



# Walking the talk: healthy & sustainable food system through aligned, evidence-based communication & policy

FAO Brussels & EUFIC: Independent Food Systems Summit Dialogue, EU Edition  
25 February, 2021



Dialogue Outcome Report

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This independent dialogue followed the [UNFSS Principles of Engagement](#) and the [Summit Dialogue Method](#). Please find here the registered dialogue and its official report: <https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/1256/>. This outcome report will directly feed into the [Official Feedback of the Summit](#).

### Special acknowledgements:

This independent dialogue was prepared by the teams from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Brussels office and European Food Information Council (EUFIC). The primary conceptualization and coordination were led by Dr Milka Sokolović, Dr Laura Fernández, Paulo de Lima and Michelle Seck. Thanks are owed to the entire organization team of EUFIC (Iva Doric, Carlos Abundancia, and Nimali Samarasinha) and of FAO Brussels (Nils Janssens and Myrto Arvaniti). FAO Brussels and EUFIC gratefully acknowledges the plenary speakers, facilitators, note-takers and participants. Special thanks to the 4SD team for their support and guidance throughout the process.



## The Dialogue

This Independent Food Systems Summit Dialogue (FSSD) brought together key European stakeholders, set to find solutions for empowering citizens to adopt healthier and more sustainable behaviours by increasing trust and use of science, and by securing aligned, evidence-based communication & policy, making thereby a direct contribution to the work of the [Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns](#), but also to that of [Action Tracks 1 and 3](#).

The dialogue “Walking the talk: healthy and sustainable food systems through aligned communication and policy” acknowledged the complexity of challenges on our way to healthy and sustainable food systems, with their numerous distinct causes that need to be tackled differently, triggering actions that may result in trade-offs, or even in creation of new issues.

Starting from a premise that a shift towards sustainable food systems can only be achieved by enabling and empowering citizens to make healthier and more sustainable food and lifestyle choices, the dialogue was set to bring EU stakeholders around the table, to ensure a paradigm shift and break the silos in addressing the urgent need to combat all forms of malnutrition and environmental degradation.

The focus of the dialogue was to find solutions for empowering citizens to adopt healthier and more sustainable behaviours - by increasing trust in science and the use thereof, and by securing aligned, evidence-based communication & policy.

## Setting the scene

To set the scene of the event:

- the UN Food Systems Summit representatives, Dr Martin Frick and Dr David Nabarro, shared the vision of the Summit, and defined the role of the Dialogues in reaching that vision;
- the Director of the two co-hosting organisations, Dr Laura Fernandez Celemin (EUFIC) and Mr Rodrigo de Lapuerta (FAO Liaison Office Brussels), outlined the role of this specific dialogue in supporting the shift to healthier and more sustainable behaviours around food;
- the keynote session, brought different views on achieving sustainable food systems, presented by:
  - o Ms Carla Montesi, DG INTPA
  - o Dr John Bell, DG RTD
  - o Dr Isabel Carvalhais, MEP
  - o Dr Jamie Morrison, FAO
  - o Dr Joao Breda, WHO
  - o Ms Barbara Pesce-Monteiro, of UNDP and UN Brussels.

Key messages of the keynote speakers are offered in the [Annex 1](#) to this Report.

Watch the plenary here: [Walking the Talk opening plenary](#)



## Discussion topics

To untangle the complex intersection of science, communication and policy, eight topics were identified that needed a deeper exploration and a more focused action, specifically with a shift in people's behaviour in mind. They ranged from the link between **production & consumption**, over **food environment** and **food waste** to **food security**, but also covered **plant-rich diets**, **education & knowledge**, **attitudes & advocacy** and **the shift from local to global in policy terms**. A total of 100 multi-stakeholders across the sectors participated – across civil societies, (inter)governmental organizations, private sector (alliances) and academia.

The discussions' outcomes of each of the eight breakout groups are summarized in the **Annex 2**.

## The outcomes

The outcomes of the Dialogue were analysed and summarised by the Curator, Dr Milka Sokolović, and submitted to the UN Food Systems Summit Dialogues Gateway.

## Overarching Conclusions

The following **FIVE OVERARCHING CONCLUSIONS** could be identified:

1. The **complexity** of the food systems must be acknowledged:
  - by taking a **stepwise, cross-sectoral approach**, to:
    - avoid resistance that a “big bang” approach could trigger;
    - allow working in a complementary fashion
    - facilitate (re)building trust in the food systems;
  - by aligning on a **definition of sustainability**, as:
    - we must be clear on where we are heading, if we are to develop successful solutions;
    - the existing divisions could lead to further loss of trust among food systems actors.
2. **Citizens** are recognised as central to the success of food systems transformation. To secure their buy-in into healthy sustainable behaviour:
  - tailored education & communication must be ensured;
  - optimal food environment should be secured, making healthy & sustainable food choices easy also for underprivileged;
  - Citizens should be involved in the co-design of research and policy.
3. **Education** is key in achieving mind-set transformation. It should be:
  - a. relying on solid science, with health at its centre;
  - b. interdisciplinary and holistic in its nature, recognising complexity of the food systems;
  - c. ensuring a knowledge build-up across educational levels;
  - d. tailored to different target groups:
    - to general public, on healthy and sustainable food choices;
    - to farmers & food producers, on efficient management of natural resources and production systems;
    - to businesses, on their impacts and dependencies on natural capital;
  - e. blended with policy & food environment.



4. **Policy frameworks** are critical for ensuring sustainable food systems. To secure success, their features should include:
  - a. strength, ambition, transparency, science at their core;
  - b. robustness against vested interests;
  - c. comprehensiveness, convergence and coherence:
    - i. across agri, trade, health, environment, education, aid, development, and other frameworks
    - ii. at different levels, from municipal to global;
  - d. the One Health approach, critical for both people's and planet's health
5. **Trust** is paramount to ensure success of most of the recommendations proposed.

### Actions & commitments

This Dialogue resulted in several **INDIVIDUAL & JOINT COMMITMENTS**. Across different fields, the participants have committed:

1. **Across research, education & communication, to:**
  - **Conduct research to understand consumer behaviour**, taking into account the relation between food, culture and identity;
  - **Shape programmes** within their specific roles, e.g. the curricula of MSc programmes;
  - **Support national consumer organisations** in educating citizens;
  - **Carry out awareness campaigns** on food storage and the use of date-labelling;
  - **Raise awareness** among policy makers and health professionals;
  - **Educate businesses** to understand their impacts and dependencies on natural capital, to better manage risks and dependencies; to help them take specific food waste actions; to teach their employees about food waste;
2. **In best practice sharing & capacity building, to:**
  - **Learn from successful** initiatives in food sourcing, processing and reformulation;
  - **Bring cities together**
    - to learn from each other's successes & failures, to improve capacity building & **good practice sharing**.
  - **Bring policymakers together** to
    - learn from each other and harmonize policies
  - **Expand the dialogue** to non-usual actors.
3. **In the area of policy, to:**
  - **Tackle inequality**, e.g. through the Childhood Obesity Taskforce in London
  - Influence **legislation on food waste**, e.g. by addressing taxation to make food donation easier;
  - Push for adoption of **ambitious & stringent** policy tools in support of initiatives like the Nutri-Score or introduction of reformulation targets;
  - Support adopting national **science-based policy recommendations**;
  - Advocate for **food system policies & policy convergence**;
  - **Bridge data gaps** in to provide basis for smart & effective food systems policies.
4. **In food safety, food packaging, food waste, to:**



- Collect **more data** on food waste;
- **Improve packaging** and commit to circular economy
- Make surplus food available and donation easier through **digital platforms & tools**;
- Continue to act on **solutions easy to implement** and proven to work (e.g. doggy-bags).

**5. Across environmental, social and ethical dimensions, to:**

- Develop **tools to measure environmental impact** that are easy to understand, and that include externalities;
- Support projects that build consumer trust, that **re-connect people with food**, and with innovations in the food system;
- Work with local actors on **social dimension to buying food**, at first in local markets;
- Commit to **sustainable sourcing** (of ingredients), **processing & reformulation**, to the **farm to fork code of conducts** within industrial agreements.



## Annex 1: Key messages from Plenary

### **Dr Martin Frick, Deputy to the Special Envoy for the UN Food Systems Summit**

*“The Food Systems in 10 years must be equitable, inclusive, and building up natural capital instead of depleting it.”*

### **Dr David Nabarro, Senior Advisor on the Food Systems Summit dialogues**

*“We all have opportunities to shift food systems. If we understand the perspectives of other stakeholders, we are in a better position to nurture food systems that are more resilient, nourishing, inclusive and equitable.”*

### **Dr Laura Fernandez, Director General of EUFIC**

*“Engaging collectively different actors of society, as agents of change, through aligning communication from a food systems perspective, brings mutual benefits and increases our chances to mobilize society into change.”*

### **Mr Rodrigo de Lapuerta, Director of FAO Liaison Office in Brussels**

*“As solutions summit, as requested by the UN Secretary General, it can only be successful, with the support of bold, straightforward and far-ranging dialogue and with the participation of solid partners from all sectors. With all partners together, we can make a solutions summit”*

### **Ms Carla Montesi, Director for the Green Deal and Digital Agenda, DG INTPA**

*“The UNFSS is a unique opportunity to accelerate and strengthen a global commitment towards more inclusive, climate adapted and resilient food systems. With 9 years left to achieve the SDGs, we must grasp this chance and promote the transition towards sustainable livelihoods on a sustainable planet. Climate-relevant research and innovation in agriculture and food systems will be crucial to trigger a fair and green transition at the global level”*

### **Dr John Bell, Director Healthy Planet, DG RTD**

*“Europe is in key position to show leadership and engage in science diplomacy to convene diverse actors of the food system to jointly tackle systemic issues, this is the aim of our new IPFSS High Level Expert Group.”*

### **Dr Isabel Carvalhais, MEP and Member of European Parliamentary Alliance against Hunger and Malnutrition**

*“Education, science, innovation and environmental action, will have to be at the core of policy choices leading to a resilient, sustainable and fair Food System.”*

### **Dr Jamie Morrison, Director of FAO’s Food Systems and Food Safety Division and Lead on Knowledge and Policy for the Food Systems Summit Secretariat**

*“Many stakeholders have been making changes to improve the sustainability of food systems, but too often their initiatives have been implemented independently of one another, limiting their effectiveness; We urgently need to strengthen coordinated - It means addressing trade-offs and making difficult choices, negotiate amongst different communities’ actors with quite different perspectives about what sustainable food systems are.”*

### **Dr Joao Breda, Special Adviser at WHO Regional Office for Europe**

*“Following science and ensuring policy coherence with nutrition and health must be at the centre for a decisive food systems transformation”*

### **Ms Barbara Pesce-Monteiro, Director of UN Development Program in Brussels, UN Secretary-General's Representative to the EU**

*“To achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, we must make our food systems environmentally, socially and economically sustainable – and to that aim build on the strategic partnership between UN agencies, the European Union and Partner Countries. This will be fundamental for the implementation of the EU Green Deal.”*



## Annex 2: Summaries per discussion group

The following eight themes were explored in the breakout rooms, each presented as a statement, followed by the **state of affairs** as assessed by the participants, and **recommendations** as developed by the discussion groups.

### PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION & IN BETWEEN: THE INCREASING DEMAND FOR HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOODS WILL SECURE THE INCREASINGLY SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION.

*How to exploit the demand? Can we transition from short(er) chains to tight(er) interactions?*

Facilitator: Andreas Thurner (EESC), Note-taker: Claudio Costantino (FAO)

#### The state of affairs:

- With the topic being debated among scientists, and the overwhelming and often contradicting information in the digital sphere, it is of no surprise that citizens can hardly grasp the concept of healthy and sustainable foods. Even if well understood, healthy and sustainable choices are not necessarily the easiest ones.
- Equally unsurprisingly, citizens have little trust in novel production methods, even when they are sustainable and safe.
- People’s decision-making around food does not happen in a vacuum, it is influenced and shaped by the social and cultural norms and policy environment.

#### The below calls for actions were made, aimed at:

- helping people navigate the food environment,
- rebuilding trust in the food systems,
- increasing demand for sustainably produced food products.
- **To governments / policy makers:**
  - to create enabling environments for sustainable production;
  - to regulate other aspects of the food system, incl. the labelling and marketing of food products;
  - to harmonise food labelling at international level;
  - to ensure policy coherence: producers should be able to rely on a solid and coherent framework, resilient to e.g. loose trade rules that challenge the level playing field;
  - to allow adequate time to adjust to new rules, as well as support access to modern technologies;
  - to secure that the rules of public food procurements follow the rules of both healthy and sustainable nutrition.
- **To food producers** (acknowledging that proposed actions are not equally accessible nor meaningful to producers in the Global North and South):
  - to react to the consumers’ and public health demand for more sustainable and healthy food;
  - to responsibly consider marketing and labelling as elements that influence consumer choices;
  - to work together with policy makers to create stimulating food environment, which will make healthy and sustainable choices easy choices;
  - wherever possible, to use sensible production methods and to (keep) implementing



innovative technologies that allow more sustainable production.

**EDUCATION & KNOWLEDGE - FROM SCIENCE, OVER CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NORMS, TO PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE - WILL UNDERPIN HEALTHY SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES.**

*How will connecting the knowledge dots get us there?*

Facilitator: Peter Defranceschi (ICLEI), Note-taker: Darya Alekseeva (FAO)

**The state of affairs:**

- With malnutrition in all its forms now recognised as the key factor behind global public health challenges, people are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of nutrition for their health, but also of the impact that our food production, consumption and disposal make on the health of the planet.
- Any change in nutrition habits and pattern is difficult, but it can start from education, and get supported by social, cultural, economic, policy and other aspects of the environment. This all, acknowledging that there is a need for more evidence on sustainable diets.
- Knowledge about food systems must come from many different fields to enable us to resolve the issues. In order to act across different sectors of the society, we need to start acting early, learning how to collaborate, and how to think out of the box.
- Education is a field of huge possibility and flexibility, crucial for the food systems transformation, but in order to demonstrate its full potential it must be made more resilient, fit for both challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**To make a difference, the following actions were suggested:**

- **Switch to sustainable education systems**, which includes moving away from subject-oriented learning to inquiry-based learning (problem- & project-oriented studying), to interdisciplinary, interactive, blended learning.
- **Focus on interdisciplinary education across educational levels**, including that on healthy sustainable lifestyles at primary & secondary schools, and on food systems at secondary schools and higher level education.
- **Ensure holistic, aligned communication on sustainable food systems**, by:
  - educating the public about the versatile aspects of the food systems,
  - breaking the communication silos,
  - avoiding generalisation and tailoring the messages and formats to specific audiences,
  - framing healthy sustainable diets around culture, social norms, and values,
  - integrating practical aspects that people can relate to and directly benefit from (e.g. cooking classes, weekly menu planning, sustainable grocery lists, food waste reducing practices).
- **Hold multi-stakeholder dialogues to facilitate exchange between science, policy & “life”**, by:
  - carefully putting the science at the heart;
  - translating, but not banalizing, scientific messages into policy and broader communication;
  - addressing systemic barriers to translation and implementation of science.
- **Use the momentum, employ innovation & creativity, reconnect people with their food!**
  - let the kids know how we grow food, what happens in the field, what is healthy,



fresh, local, seasonal; what foods we import; how do we ensure versatile, balanced diets; organise school gardens and cooking classes;

- encourage talking about food, promote bidirectional intergenerational learning; encourage people to cook for each other, to shop for food together, to share excess food within community, to jointly prevent food waste; organise communal gardens and cooking classes;
- visually capture the sustainability concept– how is that for a food labelling challenge?

## SECURITY AMIDST ABUNDANCE: SPILLING OVER WILL SPILL OVER FROM AFFLUENT TO LESS FORTUNATE.

*What are the missing links in food security? How to ensure decent livelihoods for all?*

Facilitator: Barbara Gallani (EFSA), Note-taker: Nina McGrath (EUFIC)

### Context of the discussion:

- Participants agreed on the high complexity of the topic. Root causes are many, and all need to be addressed in a (semi)coordinated way, recognising that different parts of the system need to be addressed differently, and that actions may result in trade-offs.
- The discussion touched upon both local and global aspects, as well as the internal and external impact of EU policies and actions.
- The One Health approach was assessed as critical, as food system transformation is about both people's and planet's health.

### Recommendations for action:

- **Reduce food waste:**
  - Obtain sufficient data on where food is wasted along the supply chain, to develop tailored system solutions for reducing it at the source;
  - Develop approaches to collect and redistribute excess food in a fair way to vulnerable groups ("revalue" the waste);
  - Educate people on how to use and cook with fresh foods and reduce waste at home.
- **Empower farmers and food producers:**
  - Invest in farmers and local food supply systems (e.g. in providing farming communities with the necessary infrastructure, such as good quality broadband in rural areas, or use public procurement to support farmers transitioning to more sustainable practices);
  - Educate farmers and food producers on efficient management of natural resources/production systems and on setting prices to improve their negotiating power in the food chain;
  - Consider the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and others working in rural areas.
- **Utilise technology:**
  - Maximise the use of available solutions and be on the forefront of implementation of new technologies (e.g use block chain technologies for ensuring food chain transparency and reducing waste).
- **Ensure coherent EU policies** (internal and external):
  - Conduct a transparent review of agriculture-based EU policies that could undermine food



- security and healthy nutrition, and identify opportunities to encourage sustainable agriculture in the EU;
- Ensure coherence between EU aid policies and national policies developed by the aid-receiving nation;
- Consider sustainability in the context of trade agreements.
- **Create a better definition/vision of the sustainable food system** that we aspire to achieve
  - knowing where we are going will help develop solutions for transforming the food system.
- **Foster dialogue and exchange**, improve representation of the key food chain actors
  - Due to the complexity of the challenge, and to address the needs of different people and environments, we need to ensure all stakeholders are represented in defining solutions. Civil society groups and farmers are often left underrepresented.
- **Propose mandatory EU food labelling** that quickly communicates to consumer's accurate information on nutrition and sustainability indicators.

**FOOD WASTE: EDUCATING FOOD SYSTEM ACTORS WILL TURN WASTE REDUCING BEHAVIOUR INTO A SOCIAL NORM.**

*How to leverage education, communication & policy to ensure this shift?*

Facilitator: Thin Lei Win (Thin Ink) Note-taker: Raphael van Ypersele (FAO)

**The state of affairs:**

- Food waste and loss happen at **all stages of the food value chain, from pre-harvest food loss, over the impact of packaging and transport, all the way to food waste in retail and in households.**
- **To devise efficient interventions to reduce food waste at critical points in the cycle (which admittedly significantly differ between Global North & South), a data driven approach should be taken.**
- **At the same time, a mind-set shift is required from the one in which we must produce more food to feed the world, to the one in where we must produce foods that are more nutritious and more sustainable, waste much less, and shift towards a plant-rich diet.**

**To make a difference, the following recommendations were proposed:**

- **Ensure data driven approach:**
  - conduct research into food waste and losses at different community levels to focus interventions on where the problem is most critical, and to tailor them to local specificities;
  - test the effectiveness of interventions, then promote and scale-up the most effective ones;
  - collect data for food aid necessity - at (inter)national, but also local and neighbourhood level - to understand where the excesses can spill over to where there is a need.
- **Adapt the regulation framework around food waste, to:**
  - send the right incentives to all food chain actors, from farmers to consumers;



- prioritize food donation for human consumption (over that for animal feed);
  - facilitate food donation through taxation (using e.g. tax breaks);
  - make the best use of expiration date;
  - adjust the price of food to the food systems reality (cheap food is expensive for public health, and easier to waste), while considering the needs of underprivileged.
- **Work on a local level**
    - municipalities are the ones to deal with packaging and food waste disposal;
    - they can effectively promote local markets and protect smallholder farmers;
    - they can effectively exchange best practices and build on each other's knowledge.
  - **Make use of innovation & technology**
    - develop the economic potential of food waste through innovation (e.g. restaurants making beer from old bread);
    - increase and facilitate access to refrigeration and freezing in developing countries;
    - spill over the knowledge and best practices.

**ATTITUDES & ADVOCACY: CITIZENS AS CHANGE AGENTS WILL BUILD A BRIDGE TO SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR AROUND FOOD.**

*What will secure construction of solid, sustainable cultural bridges?*

Facilitator: Carl Lachat (Gent University) Note-taker: Bettina Schelkle (EUFIC)

**The discussion context:**

Instead of the Bing Bang, the next big thing is a lot of small things that work in a complementary fashion and are focused on education; food availability, pricing and convenience; economic and financial levers and incentives; rebuilding trust in the food system; and policy.

**Actions in the following focus areas were identified as crucial:**

**Education**

- **Start early** with food, nutrition, sustainability and food system education
- **Make it practical** and consider cultural context;
- **Walk the talk:** match the classroom 'talk' with food served in school canteens.
- **Be mindful of transition** into adulthood, when teenagers develop their own agency and execute choice
- **Change the narratives** on food choices to support the adoption, focus on practical and easy things to engage and empower.

**Availability, pricing and convenience**

- **Impact the choices**
  - Consumers' choices are influenced by marketing, pricing and accessibility; both policy and industry practices must strive to influence them towards healthier and more sustainable;
  - Nudges should be used in creating healthier food choices
  - the economic means should be ensured to help consumers break through their choice

patterns and make them more sustainable.

- **Encourage behaviour change**
  - by making it feasible and practical
- **Use pricing is a driver of food choices**
  - particularly for people from challenging socio-economic backgrounds: strike the balance right to interest them in healthier diets, without neglecting the economic hurdles they face.
- **Ride on the pandemic wave**
  - Seize the momentum and build on the fact that during COVID-19 pandemic people started cooking again; encourage more of the same
  - others have reconnected to local food supply chains - make sure to keep them connected.

#### **Economic and financial levers and incentives**

- **to consumers:** make the VAT lower for fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains;
- **to farmers:**
  - incentivize small-holder farmers to food system transformation by ensuring that they have a sufficient maneuvering space to take risk and change the way they operate (currently, they have a small profit margin (1-2%), so making changes requires taking relatively large risks compared to other food system players);
- **EU CAP:** financial incentives should be available to drive radical change, e.g. to mitigate risks for stakeholders and enable risk interventions; there is plenty of money available, but not distributed such to support production focused on sustainability and healthfulness;
- **Spark interest in alternative proteins**, incl. legumes, as they can contribute to resilience and EU self-sufficiency; legumes grown in the EU are not price competitive and would lead to an ultimate loss for the farmer; in a fair food system, growing food should allow one to be self-sufficient and should not require subsidies.

#### **Rebuilding trust in food systems**

- **Involve citizens in innovation processes** from early on, to secure a buy-in and get ownership of the process;
- **Communicate better** by informing consumers but also food handlers with clear guidelines (e.g. Nutri-Score)
- **Make use of professionals** in the food systems, incl. nutritionists, to get information across clearly, and explain why differing opinions on certain points may exist.

#### **Policy**

- Support the development and adoption of **strong, integrated and ambitious policies:** urban food policy councils, or actions at regional and territorial level, up to European level;
- **Education** (in general) on healthier lifestyle has not led to an impact on number of people with overweight and obesity: policy regulation is needed.



**FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL IN SEVEN-LEAGUES POLICY BOOTS: THE EU FARM TO FORK POLICY FRAMEWORK WILL IMPACT BEYOND EUROPEAN BORDERS. Can we leverage the F2F strategy globally? How to ensure the impact?**

Facilitator: Isolina Boto (COLEACP), Note-taker: Paulo de Lima (FAO)

**The discussion context:**

- **The leading role of the EU was recognized and Farm to Fork (F2F) considered a great initiative.** While there is a need to embrace it globally, it first has to be consolidated at EU level. It was suggested to establish a European Food Policy Council and include stakeholders.
- **The sustainability of food systems is a global issue,** facing diverse challenges, so the response must be global. The attention to the external dimension of the F2F is especially important, as Europe's agricultural and food system impacts outside Europe.
- **An integrated approach should be embraced** with third and developing countries, and align the trade, development policies and decisions in standard setting organizations. Developing countries need support to transition towards sustainable economies due to multiple negative impacts (COVID-19, climate change, non-communicable diseases, food insecurity), all the while requiring a change in diets and a reduction of food waste.

**To make a difference, the following recommendations were proposed:**

- **Promoting research and innovation and coalition building**
  - Food research and innovation are key for making informed decisions, but also for monitoring success.
  - The value of information sharing, communities of practice, coalition building on food systems transition was recognized. Dialogue is key to conciliate divergent views, but some actions should not be based on voluntary actions but need to be enforced.
- **Promoting increased transparency along the food chain: a shared responsibility**
  - Food chain actors must **support** healthy and sustainable diets and transform their production and operation methods. This requires human and financial investments and therefore should also bring economic returns.
  - Increased **fairness and equity along the chain** is required to succeed in transitioning towards sustainable food systems.
  - A **fair and transparent policy** (open communication, fair prices, risk sharing) promoting more transparency along supply chains and better distribution of value is needed.
  - Capacity development is key, especially for farmers groups and MSMEs, providing support to operators in meeting required economic, social and environmental standards.
- **Providing incentives towards sustainable food systems**
  - **Investments & incentives by public and private sector are needed:** encouraging responsible food supply and consumption with neutral or positive environmental impact (tax incentives, procurement), responsible businesses, labelling, and work on legislative measures.
  - **Consumers** need to be represented and have a stronger voice in the food system. They also must understand that the price of food is generally low, and does not include externalities.



- The farmers, fishers and other operators in the food chain who have already undergone the transition to sustainable practices, be in local or global markets, should be rewarded as to encourage the transition for the others, and create additional opportunities for their businesses.
- **Reconciling local and global food systems**
  - **Tradeoffs between local and global food systems** need to be reached. There is no single solution in complex and interdependent systems.
  - To move towards food systems approach, managing change, breaking silos, and leveraging resources and measuring impact will be critical.

**PLANT-BASED: FROM PLANT-RICH TO A RICH-PLANET, THE DEVIL IS IN THE GRAINS, FRUITS, VEGGIES & NUTS.** *How to leverage communication & policy to ensure a shift to plant-rich diets as socially & culturally established?*

Facilitator: Wendy van Lippenvelde (Gent University) Note-taker: Joanna Kaniewska (EUFIC),

**General overview:**

- Changing people's eating practices and patterns takes time, and transition to the plant-rich diet will require a gradual rather than radical shift, combined emphasis on health & sustainability, and acknowledged cultural differences.
- To ensure impact, a holistic approach is necessary to gather insights from different angles (e.g. health, environment, agriculture, tourism, education) and to bring together different perspectives towards a common goal.
- On the road to plant-rich, there are both explicit and implicit decisions and actions for all stakeholders. We need to focus on both these levels in a concerted way.

**To make a difference, the following actions were suggested:**

- **Actions directed at consumers:**
  - **School food policies:** it is important to ensure that fresh and healthy foods are affordable and accessible, replacing highly processed and meat-based products.
  - **Education:** consumers must be equipped with knowledge on how to prepare healthy plant-based foods.
  - **Accessibility:** plant-based diets need to be accessible for the lower income families, which might entail a different, targeted approach, counteracting negative influences, such as unhealthy marketing/food environments).
  - **Nudging towards balanced diets:**
    - plant-based protein should be progressively incorporated into the diet, instilling the notion of consuming less meat but of higher quality, and more plant-based products;
    - healthy/ plant-based foods need to taste as good as options that are less healthy or less sustainably produced.



- **Actions directed at supply chain:**
  - **Engage private sector:** to increase the uptake of plant-based foods by consumers, incentivise food brands to advertise healthy and sustainable products.
  - **Measure the environmental impact:** encourage manufacturers and retailers to measure the environmental impact of food they are selling.
  - **Pay attention to the animal and livestock sectors.** With debates ongoing in European countries about pricing and taxation, animal welfare schemes could ensure that animal products are of higher quality and lower environmental impact.
  - **Reverse the production focus** from of animal- to plant-based protein.
  - **Logistical drivers** should be considered in providing plant-based foods into different regions/countries.
  
- **Actions directed at the policy makers:**
  - **Use policy tools to encourage** plant-rich diets
    - **Public procurement:** through campaigns promoting plant-rich diets
    - **Labelling:** use nutrition labelling to highlight the health benefits of plant-based products, and sustainability labelling such as carbon labels to highlight the environmental benefits.
    - **Fiscal measures:** level up the prices for plant-based products with meat products, for example for milk and milk alternatives.
  - **Use healthy lifestyle interventions** as a part of health system to encourage a shift to plant-based diets, as the main dietary contribution to healthy nutrition.
  - **Food environment:** the food offer should be regulated, starting with the cities where interest is high to change to healthier and more sustainable food offer.

## FOOD ENVIRONMENT: MAINSTREAMING HEALTH AND FOOD IN ALL POLICY WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

*How will policy make a difference to people's food choices? What policy?*

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### The discussion context:

Policies can make a difference in establishing food environments supportive of sustainable healthy diets, but they need to be well designed, holistic, combining mandatory and voluntary measures.

### Various critical points emerged, as summarised below:

**Mind-set change** is key for changing the food system, acknowledging its complexity. There is no simple solution: a well aligned set of solutions is required, allowing for diverse positions, opening up, and finding a common ground.

**Education and environment:** education and food environment should be considered together and not as 'false dichotomy'. Education is important to give people the skills to navigate the food environment, and food environment needs to make the healthy and sustainable choices the easy ones.

**One-health policy:** putting health at the centre, underpinning all policies, and educating people



on the link between sustainability and health is important.

**Holistic approach:** the environment and people's behaviour should be targeted simultaneously, through a mix of complementary mandatory and voluntary interventions, while considering socioeconomic and health aspects, and having in mind the 'triple wins' of sustainability - health, planet and economy.

**Lived experience:** exploring how policies affect people's lives, in the 'lived experience' of food environments, provides key information on why people behave the way they do.

**Pricing:**

- the environmental costs are insufficiently reflected in food prices;
- food price should ensure that the producer gets a fair value;
- poverty is not to be overlooked, however, as higher prices might increase inequity, as people of a low socioeconomic status cannot necessarily afford choices better for health and planet.

**Demand vs. supply:** to achieve change, comprehensive and integrated strategy is needed including the supply side. Expecting change through consumer demand, having consumer 'pay the price' is both difficult and unfair.

**Labelling:** although a much-researched topic, combining nutrition labelling with other types of labelling (e.g. on sustainability) remains complex. Labelling policies are key to support influencing people in making healthy choices, but there is a need for EU-wide legislation and harmonisation of national labelling systems

**Changing behaviour:** More research is needed to understand the choices people make, and how their behaviour can be influenced. A prerequisite to stimulate any change is to make alternative choices accessible and palatable. Targeting young people and children will be inductive of changes in the next generation.

**Healthiness of alternative foods:** plant-based alternatives can contain a lot of salt, fats and refined carbohydrates, which is to be kept in mind.

**Digital food environment:** the digital food environment is largely hidden, and includes marketing of unhealthy foods (to children), but also unhealthy meals that get ordered online.

**More data:** absence of data is key hurdle, and the integration of key performance indicators for policies is key. Currently there is insufficient to assess the effect of interventions and to ensure they are on the right track.

**Gap between research outputs and desired outcomes:** the impact of interventions on health and sustainability happens in long-term and impact indicators are often proxys. Also, it is difficult to link outcomes to specific interventions.