



May 2021

Member State Dialogues Synthesis

REPORT 1



UNITED NATIONS
FOOD SYSTEMS
SUMMIT 2021

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This Synthesis describes the progress of the United Nations Member State Food Systems Summit Dialogues, which are taking place in preparation for the UN Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit in September 2021, hereafter simply referred to as the Summit. The Summit has been convened in recognition of the significance and complexity of food systems around the world and offers an opportunity to identify pathways towards sustainable national food systems contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Alongside a wide range of other preparatory work for the Summit, Member States were invited to initiate a series of Dialogues designed to bring together an extensive range of stakeholders and actors in their national food systems in order to address the complex and often contentious issues faced by governments in promoting a sustainable food system.

Member States have responded with enthusiasm to the invitation. The important first step is the appointment of a Convenor to guide the national process. This obliges a Member State to reflect on the significance of the national food system and to consider carefully how best to engage with all the necessary players in order to achieve significant change and improvement. Consequently, this process has taken longer in some Member States than others, and in itself, this effort is contributing to a more inclusive and purposeful Dialogue programme. Nomination of Convenors has also been hindered by other pressures, notably the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has served to highlight multiple fragilities in food systems globally. It has drawn attention to the vulnerability of nations whose food security depends on a predictable supply of imports. When population movements are suddenly restricted, the capacity of food systems to respond to a rapid increase in numbers of people who need food is put to the test, and the importance of open trade for enabling those who need food urgently to be able to access it is paramount. Against this backdrop, Convenors have shown considerable resilience and ingenuity in ensuring that Dialogues are diverse, inclusive, and participatory.

This synthesis is based on data available on 13 April 2021, at which point 98 Member State Convenors had been nominated, 20 of them had announced 73 Food Systems Summit Dialogues, and 11 Convenors had reported on 35 national Dialogues held (*see Figure 0*). Outcomes of the Food Systems Summit Dialogues are reported by the Convenors using a standardised Official Feedback Form. Once published by the Convenors, the feedback forms are publicly available on the Gateway website of the Dialogues (www.summitdialogues.org).

This Synthesis draws on two principal sources:

- **35 feedback forms** completed and published by 11 Member State Convenors, including: Bangladesh; Finland; Guatemala; Honduras; Kuwait; Nigeria; Sweden; Switzerland; the United States of America; Cambodia (which published 3 feedback forms); and Japan (which published 23 feedback forms)¹. Material from this source is identified as *Emerging Themes* and *Examples*.
- **Extensive knowledge of the Dialogues process** acquired by the Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSD) support team, who are working closely with Convenors in all Member States. Material from this source is identified as *Comment*.

¹ See Annex for the list of the 35 dialogues organised by 11 Convenors

Participant Analysis

A series of tables illustrate participant data from the 35 published feedback forms. There is reasonably diverse participation in Dialogues in terms of age and gender and an indication that Dialogues are engaging a wide selection of actors and stakeholders in national food systems.

The nature and levels of participation will continue to be monitored as the Dialogues process evolves.

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 35 FEEDBACK FORMS | Bangladesh (1) | Cambodia (3) |
| Finland (1) | Guatemala (1) | Honduras (1) |
| Japan (23) | Kuwait (1) | Nigeria (1) |
| Sweden (1) | Switzerland (1) | United States of America (1) |

Figure 0 – the 11 Member State Convenors

Synthesis of Member State Engagement

This section of the Synthesis summarises emerging themes from the 35 feedback forms and offers a commentary based on wider contacts with all Convenors. The findings must be seen as provisional at this stage as the process of Dialogues continues to gather momentum.

- **Extent of national government engagement**

Key themes from the feedback forms are the recognition that food systems are complex and consequently, national policies tend to be fragmented and uncoordinated. Action is needed to achieve coherence and consistency. Contact with the wider group of Convenors confirms this sense and indicates an acknowledgement that food is not just the responsibility of the Agriculture or Rural Affairs Ministry.

- **The degree to which diverse stakeholders are involved**

The feedback forms generally indicate a very diverse participation across the various stakeholder groups who have interest in food systems. There is clear evidence that Member States are planning to continue to widen and deepen participation through programmes of sub-national, sectoral, and thematic Dialogues. Discussions with other Convenors are also focusing on ways to encourage and enable broad participation, for example where technology solutions are more challenging.

- **Pathways to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030**

Feedback forms acknowledge the importance of developing pathways to sustainable food systems. However, the concept of food systems is relatively new and will take time to become a part of everyday thought. Feedback forms comment that there is a lack of relevant knowledge and data to support a systemic approach in many cases. Discussions with the wider group of Convenors echo the feedback forms. There is evident ambition that the process of Dialogue will enrich their knowledge and appreciation of the wider food system.

- **The breadth and depth with which options are explored**

The feedback forms show that the process is beginning to stimulate game-changing options to transform national food systems. The systemic approach facilitates recognition of relationships and tensions which require attention. The FSSD team is also noticing the emergence of inter-governmental Dialogues in geographical sub-regions where Member States share challenges such as climate vulnerabilities.

- **The emergence of convergence, consolidation, and commitment**

It is early in the process for member states to identify specific outcomes. However,

feedback forms demonstrate clear plans and intentions to deliver outputs for the Summit. At the same time, discussions with other Convenors suggest that, whilst they see the Summit as an important focus for

thinking and action in the near term, they also envisage that the FSSD process will develop and maintain momentum well beyond the Summit itself.

Synthesis by Summit Objective

The Food Systems Summit has 5 objectives:

1. Access to safe and nutritious food for all
2. Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
3. Boost nature positive production
4. Advance equitable livelihoods
5. Build resilience to vulnerabilities and stress

These objectives are being addressed through five corresponding **Action Tracks**, which consist of working groups dedicated to considering and validating options for game-changing propositions for action. These propositions require action through a number of “**Levers of Change**”² and are for consideration by Member States as elements in their national pathways to sustainable food systems.

The feedback forms show that Member State Convenors are following different approaches to the Summit objectives at this stage. While some have addressed each objective specifically, others have started with a more holistic method. It is clear from feedback forms that all national Convenors intend to draw out conclusions for all objectives as their Dialogue process continues.

Dialogue feedback forms refer to Levers of Change primarily as aspirations at this stage. Some already offer examples of how Levers, such as finance and innovation, will be required to develop pathways to sustainability.

The feedback forms also show that Member State Dialogues are identifying a range of cross-cutting issues. These include in particular:

- The presence of **inequalities** in most aspects of food systems.

- The pervasive issue of **environmental degradation** caused by food systems.
- The need for comprehensive **disaggregated information** across all elements of food systems.

Discussions with Convenors confirmed that Member States are considering a range of other cross-cutting issues as part of national dialogues. These include: trade; One Health; water use; and emerging from food crises. These will be further explored as the Dialogues proceed.

At this stage, the feedback forms offer some initial insights in relation to individual Summit objectives.

- **Access to safe and nutritious food for all**
Prevalent themes here include a shift from food quantity to food quality; the development of options for healthier diets, including in relation to concerns around sustainability; better information on nutrition; and enabling vulnerable groups to access nutritious food.
- **Shift to sustainable consumption patterns**
Key themes here include the need for accurate information on healthy options for consumers, and perceptions that healthy diets are expensive.
- **Boost nature positive production**
There is general acknowledgement of the impacts of food production but also a recognition that access to food may outweigh environmental considerations on occasion. Issues around perceived additional costs of producing more

² A lever of change can be understood as an area of work that has the potential to deliver wide-ranging positive change beyond its immediate focus. With regards to the Food Systems Summit, four ‘Levers of Change’ have been

identified: human rights, innovation, finance, and gender equality and women’s empowerment (<https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/levers-of-change>).

nutritious food are also highlighted.

- **Advance equitable livelihoods**

Themes include the challenges faced by smallholder farmers in accessing markets, for example, through storage and transport infrastructure, and the possible tensions between livelihoods and environmental consequences.

- **Build resilience to vulnerabilities and stress**

Feedback forms refer to the prevailing threats posed by weather and disease, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These present particular challenges for poorer consumers, marginalised groups, and smaller scale producers.

Emerging Observations from the Member States Dialogue Process

Contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: It is evident that sustained effort and sharing of practical experience of national and sub-national multi-stakeholder dialogues will be important to contribute to widespread appreciation of the food system attributes that are needed for achieving the 17 SDGs.

Broad Multi-stakeholder engagement: Multiple stakeholders are connecting through structured dialogues: Convenors consistently reflect on the importance and value of extending participation, particularly to vulnerable and under-represented groups. A growing number of Member State Convenors encourage the organization of Independent Dialogues in their country to contribute to the extensive exploration of options at sub-national levels.

Identification of key decisions aligned to Summit objectives: Feedback forms to date and discussions with Convenors reveal a variety of approaches to frame the national dialogues in line with the Summit objectives. Some Member States are taking a broad initial focus, others an analysis linked to one or more of the Action Tracks. This clearly reflects national circumstances and preferences. The underlying message is that national dialogues start from the Summit objectives and the framing of the Action Tracks as Convenors plan

and conduct Dialogues. Member State Convenors also focus on the Levers of Change which feature prominently in the approach to changes in food systems. A focus on the right to food, the re-allocation of finance, engagement of women and youth, and dissemination of innovations are already starting to emerge through the national dialogues processes.

Patterns across countries: Emerging patterns at the national level include the challenge of moving from the quantity of food produced towards an emphasis on quality; and tensions which may exist between production for domestic consumption and production for export. Between countries, patterns are also emerging about issues such as access to water and the openness of trade.

Contribution to shifting food systems: An extensive range of processes are in train as part of the preparations for the Summit, drawing on the experience of a wide range of stakeholders at international and national levels. It is anticipated that the connections between national governments, the Scientific Group³, Action Tracks, and Champions Network⁴ will create the conditions for shifts in food systems so they contribute optimally to the SDGs. Member States are increasingly articulating their positions through the dialogue process in an effort to contribute to a productive

³ The Scientific Group is an independent group of leading researchers and scientists from around the world. Its members are responsible for ensuring the robustness, breadth and independence of the science that underpins the Summit and its outcomes (more information here: <https://sc-fss2021.org/>).

⁴ The Champions Network mobilizes a diverse range of people in every region of the world to call for fundamental transformation of the world's food systems (more information here: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/champions-network>).

Summit which leads to significant food system shifts world-wide. At the same time, local stakeholders are enabled to establish and advance unusual connections that will

transform local food systems. These kinds of unusual, sometimes unprecedented networks are already developing.

Conclusion and Looking Forward

This synthesis summarises progress on the programme of Member State Dialogues now being undertaken in preparation for the Food Systems Summit in September. The process has already afforded Member States the opportunity, sometimes for the first time, to consider their national food systems in all their complexity. This is a benefit which will be of continuing value through and beyond the Summit.

For the purposes of the Summit itself, the Dialogues will enable Member States:

- to continue to widen and deepen the **engagement of stakeholders** in the national food system.
- to pursue the exploration of **options which will transform food systems** for the benefit of consumers and producers.
- to bring forward game-changing actions and **commitments which will deliver pathways** to sustainable, nutritious food systems for the future.

1 Introduction

1.1 The National Food Systems Summit Dialogue Process

- 1.1.1 Food systems are complex. They have multiple interdependent processes which create enormous webs of inter-connected activity. Food systems directly support the livelihoods of over 1 billion people worldwide. Despite there being more food available to the world than ever before, more than half of all deaths are food-related. Enabling food systems to evolve so that they provide affordable, safe, and nutritious food for all in ways that are good for both people and planet is not straight forward. There are multiple perspectives, sometimes competing or in tension, sometimes in alignment. The UN Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit offers an opportunity for the identification of pathways towards sustainable national and global food systems through hearing, acknowledging, and engaging with a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints.
- 1.1.2 As part of the preparations for the Summit, each Member State of the United Nations has been invited by the UN Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) to engage in national Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSDs) guided by the Summit's Principles of Engagement⁵. The FSSDs help multiple stakeholders in each country to shape the way food systems will work for the future. The Dialogues bring together a diverse and inclusive range of stakeholders who are prepared to explore deeply the difficult and sometimes intransigent issues that governments face when deciding how best to shape their food systems. Through a progression of national dialogues, the emerging ideas are explored, those that need action are identified, and results are consolidated into a pathway towards sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030.
- 1.1.3 Member States all over the world are responding to the DSG's invitation with enthusiasm. Their first step is for the government to nominate a national dialogue Convenor who has a responsibility to develop a national program of dialogues, announce these on the Dialogues' [Gateway](http://www.summitdialogues.org) (www.summitdialogues.org), and publish the Official Feedback Form on behalf of the Member State's Government.

⁵ The [Food Systems Summit is guided by seven principles of engagement](#) : Act with urgency, Commit to the Summit, Be respectful, Recognise complexity, Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity, Complement the work of others, Build trust.

1.3 Nomination of Member State Convenors

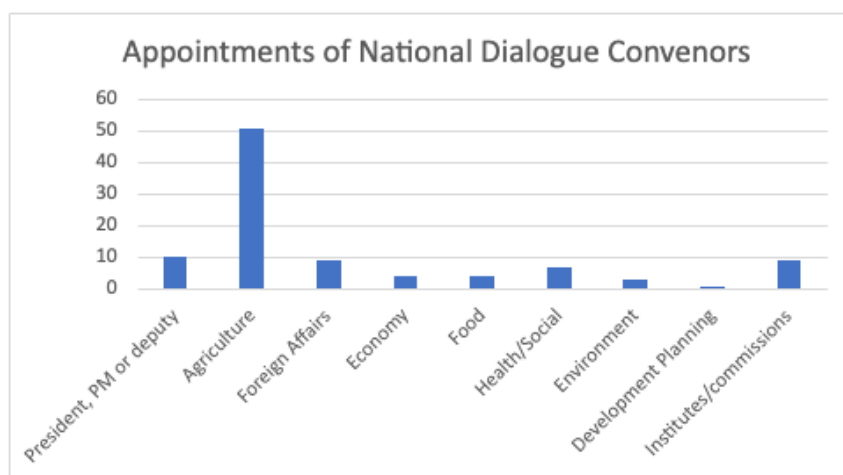


Figure 1 - Appointments of National Dialogue Convenors

1.3.1 The ways in which national dialogues are initiated varies from country to country but the general pattern is as follows:

- I. **The DSG sent a letter on November 3, 2020 to each Member State** inviting the nomination of a National Dialogues Convenor to lead the process at the national level. The letter was sent to the missions in New York and then to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the capital city.
- II. Once the letter was received, an internal **discussion takes place within governments** about how best to address the nomination process before a nomination has been made.
- III. In the countries with UN presence, **the UN Resident Coordinator and Country Team have been engaged** and helpful in assisting this process.

1.3.2 As of 13 April 2021, 98 Member States worldwide committed to participation in the Food Systems Summit Dialogue Process through the nomination of a national dialogue Convenor by their government. This is an encouraging response. The FSSD team is building relationships with Convenors and their support teams through individual briefings, strategic orientation sessions,

and support around specific questions.

1.3.3 Dialogue Convenors have been appointed from the ministries or organisations as shown in figure 1.

Please note, different governments organise their ministries according to their specific situation, so Convenors have been accounted for in the description of a ministry that best fits their position.

Just over half the national Convenors are from the Ministry of Agriculture or equivalent.

Next most numerous are Convenors from the Office of the President or Prime Minister, one of whom is the First Lady of that Republic.

National institutes and commissions, usually for food, welfare, or planning, also provide a number of Convenors.

Some Member States have appointed two Convenors. These may bring ownership from two different ministries or provide a balance between political and technical leadership.

1.3.4 The decision by a government to identify and then nominate a Convenor is a critical moment in the preparation of the Member State Dialogues. It prompts reflection as to how national food systems are composed and enabled to function. This means being prepared to explore the ways in which the food

system links to people's livelihoods, as well as agriculture, livestock and fisheries, public health and well-being, trade practices, the economy, ecosystem services, and more. The discussions and reflections in choosing

this nomination are a valuable part of developing the pathway forwards. Some governments are taking time to ensure these nominations are formally agreed and adequately resourced.

1.4 Support for Convenors

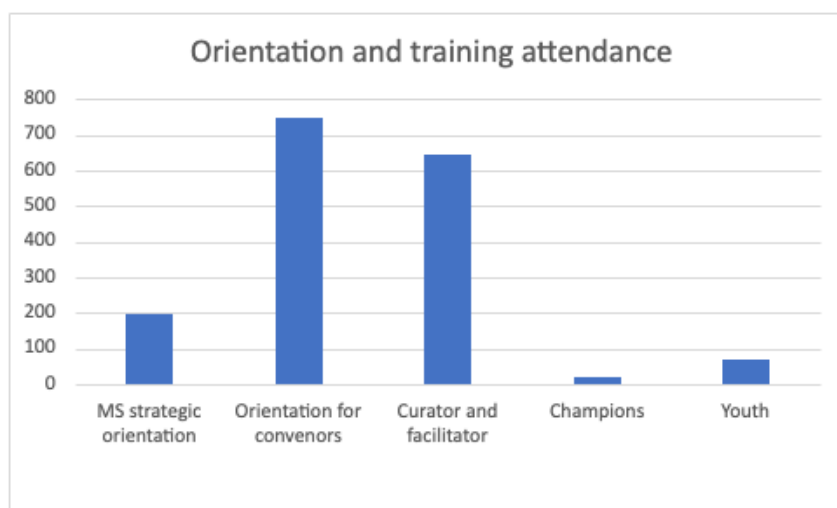


Figure 2: FSSD Orientation and training attendance

1.4.1 The groups supporting the Convenors of Member State Dialogues are made up of key figures from within government, as well as from the UN system and from development partners wherever they are present. The logistical challenge of running a programme of national dialogues means that the appointment of a Convenor implies the mobilisation of intention and resources on a considerable scale.

1.4.2 Working with their support groups, national dialogue Convenors initiate preparations across different sectors of the government and then progressively widen the circle to involve an increasingly diverse group of food systems stakeholders. Over time there is increasing interest in the dialogues from within different parts of government as well as among stakeholders: some governments initiate public communications about the dialogues and their purpose.

1.4.3 Convenors stay connected to the FSSD

support team through regular progress discussions, by participating in weekly online strategic orientations, as well as through the Dialogues Gateway website (www.summitdialogues.org).

1.4.4 Since December 2020, a programme of orientation and training is offered to all those convening Food Systems Summit Dialogues (Member States or Independent Convenors and their support teams). Weekly sessions include (i) strategic orientation for Member States Convenors that focuses on the structuring of the Dialogue programme, including its political implications; (ii) an orientation for Independent or Member State Convenors on the standardised method to prepare, organise, and report on a Food Systems Summit Dialogue; and

(iii) a training session that focuses on the art and skills of curating and facilitating Food Systems Summit Dialogues. Since the beginning of the programme of orientation and training sessions, over 1600 participants have joined to prepare Member State or Independent Dialogues, including 180 participants to the strategic orientation sessions for Member States Convenors and their support team.

1.4.5 The programme of orientation and training introduces a standardised approach for Member State Dialogues. It is described in full in the '[Handbook for Member State Dialogues](#)' and the '[Reference Manual for Convenors](#)'. It outlines three stages of a Member State Dialogue. The first stage (*Initiating National Engagement in the Summit*) commences the Dialogue programme in a nation and draws together diverse stakeholders to explore what challenges are to be addressed in developing a national pathway to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030. The second stage (*Extensive Explorations Everywhere*) broadens and deepens the conversation to address how this pathway might be created. The third stage (*Consolidation, Intention and Commitment*) draws together the work from stages one and two to identify who will be involved in taking forward the process.



1.4.6 The standardized approach can be adapted in many ways to suit local circumstances and national Convenors are encouraged to develop approaches to fit the political and cultural environment within which the Dialogues take place. However the approach is adapted, it remains essential that Dialogues are announced on the Gateway www.SummitDialogues.org, feedback is published using the Official Feedback Form, and at all times the dialogues follow the Principles of Engagement of the Food Systems Summit.

1.5 COVID-19 Pandemic

- 1.5.1 **The programme of Member State Dialogues is being undertaken in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic: countries are making major efforts to contain disease outbreaks, including through the restriction of population movements. The consequences of containment efforts reveal three major fragilities in food systems**, as highlighted by national Convenors in their interactions with the FSSD support team when they started shaping and framing the programme of Dialogues in their country.
- 1.5.2 **First**, is the vulnerability of nations whose food security depends on a predictable supply of imports. In these cases, questions arise around whether essential imports can be prioritized and maintained in times of crisis.
- 1.5.3 **Second**, when population movements are suddenly restricted the capacity of food systems to respond to a rapid increase in numbers of people who need food is put to the test. Food markets may shut down or the supply of produce is otherwise dramatically reduced as movement limitations are imposed on a population. Additionally, migrant workers may return en masse to their home locations. Under such circumstances, the ability for populations to be

protected and prevented from extreme hunger is uncertain.

- 1.5.4 **Third**, COVID-19 has revealed the importance of open trade for enabling those who need food urgently to be able to access it in times of crisis. Can the contraction of supply – due to exporting nations restricting their exports – be averted? The alternative is unpredictability of supply and rising import costs.
- 1.5.5 Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has made the organization of Dialogues especially challenging, Convenors of Member State Dialogues, as well as those who support them, are using their ingenuity to make them diverse, inclusive, and participatory. For example, Convenors report exploring different uses of technology, 'hybrid dialogues' that merge face-to-face contact with online events, and physically going to visit communities that lack the infrastructure to engage digitally.

1.6 Planning Member State Food Systems Summit Dialogues

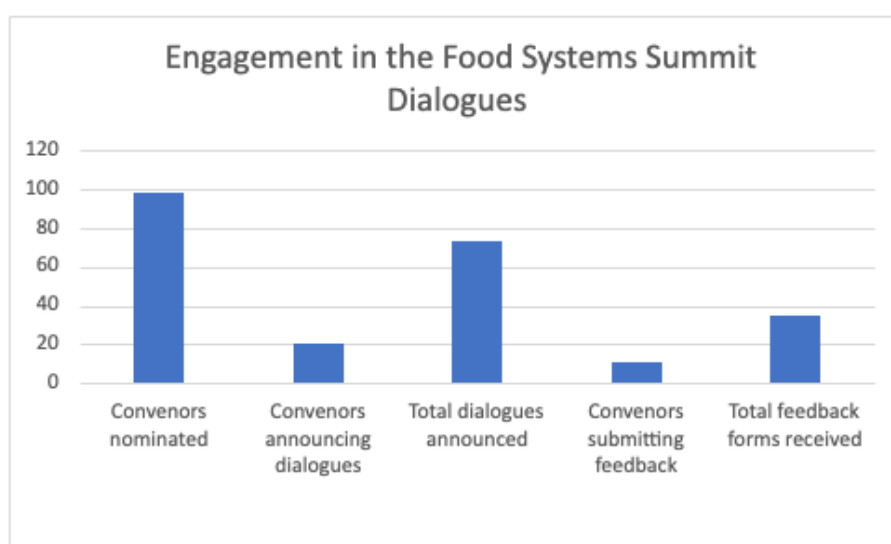


Figure 3: Member State engagement in the food systems Summit Dialogues as of 13 April 2021

1.6.1 **Plans for Member State Dialogues are progressing positively at varied pace with differing levels of ambition.** In a small number of countries, the Dialogues have progressed into their second stage. These Convenors have already run an initial Dialogue that sets the frame and the aspiration, and they now encourage sub-national dialogues that engage widely and deeply, often connecting with Independent Dialogues to broaden the reach and scope of that engagement.

community of stakeholders for the inception stage of the Dialogues' programme (stage 1). The stage 1 dialogues are designed to ensure that participants have fully understood the potential opportunities provided by the FSSD process and are planning accordingly. The work required to organise, conduct, and submit feedback for a dialogue can take a while, particularly where multi-sector and multi-stakeholder consultations and dialogues about food systems are relatively new.

1.6.2 Many Convenors are taking time to encourage focus on food systems and the Summit within their respective government and to establish a diverse

1.6.3 Compelling practical issues can inevitably hinder more rapid activity for national dialogues. These include recent or upcoming elections, and the

impact of other external pressures, notably the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.6.4 As of 13 April 2021, the progress in countries with a nominated convenor is as follows: 20 Convenors have announced 73 Member State Dialogues, and 11 Convenors have published 35 feedback forms. Many more have timescales for Dialogues agreed but dates are yet to be announced. Still more are being actively

planned.

1.6.5 Additionally, as of 13 April 2021, 214 Independent Dialogues have been announced. There is a growing tendency by Member State Convenors to integrate Independent Dialogues as part of the Stage 2 progression of national dialogues. The number of Independent Dialogues is expected to grow considerably throughout the rest of 2021.

1.7 Sources for the present synthesis report

1.7.1 **The primary source of information for this synthesis is supplied by Member State Convenors after their Dialogues using the Official Feedback Form:** these forms are available on the Dialogues' Gateway, thus in the public domain. By 13 April 2021, 35 feedback forms had been published by 11 national Convenors of the following countries: Bangladesh; Cambodia; Finland; Guatemala; Honduras; Japan; Kuwait; Nigeria; Sweden; Switzerland; and United States of America. It should be noted that all feedback forms received for this synthesis were from Stage 1 Dialogues (initiation). Some countries have included several separate dialogues in their initiation stage (see breakdown in annex).

1.7.2 Within this synthesis report, **the comments reflect understanding gained by the FSSD support team through the programme of orientation and training, direct engagement with Convenors and their support teams** as they prepare and plan their Dialogues, and informal feedback from those supporting the Dialogues including the UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinator network.

Register of Attendance
For completion by Convenors after a Dialogue

| Dialogue Date | Total number of participants | | | | | |
|---|---|--------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|
| Dialogue Title | | | | | | |
| Number of participants in each age range | 0-18 | 19-30 | 31-50 | 51-65 | 66-80 | 80+ |
| Number of participants by gender | Male | Female | Prefer not to say | | | |
| Number of participants in each sector | | | | | | |
| Food | Food retail | | | | | |
| Fish and aquaculture | Food industry | | | | | |
| Livestock | Financial services | | | | | |
| Agri-forestry | Health care | | | | | |
| Government and ecology | National or local government | | | | | |
| Trade and commerce | Utilities | | | | | |
| Education | Industrial | | | | | |
| Communication | | | | | | |
| Food processing | | | | | | |
| Other (please list) | | | | | | |
| Number of participants from each stakeholder group | | | | | | |
| Small/medium enterprise/artisan | Member of Parliament | | | | | |
| Large national business | Local authority | | | | | |
| Multinational corporation | Government and national institution | | | | | |
| Small-scale farmer | Regional Economic Community | | | | | |
| Medium-scale farmer | United Nations | | | | | |
| Large-scale farmer | International financial institutions | | | | | |
| Local Non-Governmental Organisation | Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance | | | | | |
| International NGO | Consumer Group | | | | | |
| Indigenous People | | | | | | |
| Science and academia | | | | | | |
| Writers and Trade Union | | | | | | |
| Other (please list) | | | | | | |

Food Systems Summit Principles for Engagement

Urgency: We recognize the utmost urgency of sustained and meaningful action at all levels to reach the respective 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Respect: Within our respective capacities and circumstances, we will promote food production and consumption policies and practices that strive to protect and improve the health and well-being of individuals, enhance resilient livelihoods and communities, and promote good stewardship of natural resources, while respecting local cultures and contexts.

Complexity: We recognize that food systems are complex, and are closely connected to, and significantly impact, human and animal health, land, water, climate, biodiversity, the economy and other systems, and their transformation requires a systemic approach.

Multi-stakeholder inclusivity: We support inclusive multi-stakeholder processes and approaches within governments and communities that bring in diverse perspectives, including indigenous knowledge, cultural insights, and science-based evidence to enable stakeholders to understand and assess potential trade-offs and to design policy options that deliver against multiple public goods across these various systems.

Engage: We commit to practice what we preach personally and professionally to contribute to the vision, objectives and the final outcomes of the Food Systems Summit.

Complement the work of others: Recognizing that issues related to food systems are being addressed through several other global governance processes, we will seek to ensure that the Food Systems Summit aligns with, amplifies, and accelerates these efforts where practicable, avoiding unnecessary duplication, while encouraging bold and innovative new thinking and approaches that deliver systems-level transformation in line with the Summit's principles and objectives.

Build Trust: We will work to ensure the Summit and associated engagement process will promote trust and increase motivation to participate by being evidence-based, transparent, and accessible in governance, decision-making, planning, engagement, and implementation. We - from member states to private businesses to individual actors - will hold ourselves accountable for commitments made with mechanisms in place to uphold this accountability.

I have read and I understand the Food Systems Summit Principles of Engagement YES NO

Example of the Official Feedback Form

2 Participant Analysis

2.1.1 **Convenors have either drawn on existing multi-stakeholder platforms to gather a wide-ranging group of participants for this initial stage of Dialogue, broadly representative of food systems actors in their country or have indicated that they will establish their stakeholder group progressively, as the national dialogue process unfolds, in the run up to the Summit in September.**

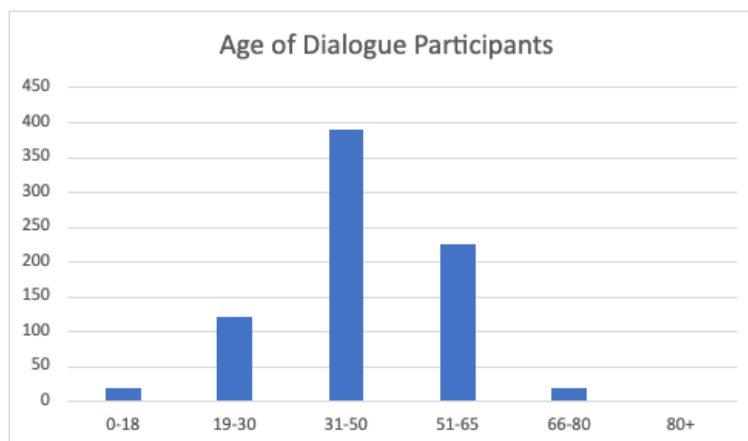


Figure 4 - Age of Dialogue participants

2.1.2 The tables to the right and below summarise details about participation in the dialogues as provided in these feedback forms submitted by the national Convenors. Not all forms contained complete participant data, and some did not contain any data in this section at all.

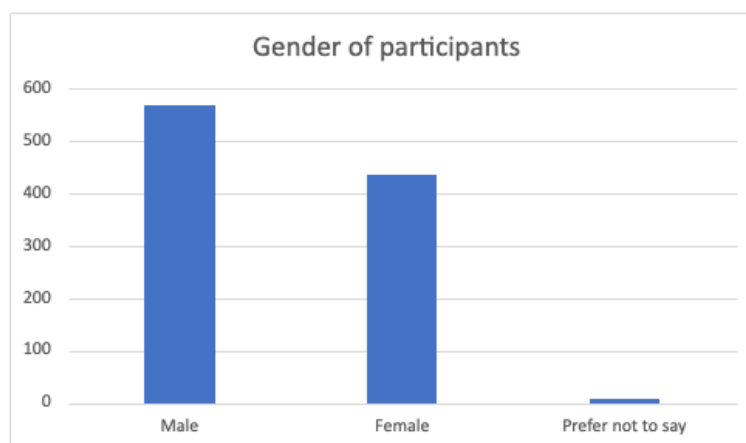


Figure 5 - Gender of participants

2.1.3 As not all Convenors have completed all elements of the feedback forms in full, it is not possible to state the exact numbers of participants in Member States Dialogues collectively. However, the data received shows that so far well over 1000 people have taken part in a national dialogue with around **45% of participants being female.**

2.1.4 Breakdowns of participants by sector and stakeholder group are also not complete. However, it is clear that nine countries have convened wide-ranging participant groups, with broad sectoral representation, as explored below. The other countries report beginning with smaller, less diverse groups but

typically indicate that they expect to reach out to a wider population as the FSSD process rolls out.

2.1.5 When considering representation by sector⁶, **crops, education, and government provide the majority of participants.** It is not possible to determine from this data whether a participant reporting 'crops' is a farmer, agricultural labourer, or works for a government agency, commercial organisation, or is a private individual. It is noteworthy but maybe unsurprising that these areas are the largest areas of

⁶ A sizeable number of participants are reporting their sector as 'other'. Instructions to Convenors and two

sector definitions have been updated as a way of encouraging more detailed responses.

representation. Many Convenors are based within the Ministry of Agriculture so immediate networks will connect well to 'crops'. There is also a tendency to begin by building coalitions across government departments that means a

significant proportion of participants in early dialogues will be from the 'government' sector. The involvement of scientific and technical expertise from the 'education' sector is also of note.

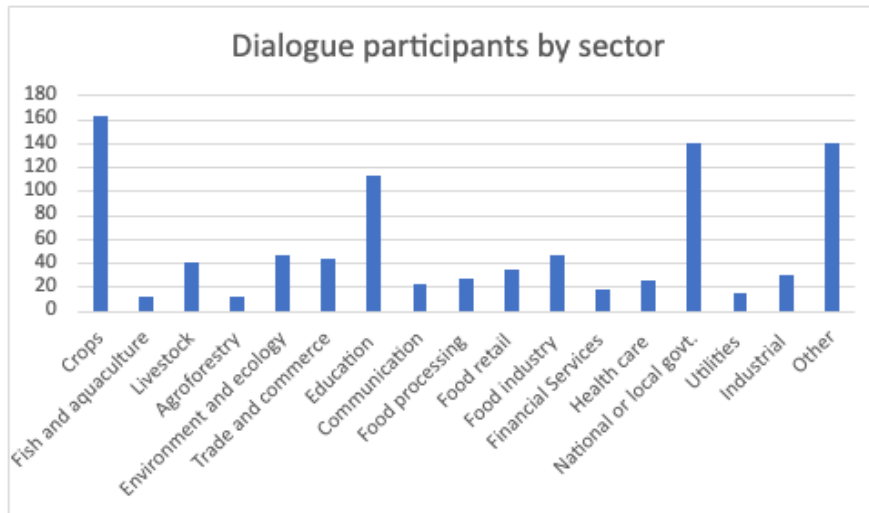


Figure 6 - Dialogue participants by sector

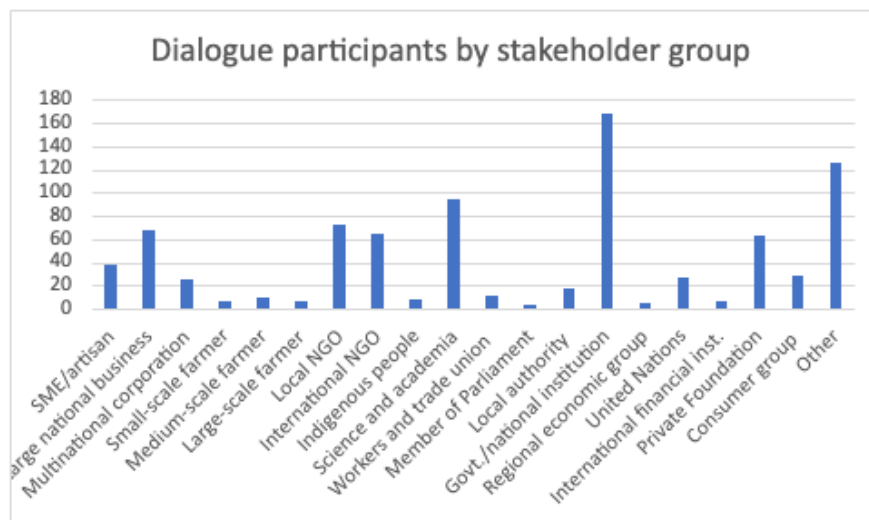


Figure 7 - Dialogue participants by stakeholder group

2.1.6 The breakdown by stakeholder group is also illuminating. **The largest single group is formed by civil society.** Commercial engagement is strongest with national businesses and Small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs), with multinational businesses less involved. Science and academia are well represented. Convenors report that most dialogues involve scientists of multiple disciplines. Farmers at all scales are less well-represented. Two Convenors (Nigeria and USA) have identified Independent Dialogues within

their country as a route to ensuring better representation of farmers. Numbers of participation by indigenous peoples are also low. The Finnish Convenor has engaged directly with representatives from the Saami people's parliament to explore how they might wish to be involved. Workers and trade unions are also lightly represented. It remains a challenge to engage with agricultural laborers, including those who may not belong to a representative organisation.

3 Synthesis of Member State Engagement

In this section, the report explores questions about (i) the extent of national government engagement, (ii) the degree to which diverse stakeholders are involved, (iii) the focus on pathways to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030, (iv) the breadth and depth with which options are explored during Member State Dialogues and (v) the emergence of convergence, consolidation, and commitment.

In each section findings are presented as *Emerging Themes*, followed by supporting **examples** and **commentary**. Quotes taken from the official feedback forms illustrate each section. Any conclusions must be regarded as preliminary and certain to evolve as the Food Systems Summit Dialogue process rolls out. Nevertheless, there are already some patterns and valuable indicators of progress on a number of dimensions.

3.1 The Extent of National Government Engagement

“We have a unique opportunity to build our new national food systems narrative into our key national development plans.” (Nigeria)

3.1.1 **Emerging theme:** Five of the feedback forms indicated that the FSSD process is led by the national equivalent of the agriculture, food, or rural affairs Ministry. Others vary, and include the President’s Office and the Foreign Ministry, for example. There is a general acknowledgement in the feedback forms that policy development, as it affects the food system, tends to be fragmented to the detriment of the system as a whole and to various stakeholders. All Convenors welcome the opportunity that the Summit and the FSSD process offers to broaden the discussion about food systems to embrace the whole system and stakeholders. Two Convenors from Ministries of Food and Agriculture acknowledge in their feedback that it will be important, but possibly quite challenging, to draw in the participation of other interested Ministries and elements of national Government.

3.1.2 **Examples:** The feedback from **Bangladesh** commented that 21 Ministries have an interest in food systems. The feedback from **Switzerland** illustrated beneficial collaboration between the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Office of Agriculture, with involvement of other Federal

Departments (including environment, health and economy), and commented on the need for food policy coherence. The feedback from **Kuwait** identifies the need for radical change in government structures and public-private partnerships, and strong political will to set up a food and nutrition action plan.

3.1.3 **Comment:** Rapid implementation of the FSSD process is not necessarily associated with the establishment of a broad, inter-governmental process. Time taken to ensure broad-based ownership by government at the outset should result in an appreciation of the important role food plays across the economic spectrum, as well as in health, household livelihoods, and environmental sustainability. The various conversations between ministries and agencies that enable this to happen are a necessary pre-condition for an effective FSSD process.

Efforts to ensure inter-governmental national ownership at the start will contribute to the impact of the dialogue programme on national processes. The majority of national dialogues focus on ensuring broad-based ownership and local relevance of the process. Where such conversations are already underway within the government, the

Member State Dialogues can be established and made to work with minimal delay. Where conversations need to be established, the process has taken longer to commence.

The conclusion drawn at this point is that the depth of engagement in the national dialogues by governments is moving beyond the ministerial responsibilities that have existed in the

past: Food is part of agriculture but is of relevance to several other sectors too. This might indicate an important shift in ownership and should be a subject of attention for later syntheses. As the process develops, it will be interesting to observe the extent to which engagement moves beyond government to embrace the wide variety of non-governmental actors present in any food system.

3.2 The degree to which diverse stakeholders are involved

“All stakeholders need to be involved—vulnerable groups, women and youth, small and medium producers.” (Honduras)

3.2.1 **Emerging Themes:** Most Convenors report significant progress in engaging a wide range of stakeholders across the food system in their countries. As indicated in the analysis in Section 2, Dialogue participants have been drawn from civil society, the private sector, the scientific and academic community, farmers, indigenous peoples, and workers and trade unions. Initial Dialogues, as surveyed in this report, have embraced a wide diversity of participants with the intention of continuing this inclusive process in future. A number of Convenors have already embarked on ambitious plans to roll out Dialogues both sub-nationally and also thematically as the Summit approaches. As noted earlier, some Member States have started deliberately with a more focused participation with the firm intention to expand the circles of engagement over time.

There is already considerable progress in extending participation so that diverse stakeholders are included in the Dialogues, and a number of countries have drawn attention to the need to maintain momentum and effort to ensure this extension. The need for diversity starts with different departments within the national government, noted in the previous section. More broadly, even where Convenors can already demonstrate good engagement of some stakeholders, they have highlighted

numerous others who have yet to participate, for example indigenous peoples, small farmers, environmental groups, those in the financial sector, and data scientists. Convenors frequently point out that innovative means are needed to encourage engagement given the impact of COVID-19, including through ‘hybrid dialogues’ (some participants online, some face-to-face) and going directly to some groups on foot to widen participation.

Convenors see the need for diversity and inclusion as particularly important for the identification, exploration, and resolution of the various conflicts of interest which exist in national and international food systems. Examples include the initial differences of interest between food producers and the environment; between large producers and smallholders; and between ingrained consumer preferences and nutritious eating options. These initial differences may turn out to be less pronounced once protagonists have had a chance to explore each other’s perspectives through Member State Dialogues. These conflicting interests are highlighted in feedback forms from all Convenors.

3.2.2 **Examples:** In **Nigeria**, an extensive series of sub-national, local Dialogues are announced as a way of reaching many and diverse stakeholders beyond the capital. In **Japan**, a wide-ranging

programme of stakeholder engagement is underway as part of Stage 1, with, among others, food producers, processors, and distributors. In **Finland**, efforts have been made to engage indigenous peoples. In **Kuwait**, students participated in the first Member State Dialogue. And the feedback from the **USA**, among others, refers to the importance of continuing to broaden participation as the FSSD process develops. Feedback from **Guatemala** refers to the importance of institutional coordination. The feedback forms from **Bangladesh, Honduras, and Cambodia** emphasise the importance of including the voices of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

3.2.3 **Comment:** As the FSSD process unfolds, there will be merit in sharing experiences of stakeholder engagement across all participating countries so that key lessons of engagement and commitment can be shared and applied. Convenors consistently ask the FSSD support team for advice on how to get a

broad range of stakeholders involved in the Dialogues, including those with whom governments are less well connected.

Most Convenors are very clear as to the value of attracting a diverse group of actors to their Dialogues and are taking steps to make this an inclusive process. Consideration is being given as to how to involve those who have poor access to technology or for whom such settings can be alien or intimidating. Seven Convenors who submitted feedback forms have held pre-meetings with individual groups of stakeholders to hear their needs and enable them to explore together a) how they wish to participate and b) what they seek to share and hear from other stakeholders. Convenors are also identifying the importance of sub-national dialogues as a way of reaching more rural populations which may bring a different perspective to Dialogues held in the capital city.

3.3 Pathways to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030

“There is the necessity of a greater coherence between food related policies or even one food systems policy.” (Switzerland)

3.3.1 The purpose of Member State Dialogues is to shape a national pathway to food systems of the future. This is likely to involve:

- confirming the desired future state of national food systems taking account of all 17 SDGs with the target date of 2030.
- building on existing cross-sector and multi-stakeholder processes and drawing on existing strategies and road maps endorsed by the government.
- identifying what aspects of food systems need to change urgently so that the desired future state can be achieved.
- exploring ways in which stakeholders can work together so that the changes happen in ways that align with the SDGs.

3.3.2 **Emerging themes:** Within the feedback forms there is clear evidence of national ambitions that link thinking about food systems to broader ambitions towards development and sustainability for 2030. All Convenors refer to current and evolving national policies and plans with the SDGs in mind. Feedback forms indicate a general recognition that sustainable food production and consumption should be seen as a key element of complex, evolving societal systems. To this extent, therefore, there is a recognition of the importance of developing and implementing pathways to sustainable and equitable food systems.

However, at the same time, the food systems concept is seen as relatively new: only some of those who work in food and agriculture are comfortable working with it. In practice, the development and implementation of

policies with regard to food issues is typically fragmented within national governments, whether at capital or sub-national levels. And the Dialogues are offering opportunities for many of the stakeholders in food systems to come together in an unprecedented format with high potential for impact.

Most Convenors have highlighted the need for systemic information to aid the framing of national enquiries that will result in the shaping of pathways for the future of food. Specific items of data, as well as accumulated knowledge, are needed to enable the analysis of many aspects of food systems. This may apply to the nutritional value of specific foods; the information provided to and absorbed by consumers of food; options for connecting with vulnerable or hard to reach individuals and communities; or the impact of specific production processes on the environment.

- 3.3.3 **Examples:** Feedback from **Nigeria** demonstrates a comprehensive analysis of food systems challenges and plans to develop relevant pathways to sustainability. The feedback from **Finland** focused initially on establishing the evidence base, and gaps, for the purposes of the Dialogue. In

Switzerland, the Dialogue builds on existing national strategies and processes. In **Kuwait** the Dialogue identifies that changes may be needed to the existing policy. And several feedback forms, including from the **USA** Convenor, commented on important knowledge gaps in understanding food systems.

- 3.3.4 **Comment:** There is strong support for the creation of a pathway to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030. There is also recognition that this pathway will be formed by weaving together multiple interests and perspectives. Shaping and maintaining these pathways will be an ever-evolving challenge and many Convenors see their Dialogues as beginning a process that will continue long after the Food Systems Summit itself.

Seeing 'food' as a system is the most significant step on this pathway. The Dialogues make visible the interdependencies between people, policies, and places. This creates openings for new and significant collaborations that will be necessary if the pathway is to become one to sustainability and equity.

3.4 Exploring options for developing a pathway to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030

“There was a great interest in participating. Around 100 suggestions, comments, and proposals were put forward.” (Sweden)

- 3.4.1 **Emerging themes:** The FSSD process offers the opportunity to identify options for the development of a pathway to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030. These may include key decisions that must be taken, perhaps regarding policy, investment or public engagement. Even at this early stage, it seems clear from feedback forms that this opportunity is being embraced. The feedback forms indicate that the FSSD process is being used, in some cases for the first time, to take a systemic view with wide-ranging participation of key actors.

The evidence available at this point is that the exploration of options is likely to

lead to the surfacing and illumination of key points of tension and potential in the wider food system, where the interests of, say, producers and consumers may diverge. This is recognised in feedback forms to be a necessary consequence of addressing food system transformation in this more comprehensive, inclusive, and systemic way.

- 3.4.2 Given that governments differ on the degree to which they currently focus on food systems, there is the potential for significant sharing of experiences between governments and other national stakeholders from different countries when they face similar



challenges and opportunities.

- 3.4.3 **Examples:** Feedback from **Kuwait** illustrates a comprehensive analysis and an intention to address fundamental challenges. Initial Dialogues in **Sweden** and **Switzerland** offer a series of specific ideas for future development in follow up Dialogues. And, as already mentioned, feedback forms from **Nigeria** and **Japan** demonstrate an extensive exploration through a sequence of regional and sectoral Dialogues. Feedback from **Honduras** notes an initial focus on creating a 'structured road map' for the creation of a sustainable food system beginning with the intention of up to ten discussion groups coming together in further Dialogues.
- 3.4.4 **Comment:** As Dialogues explore options for shifting to more sustainable and equitable food systems with

increasing depth and breadth, new patterns will emerge that link countries, either by their location, the patterns of food import and export, or perhaps by climate change and other external challenges.

The desire of some Convenors from different nations to connect adds momentum to the development of their approaches and their ability to address food as a constellation of systems. It is therefore encouraging to see the emergence of intergovernmental dialogues in different sub-regions (e.g. in the Caribbean and amongst the Pacific Islands), linked to the national dialogue processes. It is also encouraging to see the beginning of sharing of experiences between some Member State Dialogue Convenors at the weekly FSSD online strategic orientation sessions.

3.5 Convergence, consolidation, and commitment

"Ensuring collaboration between the public and private sector is vital with continuing opportunities for multi-stakeholder discussions and information sharing." (Cambodia)

- 3.5.1 **Emerging themes:** At this stage in the FSSD process, it is not appropriate to offer substantive comments on the specific types of actions which may be taken forward to the Summit. However, it is already evident in a number of cases that there is a very clear direction of travel for the national dialogue process, and a growing momentum in the shape of planned sub-national, local, thematic and Independent Dialogues. Member States have typically indicated that they intend to follow a process along these broad lines: (1) Initial Member State Dialogue, (2) Extensive wide-ranging engagement and exploration, (3) Drawing together proposals for action. It also clear that Convenors are working hard to broaden the involvement of wider stakeholder groups, including younger people, women and vulnerable individuals and communities. This at least offers the possibility that emerging conclusions

and recommendations for action may command a broad level of support.

- 3.5.2 **Examples:** Feedback from the **USA**, for example, records the intention to follow a three stage Dialogue approach. The initial national dialogue in **Sweden** (and in other places) is being followed up through a series of regional and thematic dialogues.
- 3.5.3 **Comment:** There is a clear and accelerating momentum in the Member States Dialogues process that sees Convenors planning up to the Summit. Regular contact with other Convenors where initial dialogues have yet to take place indicates that this momentum will go well beyond the immediate timetable of the Summit. The occasion of the Summit is being used to focus activity and thought whilst at the same time maintaining a view on the longer horizon of sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030.

4 Synthesis by Summit Objectives

The five Objectives of the Summit are as follows : (1) Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all, (2) Shift to sustainable consumption patterns, (3) Boost nature-positive production, (4) Advance equitable livelihoods, (5) Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress. These are pursued through five technical working groups (the Action Tracks) that are developing propositions for how the objectives might best be achieved both separately and together.

To this end, they have encouraged those with an interest, to submit propositions that could be considered for inclusion within national pathways towards sustainable and equitable food systems, in line with the SDGs. There has already been one wave of submissions which have been assessed (against explicit criteria), and grouped. They are then offered to decision-makers as a menu of options for areas of action, also serving for consideration as national pathways are being shaped. The implementation of the propositions calls for action on several “Levers of Change,” which include finance, gender, human rights, and innovation. Other potential cross-cutting issues are emerging as Action Tracks receive more propositions and Member State Dialogues are being held.

4.1 Status of links between Dialogues & Summit objectives, Action Track Propositions & Levers of Change

4.1.1 **There is an evident willingness to address all Summit objectives within national dialogues by focusing both on long running challenges, as well as recent exacerbations,** by exploring the effectiveness of novel approaches in local, national, and inter-country contexts.

4.1.2 As the FSSDs progress, there is an increasing tendency to focus more on specific issues of local concern. This focus on local tension points that need to be specifically addressed helps those involved in dialogues to move more directly towards immediate challenges of sustainable and equitable food systems in their own setting. Issues such as access to water, differing access to information or markets, and the balance in trade between food imports and exports provide a tangible focus for the conversations. Clearly these are connected to the Summit objectives, while there is a notable tendency in the dialogues to engage in locally contentious issues.

4.1.3 The Member State Dialogue feedback forms available to this synthesis typically did not organise their dialogue according to the five objectives and consequently did not provide feedback

ACTION TRACK #1
ENSURE ACCESS TO SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD FOR ALL



ACTION TRACK #2
SHIFT TO SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS



ACTION TRACK #3
BOOST NATURE-POSITIVE PRODUCTION



ACTION TRACK #4
ADVANCE EQUITABLE LIVELIHOODS



ACTION TRACK #5
BUILD RESILIENCE TO VULNERABILITIES, SHOCKS AND STRESS



specifically in that format. Most Convenors commented that discussions touched on all the Action Tracks and that they intend to address them further as the process carries on. Several feedback forms identified cross-cutting issues applicable to most if not all objectives and these included:

- Questions of **inequalities** in all aspects of food systems, and consequently, in relation to each of the Action Tracks. For example, there are feedback forms report evident inequalities in relation to: access to food and information about food; access to markets and financial resources for small farmers; and capacity of individuals and vulnerable groups to withstand shocks and stresses in the food system.
- The pervasive issue of **environmental degradation**, with damage to ecosystem services, some of which can be attributed to aspects of food production, processing, and consumption.
- The ongoing need for comprehensive, reliable, and disaggregated **information** on issues related to the Summit objectives from the perspectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4.1.4 Discussion with Convenors and their support teams reveals that other cross cutting issues are being considered within national dialogues. These include: (i) Trade, (ii) One Health, (iii) water use, and (iv) emerging from food crises. In addition, the following issues are all stressed as needing attention if the Action Track propositions are to be implemented successfully: metrics and measurement, human resources, governance, multisectoral planning capability, applied interdisciplinary research and systems change capabilities.

4.1.5 As the FSSD process develops, the relevance and implications of these issues may become clearer as they are examined from an increasing number of perspectives. As the Stage 2 Dialogues explore how the issues being identified in Stage 1 might be addressed, it is expected that potential developments

for each of these cross-cutting issues may emerge. These changes may provide specific opportunities for developing sustainable and equitable food systems. Clearly, the opportunities may be different in different settings, with local political and cultural differences being critical in determining how any propositions for change can be adopted.

4.1.6 Convenors at this early stage in the process have found the Summit Action Tracks helpful when choosing discussion topics. They have also chosen topics that are pertinent to local circumstances. In feedback forms, Convenors will often connect to multiple Action Tracks so the drawing of specific conclusions at this stage is not possible. However, in some instances, feedback forms did offer insights in relation to particular objectives, and these are set out below for further development as the FSSD process continues.

4.2 Access to safe and nutritious food for all

4.2.1 Emerging Themes:

A) Prioritizing nutrients: A number of feedback forms note that access to nutrition food to avoid under-nutrition remains a pressing issue. The emphasis is on promoting access to foods that contain adequate quantities of essential nutrients.

B) Access to nutrition information: All feedback forms note that there are challenges with enabling consumers to access and draw on nutrition information to be better able to focus on eating healthily.

C) Enabling poor people to access the nutritious food they need: An overarching challenge is to ensure that the national food supply infrastructure enables vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups to access the nutritious food they need: sudden reductions in income-earning opportunities that are linked to COVID-19 containment measures are leading to increased needs for social protection.

4.2.2 **Examples:** The need to focus on access to nutritious food, as opposed to access to calories, was highlighted in



feedback from **Guatemala's** first Member State Dialogue. The **Nigerian** participants concluded that producing food for export has led to domestic shortages of nutrient-dense foods, which has had a negative impact on the nutrition of poorer Nigerians. Addressing the challenge of limited access has implications for the business model and potential income of Nigeria's food export businesses. Feedback from **Bangladesh** noted the shift in their own food system from priority of quantity to quality.

- 4.2.3 The outcome of several dialogues (see for example **Cambodia**), emphasise the potential opportunity of engaging with young people and women as advocates of healthier diets.

4.3 Shift to Sustainable Consumption Patterns

- 4.3.1 **Emerging theme:** A number of feedback forms refer to major initiatives in informing consumers about healthy diets to better enable informed choices. The challenge of promoting healthy diets appears to be universal in the feedback from the 11 Convenors. There is a generally held view that some of the information that people access about nutrition may be misleading and even wrong. This leads to scepticism among consumers and a lack of enthusiasm for healthier eating and lifestyles.

- 4.3.2 **Example:** The **Finland** feedback, for example, notes that despite relatively well-developed knowledge and resources on healthy diets for young people, nevertheless the population continues to face avoidable obesity problems. The **USA** feedback reports that healthy diets are perceived as more expensive. And that, at the same time, less expensive food is less healthy and often leading to excessive waste. The feedback from **Kuwait** highlighted dependence on imported foods and challenges in promoting healthier habits. Feedback from **Honduras** also noted information gaps, for example, concerning child malnutrition. And feedback from **Switzerland** argues that food is too cheap, and prices should more accurately reflect true production costs.

4.4 Boost Nature Positive Production

- 4.4.1 **Emerging theme:** There is widespread recognition in the feedback forms that producing, harvesting, processing, and transporting food has environmental impacts. For some, the priority is to ensure that everyone can access the food that is needed for life and that this need may outweigh the negative environmental impacts of food production, at least in the short term.

- 4.4.2 **Examples:** The feedback form from **Nigeria** records that efforts are in hand to apply sustainable food policy frameworks which aim to benefit smallholder farmers while also protecting ecosystem services. In **Japan**, there is a major programme, Measures for Achievement of Decarbonization and Resilience with Innovation (MeaDRI), which is directed at environmentally friendly practices in the whole food system. The **USA** reported a lack of accessible information to encourage food producers to adopt better environmental practices and to see these as in their long-term interests. The challenge is that producers may well perceive that environmentally favourable production methods are more costly.

4.5 Advance Equitable Livelihoods

- 4.5.1 **Emerging themes:** All feedback forms acknowledge the ambition to promote productive employment and to help eliminate poverty. Themes in the feedback forms include:

- recognising that the contributions of all players in the value chain (from production to consumption) should be reflected in **decent working conditions** and remuneration.
- improving smallholder farmers' access to markets through **better transport and storage infrastructure**.
- enabling food producers and processors with limited means to access **social protection** in the form of financial support.
- expanding the **participation of young people and women**.
- effectively **managing the balance** between crops for export and food



for domestic consumption.

- **acknowledging and addressing the tensions** (and likely trade-offs) between prioritising healthy consumption, sustainable production, resilience of supplies and regenerating ecosystems.

4.5.2 **Examples:** Feedback from **Bangladesh** highlighted issues of access to markets for smallholder farmers. The **USA** feedback commented on issues of access to finance, land, and necessary infrastructure. Several feedback forms highlighted the impact on livelihoods of a shift away from higher revenue food exports, and feedback from **Cambodia** noted that assuring equitable livelihoods could sometimes be at odds with conservation goals.

4.6 Build Resilience to Vulnerabilities and Stress

4.6.1 **Emerging themes:** Resilience has emerged as an important property for food systems because of the increased uncertainty of weather patterns and their consequences (storm surges, floods, droughts). It has become even more relevant for food systems given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and control strategies. The pandemic has revealed the importance of food systems that are resilient when viewed from the perspective of low-income consumers, small scale producers, marketeers and traders.

4.6.2 **Examples:** For some Member State Dialogues the need to ensure resilience of food supplies is a continuing challenge. For example, in **Bangladesh**, disruptions such as floods, droughts, or disease epidemics exacerbate existing challenges associated with poverty and unemployment, lack of access to schooling and education, and the marginalisation of specific groups in society (such as indigenous or disabled peoples). The feedback from **Guatemala** also highlights the major vulnerabilities of its food system and the problems arising from inadequate management of natural resources such as water and soil. Feedback from **Honduras** emphasised the importance

of access to water. There is also evidence in feedback forms, for example **Finland** and **Guatemala**, of the need to explore the particular challenges faced by indigenous peoples.



4.7 Levers of change

4.7.1 **Emerging themes:** The four Levers of Change that have been identified by the Summit Secretariat are all acknowledged in feedback forms from Member State Dialogues included in this synthesis. The Levers are seen as fundamental in establishing pathways to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030. In dialogues focused on the Action Tracks, the Levers of Change are frequently referenced, as illustrated below. In future elements of the FSSD process, it may be valuable for Convenors to encourage dialogue on how attention to these levers can lead to desired shifts in the functioning of food systems. Particularly as the FSSD process moves from stage 1 (initiation) to Stage 2 (exploration), exploring these Levers of Change will become increasingly valuable.

4.7.2 **Examples:** **Human Rights** are noted as a guiding principle when the functioning of food systems is analysed and interventions are considered.

Gender, and the need to ensure womens' participation is adequately remunerated, features in national food strategies and the basis for national dialogues. It is an area highlighted for development as pathways towards future food systems are elaborated.

On **Finance**, the importance of food systems stakeholders being able to access suitable financial support appears in feedback forms: Dialogues

have recognized the need for both public and private investment to promote sustainable production and of all people being able to have equitable access to nutritious food as needed.

Examples of necessary **innovations** cited in feedback forms include:

- investment in leadership, technology, and human resource capability
- investment in mechanisation of production
- scaling up of sustainable technologies such as cold chain
- investment in nutritious dietary

options such as fortified rice.

4.7.3 **Comment:** The Levers of Change are mentioned repeatedly in the feedback forms. However, they tend to appear as high-level aspirations and intentions rather than as specific actions.

4.7.4 **Closing observation.** The Summit Action Tracks and Levers of Change are frequently referenced in the feedback from Member State Dialogues. At this early stage, specific connections with activities are less evident. The objectives and levers of change are used to frame the discussion topics and these often evolve to address local areas of interest.

5 Emerging observations from the Dialogue Process

At the end of the inception period of the Member State Food Systems Summit Dialogues (November 2020 to January 2021), it was anticipated that as each Member State Dialogue programme advanced, it will help shape the vision of food systems to meet the needs of all people while also regenerating the planet. In this section, the contribution of Member State Dialogues to the preparation of the Summit is being assessed against the following expectations:

- **Contribution to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**
Member State Dialogues will lead to widespread appreciation of food system attributes that are needed for achieving the 17 goals for Sustainable Development (the SDGs) by 2030.
- **Contribution to Multistakeholder Engagement**
Member State Dialogues will provide opportunities for substantive engagement among government and other stakeholders to explore how to achieve this vision and to converge around a pathway to make it a reality. Dialogues should offer an opportunity for stakeholders to debate priorities for action and pathways for implementation from the multiple, and sometimes competing, perspectives. To increase the range of stakeholder perspectives considered to shape national pathways, Member State Convenors can incorporate the outcomes of Independent Dialogues, especially when taken place in the same locality.
- **Contribution to identifying key decisions aligned with the Action Tracks**
Member State Dialogues encourage a focus on the key decisions that need to be worked through now for all stakeholders to move together on the pathway to the 2030 vision. Some Dialogues also encourage an examination of both the interactions between, and potential consequences of, these key decisions.
- **Contribution to appreciating patterns across countries**
As the outcomes of Member State Dialogues are synthesised across different countries, patterns emerge in the priorities for action, pathways for implementation, and key decisions to be worked through.
- **Contribution to shifting food systems**
The national dialogues programme supports the emergence of food systems that meet the needs of all people while regenerating natural resources.

5.1 Contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- 5.1.1 The Summit is grounded in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: these are the basis for the vision, principles, and objectives for the Summit. The Action Tracks of the Summit build on the ongoing work in support of sustainable food systems.

This work is being undertaken in multiple locations and involves national governments, local authorities, sub-regional and regional bodies, as well as partnerships, alliances, federations, training centres, universities, research bodies, business associations, farmer organizations, civil society and international organizations (including the Committee on World Food Security and UN systems entities such as FAO,

IFAD, WFP, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank). Means for implementing action in line with the objectives are being shaped by the Summit Scientific Group and set out in propositions of the 5 Action Tracks. They are articulated through the Summit Champions Network and the digital support platform ([www. foodsystems.community](http://www.foodsystems.community)).

- 5.1.2 It is anticipated that this harmonized collective effort is contributing to shaping the direction for significant food system shifts world-wide and helps clarify the issues on which there are clearly divergent positions, which are likely to become more explicit as the date of the Summit approaches.

5.2 Multi-stakeholder engagement

- 5.2.1 Food System Summit Dialogues create space for local stakeholders to establish and advance unusual connections that will transform local food systems. These kinds of novel connections are already deepening or emerging in a number of countries, to the benefit of the FSSD process. Participants in a number of Dialogues are also taking the opportunity to highlight the importance of extending participation even further. National Convenors are increasingly exploring how to better reach local stakeholders, addressing issues of technology, language and culture.
- 5.2.2 In a number of countries, the Member State Dialogue Convenors have been working on organizing extensive explorations of options for the future of food systems through sub-national Stage 2 Dialogues. Most Convenors are taking direct responsibility for organizing these sub-national events though given the limited time before the Summit and the impact of COVID-19, the number of Stage 2 Dialogues they can organise is often less than is desired by the Convenors. In these situations, national Convenors are now encouraging Independent Dialogues in different sub-national jurisdictions to access stakeholder groups and sectors where they may be less well connected. The national Convenor may wish to seek agreement from the Convenors of Independent Dialogues that the Independent Dialogues' outcomes can be incorporated into the national

dialogues process. Conversely, many Independent Dialogue Convenors would like the outcomes of their dialogues to have an influence on the national pathway to sustainable and equitable food systems. This interaction is already seen as beneficial in many places: it will be important to foster these relationships as the FSSD process gathers momentum.

5.3 Identification of key decisions aligned to the objectives of the Summit

- 5.3.1 In the Dialogues reported to date, there have been a range of approaches. Some Convenors have chosen to focus on the Action Tracks; others have looked at the functioning of food systems as a whole. In considering the wider system they have noted the implications for the Summit objectives. Whatever the approach, it seems clear that specific work on the Action Tracks will both inform and be informed by national and sub-national dialogues as the process moves forward.
- 5.3.2 The Levers for Change are mentioned repeatedly as integral to the development of more productive, inclusive, equitable food systems. In the FSSDs so far, the Levers feature primarily as cross-cutting, underpinning principles that contribute to systems shift. They are referred to as statements of aspiration at this early stage. As the Dialogues move into Stage 2, it will be interesting to observe specific options and proposals emerge, particularly around gender, finance, human rights, and innovation, but also around the issues noted above in sections 4.1. and 4.7.

5.4 Emerging patterns across countries

- 5.4.1 As the Member State Dialogue feedback forms are collated, a number of similarities and patterns are beginning to emerge. For example, several dialogues reveal the challenge of moving from an emphasis on ensuring that everyone has sufficient grain to ensure adequate energy intake,



towards a greater regard for the way in which food is produced and marketed, its nutritional quality, and its safety.

Several Member State Dialogues reveal the need to balance domestic needs with the opportunities offered by exports. Dialogues reveal that nations are facing up to these challenges both at national and sub-national levels, through wider-ranging engagement of domestic stakeholders, and drawing on experiences and learning opportunities available internationally. The first patterns that are emerging are reflections of geographic location, topography, infrastructure, access to ecosystem services and political stability. As the process develops, specific patterns linked to access to water and openness of trade are becoming more evident across multiple geographies.

5.5 Contribution to shifting food systems

- 5.5.1 The progress to date gives reason to believe that the additional dimensions established through the Member State Dialogues will contribute to continuing explorations of options and pathways among stakeholders who participate in

the national FSSD programme.

- 5.5.2 On the basis of experience to date, it seems clear that, where governments engage intensively in the process, they are better able to explore both national and international food systems with clarity and in depth. This suggests that FSSDs, when accompanied with collective exploration, can be a useful means for getting into complex and contentious issues in food systems quite quickly, and encouraging collective effort to devise pathways to food systems of the future. This implies that the use of structured multistakeholder dialogues may have longer term, worldwide impacts. However, it will be important to encourage continuous adaptation of the FSSD method to different settings, while continuing to involve increasing numbers of stakeholder groups and taking account of the dangers posed by COVID-19 and similar threats. The momentum of progress will be sustained if there is sharing of experiences with conducting exploratory multi-stakeholder dialogues in different local, national, and regional venues. It will be interesting to observe how the FSSD process can help national authorities address challenging issues in the progression towards the Summit and beyond.

6 Conclusion and Looking Forward



- 6.1.1 **Near 100 countries have embarked on National dialogues:** This synthesis reflects the progress of Member State Convenors as they develop, on behalf of their governments, programmes of multi-stakeholder dialogue about the future of national food systems in advance of the Food Systems Summit in September 2021. As of 13 April 2021, some 15 of them had announced⁷ 62 Member State Dialogues (at national or sub-national level) taking place over the period from March to May 2021. The 11 who had published a feedback form on time for this synthesis are advancing their national process further with multiple stage 2 dialogues being planned as indicated in Annex. It is expected that the number and intensity of Member State Dialogues will increase between now and the Summit.

- 6.1.2 **National governments adopt a comprehensive approach:** A large number of governments are now undertaking national FSSDs. This provides them with opportunities to use a comprehensive approach to shaping the future direction of national food systems. Even if a government has already applied this comprehensive approach for some time, the dialogues offer a valuable opportunity for collective reflection on the policies and strategies needed to ensure that

national food systems are sustainable, equitable and resilient by 2030. National convenors are encouraging wide-angle approaches that weave together the priorities identified through the work of the action tracks: this leads to a growing appreciation that food systems are complex, multifaceted, and locally specific and is, in itself, important progress. It will be of inestimable long-term benefit as national governments and stakeholders focus intensively on desired food systems of the future and how they can become a reality after the Summit.

- 6.1.3 **Dialogues are an opportunity for including many diverse stakeholders:** As the circles of stakeholder engagement expand over time, a wider community of diverse stakeholders will take part. The circles of engagement are expanding, to varying degrees, in all the countries whose governments have nominated Convenors. The Member State Convenors and their support teams are encouraging ever more diverse participation in national dialogues, extending increasing numbers of invitations to those who can reflect the interests of smallholder farmers and agricultural labourers.
- 6.1.4 **The progression of national dialogues:** Member State convenors organise series of national dialogues to explore the complex systems challenges that must be explored if national food systems are to shift to where they are expected to be by 2030. **In stage one**, as the national dialogues are initiated, convenors encourage participants to focus on the desired characteristics of food systems by 2030. They indicate the need to focus on the challenges being faced now and the key decisions that must be worked through if the pathways are to become a reality and the SDGs to be achieved. **In stage two**, when dialogues take place in several

⁷ Announced means published on the Gateway www.summitdialogues.org

different locations to explore specific aspects of food systems, the focus is on extensive explorations of options for achieving desired food systems by 2030. This means identifying the priority actions needed for all in society to contribute to ensuring that future food systems are sustainable, equitable and resilient. These are sometimes referred to as the 'game-changing' actions. As the national dialogues approach **their third stage**, when the outcomes of earlier stages are consolidated, the level of convergence and collective ambition will become apparent. Convenors adapt this three stage progression to the national context as well as to local realities, always taking COVID19 risks into account.

6.1.5 **Preparation for the July 2021 pre-summit:**

When they attend the pre-summit in July 2021, different national delegations will have the opportunity to share both the emerging pathways towards food systems of 2030 and the key decisions that need to be worked through now. They will be able to seek others with similar ambitions and collective will, and to encounter the advocates of broader global coalitions around specific issues. They will encounter opportunities for their Governments (and the other stakeholders alongside them) to join international coalitions that make significant commitments for food systems to make the greatest possible contributions to the SDGs.

6.1.6 **The Independent Dialogue Programme:**

The feedback forms from 17 Independent FSS Dialogues were posted on the Summit dialogues website between early November and mid-March 2020. The [Synthesis of Independent Dialogues released in April 2021](#) reveals several complementary trends. Independent and Member State Dialogues both focused on the potential for food systems to impact on climate and to damage ecosystem services as well as on the inequalities among people within food systems. The early evidence of synergy between emerging outcomes of the Member State and independent Dialogues implies that – over time – the combination of Independent and national Dialogue outcomes may contribute to the

development of large-scale propositions for action – proposals which will command the support of a wide range of stakeholders.

6.1.7 **Information that assists decision-makers with trade-offs:**

Both sets of dialogues indicated the range of challenges in food systems and the wide range of choices facing decision-makers. Each decision brings with it both benefits and costs. Scientific analysis helps with decision-making but there will be other factors being considered including the extent each option meets people's needs, reflects the interests of different stakeholders, and is aligned with the power that they are able to exert. Such considerations underline a finding in the Independent Dialogue synthesis: all stakeholders need access to the information required if decisions are to be guided by the principles and goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. This is the information that will be used as trade-offs are re-assessed and decisions are worked through.

6.1.8 **Access to science-based information:**

The Independent Dialogues indicate the urgent need to increase and sharpen investments in targeted education (for example, around the advantages and disadvantages of different dietary patterns), as well as to ensure that relevant information is provided. It should help all concerned to assess the value to societies of different options, such as the prioritization of producer livelihoods over regenerating natural resources, or between saving the best produce for export rather than using it for domestic consumption. Hence, the Independent Dialogue synthesis reflects on the importance of involving scientists in the dialogue process, to inform and to inspire, and thus to contribute to more meaningful decisions. It is to be noted



that all national processes analysed for this synthesis included the participation of scientists in the initiation dialogues.

6.1.9 **The central role of national governments:**

The Synthesis of Independent Dialogues identifies the central role of *government* in policymaking and regulation: it points out the themes on which governments are specifically requested to act. It identifies the need for clarity on the financial flows within food systems, especially the ways in which public funds are used. It notes that in the Independent Dialogues there is little reference to the role of private sector stakeholders. However, national and local businesses, including SMEs, are increasingly invited to participate in member-state dialogues.

6.1.10 **Links between national and independent dialogues:**

Convenors of Member State Dialogues increasingly look to link up with Independent Dialogue Convenors, especially during stage two (extensive exploration), seeking to encourage unusual connections that bring differing perspectives together to bear on specific issues. The interplay between governments, with their broad responsibility for the national interest, and highly motivated independent actors gives an opportunity for exciting explorations that could lead to the emergence of innovative approaches to difficult issues. This connection between the Member State and Independent Dialogues is expected to grow during the coming months. Often, Independent Dialogues will focus on specific topics of interest and those governments that make the link will be able to access the interests and passions of independent groups when developing their national pathways to sustainable and equitable food systems by 2030.

Looking Forward

Further synthesis in the coming months will focus on:

- 1 The evolving FSSD process**, including the number of Member States participating and the scale and content of the FSSDs, whether completed or underway.
- The analysis of how the process is enabling **Member States to move through the key stages of mobilisation of participants at national and sub-national level**, and among all the relevant sectors, through to the inclusive, frank and deep exploration of options for key decisions and game-changing commitments.
- 3 The emerging implications for the content and process** of the Food Systems Summit itself and for the ongoing evolution of food systems among Member States.

Annex:- Progression in the eleven countries submitting feedback for this report

| Country | Convenor nominated | First Dialogue | Number of Dialogues | Feedback Form URLs | Next Steps |
|------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|--|---|
| Bangladesh | 1/12/20 | 21/01/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/2568/official-feedback-2568-en.pdf?t=1614077219 | Three out of six stage two Dialogues have been held with the remaining three postponed due to Covid lockdown restrictions. They are reassessing the timeline to ensure they can contribute to the Summit. |
| Cambodia | 26/11/20 | 18/03/21 | 3 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/2549/official-feedback-2549-en.pdf?t=1611563337 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/9704/official-feedback-9704-en.pdf?t=1617018971 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/7025/official-feedback-7025-en.pdf?t=1615701595 | Cambodia have announced five further Dialogues throughout April but Covid restrictions means they are assessing the approach in the absence of face-to-face meetings in stage one. Stage two will begin with small, focused sessions exploring issues from stage one. |
| Finland | 2/11/20 | 29/01/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/4531/official-feedback-4531-en.pdf?t=1612968023 | One national stage two Dialogue has already taken place and one independent Dialogue for stage two has been announced. |
| Guatemala | 1/12/20 | 25/02/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/4694/official-feedback-4694-es.pdf?t=1618001371 | Five independent Dialogues are planned as part of stage two. Five regional Dialogues with other countries in Central America are being considered |
| Honduras | 5/3/21 | 24/03/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8707/official-feedback-8707-es.pdf?t=1618332086 | Up to ten discussion groups are envisaged as a follow on to the first Dialogue |
| Japan | 14/01/21 | 11/12/21 | 23 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/5831/official-feedback-5831-en.pdf?t=1614161762 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/7820/official-feedback-7820-en.pdf?t=1615805532 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/7841/official-feedback-7841-en.pdf?t=1615806143 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/6074/official-feedback-6074-en.pdf?t=1614162007 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/7844/official-feedback-7844-en.pdf?t=1615806853 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/7847/official-feedback-7847-en.pdf?t=1615807191 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/7852/official-feedback-7852-en.pdf?t=1615807419 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/7857/official-feedback-7857-en.pdf?t=1615807602 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8573/official-feedback-8573-en.pdf?t=1616410726 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8576/official-feedback-8576-en.pdf?t=1616410944 | Japan is engaged in a wide-ranging stage one initiation of Dialogues with different stakeholder groups. Stage two brings specific stakeholder groups together, and for stage three a national dialogue with wide stakeholder participation is planned for June. |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|---|---|--|
| | | | | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/6079/official-feedback-6079-en.pdf?t=1614590014 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8106/official-feedback-8106-en.pdf?t=1616411193 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8108/official-feedback-8108-en.pdf?t=1616411504 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8110/official-feedback-8110-en.pdf?t=1616411842 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8589/official-feedback-8589-en.pdf?t=1616412177 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/9658/official-feedback-9658-en.pdf?t=1617013274 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8113/official-feedback-8113-en.pdf?t=1617013481 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/9691/official-feedback-9691-en.pdf?t=1617013694 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/9697/official-feedback-9697-en.pdf?t=1617019013 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/9700/official-feedback-9700-en.pdf?t=1617013846 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/11095/official-feedback-11095-en.pdf?t=1618213379 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/14019/official-feedback-14019-en.pdf?t=1619487701 https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/13936/official-feedback-13936-en.pdf?t=1619449047 | |
| Kuwait | 1/3/21 | 30/03/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/8054/official-feedback-8054-en.pdf?t=1618157259 | The plan for stage two is being developed with sub-national and thematic Dialogues under consideration |
| Nigeria | 11/12/20 | 23/02/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/2736/official-feedback-2736-en.pdf?t=1615637487 | For stage two, twelve sub-national dialogues are currently being undertaken |
| Sweden | 7/12/20 | 25/01/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/2723/official-feedback-2723-en.pdf?t=1614266561 | Three stage two Dialogues have been undertaken, two at sub-national level and one thematic. A further two thematic Dialogues are under consideration |
| Switzerland | 2/12/20 | 23/03/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/5003/official-feedback-5003-en.pdf?t=1617981610 | A series of city Dialogues in three different linguistic regions of the country are planned in May to address solutions at local level. In addition, three independent Dialogues are planned in April/May. A stage three national dialogue is planned on 8 June aiming at identifying pathways towards sustainable food systems by 2030 and discussing possible commitments from different stakeholders. |
| United States of America | 4/12/20 | 13/01/21 | 1 | https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/1871/official-feedback-1871-en.pdf?t=1614697097 | For stage two, the USA are engaging with a wide range of independent Dialogues. |