Welcome and introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">Jesús A. Quintana, Managing Director for the Americas - Bioversity-CIAT Alliance
15 min	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">Juan Camilo Restrepo, Deputy Minister of Rural Development - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural DevelopmentJuan Lucas Restrepo, Director General - Bioversity International Alliance & CIAT
5 min	Introduction to the Food Systems Dialogue, Colombia 2020 Edition <ul style="list-style-type: none">David Nabarro, Winner of World Food Prize 2018 and Curator of Food Systems Dialogues
5 min	Results of the Food Systems Dialogue, Colombia 2019 Edition <ul style="list-style-type: none">Claudia Martínez, Director - E3-Ecology, Economics and Ethics; and Representative of New Economy for Food and Land Use, FOLU-Colombia
50 min	Parallel group sessions <ol style="list-style-type: none">Food supply and distributionConsumption of nutritious foodLivelihoods of farmers and food chain actorsTechnologies and innovationRole of biodiversity
30 min	Presentation of results of group sessions and definition of next steps
10 min	Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">Juan Camilo Restrepo, Deputy Minister of Rural Development - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural DevelopmentJesús Quintana, Managing Director for the Americas - Bioversity Alliance – CIAT

Annex 2: Photo of the Opening Session of the Colombian Food Systems Dialogue and COVID

