

Summary report of key sessions

UN Food Systems Pre-Summit

26 - 28 July 2021



Overview

The UN Food Systems Pre-Summit took place from 26 – 28 July, setting the stage for the culminating global event in September by bringing together diverse actors from around the world to discuss the evolution of food systems, with a view to delivering on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Taking place over three days, the Pre-Summit had over 50 main programme sessions and over 100 affiliated events. Speakers from around the world all shared a similar message; that more ambitious action is required if we are to achieve the UN SDGs, but very few had specific advice on how this could be achieved.

The main programme sessions were more balanced than previous summit dialogues and game-changing solutions presented by the Action Track Leaders. This was surprising given the anti-livestock rhetoric that has been very present to date. However, this may be the result of a growing backlash against the Summit's reported lack of transparency and pre-set agenda.



Opportunities for the egg industry

The Summit leaders state they are looking for actions and solutions to 'transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food'. As producers of high-quality, low impact protein, the egg industry is perfectly placed to lead in this quest.

However, it is vital that we continue to take action to promote eggs as a key nutritional solution, so the essential role eggs play in diets around the world is not overlooked.

Threats to the egg industry

Many speakers referred to a need for solutions to offer a 'just transition'. This language has become highly charged throughout the Summit process, relating to a game-changing solution presented within Action Track 2 which intends to halve livestock production by 2040 and is therefore troublesome for our industry.

The more neutral status of the Pre-Summit sessions masked the anti-livestock agenda which was established at the beginning of the Summit process. The Pre-Summit made very little reference to specific game changing activities already submitted, including the shortlisted solutions which aim to reduce livestock production and consumption. This leaves a big question over what role these will play in the Summit in September, and whether this was a deliberate tactic to appear more balanced.

What comes next?

The UN is currently considering its next steps as we head towards the Summit in September, and it is therefore essential that as an industry we do not lose focus and continue to demonstrate that eggs have a valuable part to play in the future of food systems around the world.

The following report provides an overview of some of the key sessions most relevant to our industry.



The Triple Challenge of Meeting Food, Climate and Biodiversity Goals

- Speakers highlighted that there are only “nine harvests” left to meet the goals set for 2030.
- A need to embrace the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and adopt nature-positive practices was reinforced.
- The experts were in agreement that collaboration across sectors and countries is needed.



This valuable discussion, chaired by David Lane, President of The Annenberg Foundation Trust, confronted the many challenges facing food systems around the world and ways to overcome them.

The global livestock sector, including the IEC, have recently announced their commitment to collaborate with international institutions and others to help achieve the UN SDGs.

Read the full statement [here](#).

The predominant message reinforced throughout this session was the need for collaboration and integration across a range of sectors and countries. The speakers acknowledged a requirement for a “holistic approach” when facing these challenges, in order to achieve the goals set out for 2030 and beyond.

Expert speaker Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary for the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: “We all need state and non-state actors to act together to resolve the food biodiversity and climate crisis in tandem with each other.”

The Voice of Farmers, Fishers, Pastoralists and Other Producers Toward the Food Systems of the Future

- Speakers highlighted inequalities in existing food systems and called for a rebalancing in order to better recognise farmers and producers in the value chain.
- The need for the voices of farmers and producers to be heard at every stage of the decision-making process was emphasised.
- The experts also called for improvements in consumer education regarding the nutritional value of the foods being consumed.

Chaired by Elizabeth Nsimadala, President of the Pan-African Farmers' Organization (PAFO), this session focused on the priorities of farmers, fishers, pastoralists and other producers, the main challenges they face, their solutions and their joint commitment towards achieving sustainable food systems globally.

Inequalities within existing food systems were a central talking point, with Dr. Ishmael Sunga, CEO of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), highlighting that although the food industry is one of the richest in the world, its farmers and producers are some of the most financially insecure. He labelled this a “grossly unfair and unjust situation”, and called for a “rebalancing” of the system.

This viewpoint was reinforced by many of the other expert speakers throughout the course of the discussion, with Gilbert F. Hounoubo, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), asserting that the voices of farmers and producers need to be heard and their views need to be taken into account in all decision-making processes.

The speakers also agreed that solidarity and an open dialogue amongst all players in the food industry is essential to resolving the issues faced. Furthermore, Gordon Bacon, CEO of Pulse Canada and the Global Pulse Confederation, supported a need to help consumers understand the true quality of the food they are eating, and called for better education surrounding these foods from the industry.

Achieving Zero Hunger: Nutritiously and Sustainably

- This session highlighted the difficult challenges the food sector faces in combatting the negative effects of COVID-19 and climate issues, in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.
- A variety of experts from different regions and competencies offered their solutions, with technology and innovation at the core of the rhetoric.
- The need to support small businesses and local farmers was emphasised.

Chaired by Dr. Lawrence Haddad, Leader of Action Track 1 and Executive Director for the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), this session focused on SDG 2, to end world hunger by 2030.

Dr. Haddad introduced the discussion by presenting the challenge, highlighting the latest statistics from The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report and emphasising the need for urgent change in our food systems in order to reverse the recent negative effects of COVID-19, climate and conflict.

Throughout the session, ministers, indigenous peoples, state leaders, farmer groups and business leaders shared their own experiences and presented their proposed solutions.

One of the core areas of focus within the discussion was the wider utilisation

of tried and tested practices that improve productivity and increase availability to vulnerable populations, and the need to use modern technology to achieve change. Irish Baguilat, Coordinator for the UN Decade of Family Farming and Women Farmers' Agenda at Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), said: "Farmers and fishers are committed to bringing our solutions and innovations to this transformation process, to this coalition, while being empowered at the same time."

Furthermore, Ndidi Nwuneli, Managing Partner of Sahel Consulting Agriculture & Nutrition Ltd, highlighted the important role that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will play in abolishing hunger around the world. She added: "Nutrition education is critical to ensure that farmers' livelihoods and nutrition outcomes are improved."

Unleashing the Power of the Plate – for the Health of People and Planet

- Expert speakers discussed the negative effects of unhealthy diets on both the health of humans and the environment, offering a range of suggestions to promote healthy, sustainable consumption globally.
- The session highlighted challenges for the livestock industry in regards to lowering its carbon footprint and minimising biosecurity risks.
- A need to put consumers at the heart of the decision-making process was a key message arising from the discussion.

This detailed session, chaired by Dr. Gunhild Stordalen, Founder and Executive Chair of the EAT Foundation, discussed unhealthy diets and their contribution to global environmental degradation, as well as ill-health and premature deaths around the world.

Key stakeholders took to the stage (or screen) to reflect on a variety of propositions to resolve these issues, and offer concrete examples of how these solutions would work in practice.

"No one single food system is good for everyone."

- H.E. Stefano Patuanelli, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forest Policies of Italy and current presidency of the G20

To begin the discussion, Dr. Stordalen introduced the global challenges in food systems and nutrition, including unbalanced diets, excessive food waste, world hunger and how all these factors have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A central message throughout the session was that not all countries and cultures should be subject to the same food systems, and that what is deemed 'healthy' and 'sustainable' may differ from country-to-country, individually and in different groups. H.E. Stefano Patuanelli, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forest Policies of Italy and current presidency of the G20, said: "No one single food system is good for everyone, nor are there food systems that can be rolled out in every single country."

This idea that context should be considered at all times also featured in a broader discussion of 'plant-based vs animal-source proteins'. Dr. Mario Herrero Acosta, Chief Research Scientist for Agriculture and Food at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), referred to the idea that plant-based foods have lower environmental footprints, but added that it is important to be careful with broad recommendations.

Another focal point of the session was on consumer behaviour, and how consumers can be 'nudged' into choosing healthier, more sustainable options. Dr. Wai-chan Chan, Managing Director of the Consumer Goods Forum

(CGF), stated that it is important to create the right shopping environment and educate people about what they should be eating.

A challenge for livestock farmers and producers arising from this discussion related to zoonotic pathogens, anti-microbial resistance (AMR) and bio-secure practices, which was highlighted by Deputy Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Zsuzsanna Jakab.

It is important to note that although the Pre-Summit appeared to offer a more balanced discussion, Action Track 2 has proposed a number of solutions to reduce consumption of livestock, including a 'Just Transition' to reduce livestock by 50% by 2040.



Feeding the Future: Global Innovations in Sustainable Animal Proteins

- Experts discussed the value animal-source proteins bring to people around the world.
- The particular value they bring to vulnerable populations was highlighted.
- The session also explored ways that innovation can help improve sustainability and productivity in food systems.

At this side event, organised by the International Meat Secretariat (IMS) and supported by the IEC, experts examined the ways in which livestock production and animal-source foods can contribute to sustainability through innovations, looking across the supply chain from feed and inputs to production, processing, packing, distribution and retail.

Ambassador Carlos Cherniak, Permanent Representative of Argentina to FAO*/IFAD**/WFP*** and Moderator of the talk, opened the discussion by emphasising the importance of animal-source proteins in healthy, balanced diets: “The role of animal protein as an essential nutrient cannot be replaced by plant protein.”

* Food and Agriculture Organization

** International Fund for Agricultural Development

*** United Nations World Food Programme

Mr Cherniak highlighted the importance of listening to scientific evidence when discussing nutrition, and hailed the use of technology and the latest innovations to improve sustainability and productivity in food systems.



These opening remarks were followed by a presentation by Lloyd Day, Deputy Director at the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), who concurred with Mr Cherniak’s views, arguing that animal-source protein is essential, especially in vulnerable populations.

"Livestock convert large amounts of by-products and waste material, for which there is no alternative use, into valuable products."

- Lloyd Day, Deputy Director, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

He added: "Livestock convert large amounts of by-products and waste material, for which there is no alternative use, into valuable products" and argued that agriculture needs to be viewed as part of the solution, rather than the problem, in order to move forward productively.

In addition, Assistant Director-General of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and Chair of the Global

Agenda for Sustainable Livestock (GASL), Shirley Tarawali, highlighted the value of animal-source foods to vulnerable populations across the world, and how they can actively contribute to the prevention of stunting in many areas.

The session was very positive for the egg industry, sustaining the important role high-quality, natural proteins, such as eggs, play in improving health outcomes globally.

Help promote the power of eggs

Ensure the voices of egg producers are heard by sharing our pre-prepared social media graphics ahead of the Summit in September.

Click [here](#) to download the graphics, available in English, French or Spanish.



Catch up with the Pre-Summit

Register to watch all the UN Food Systems Pre-Summit events at:
<https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/pre-summit>