



Departementene

REPORT FROM THE MEMBER STATE DIALOGUE IN NORWAY, 15 JUNE 2021

UN Food System Summit 2021 – National Dialogue, Norway

As part of the preparations for the UN Food System Summit 2021, Norway held its national dialogue on 15 June 2021. A total of 90 persons from research organizations, businesses and enterprises in the food system, civil society organizations and authorities participated.

The National Convenor, State Secretary Mr. Widar SKOGAN from The Ministry of Agriculture and Food hosted the dialogue on behalf of the Norwegian Government. The following ministries are closely coordinating the Government's work on sustainable food systems and prepared the dialogue in close cooperation: The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, The Ministry of Climate and Environment, The Ministry of Health and Care Services, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

The meeting took place as an all-digital event over two and half hours. The opening session included a welcoming speech from the national convenor. He described the preparations for the UN Food System Summit, key features of the national food system and underlined the importance of working together across sectors to build a sustainable food system.

Six invited speakers, from the public and private sectors representing research, the agriculture and aquaculture industry, youth, civil society and indigenous people (The Sami Reindeer Herders' Association) gave short comments explaining their role in and expectations to a sustainable food system.

The participants were divided into eight groups to discuss themes relevant for a sustainable food system:

Group 1: Food security and sustainable consumption

Group 2: Sustainable use of natural resources

Group 3: Sustainability in the food value chain

Group 4: Food security preparedness in a changing climate

Group 5: Access to updated, correct and necessary research, knowledge and competence

Group 6: Economic and social sustainability

Group 7: Various forms of production and production factors

Group 8: Norway in the world

The themes for the groups were presented to the participants a few days before the dialogue meeting. The participants were randomly distributed to the groups by the organizers. This ensured a mix of people with different, but relevant, backgrounds in each group. Each group had a pre-selected moderator and a rapporteur. The group discussions had a duration of 45 minutes.

After the 45 minutes of group discussions, all participants came back to a plenary session for a summary of the breakout session. The group moderators reported back from their respective groups according to pre-prepared questions given to them by the organizers. At the end of the meeting the national convenor made a short summary of the highlights from the discussions and the way forward to the UN Food System Summit in September. The summaries of the eight group discussions are included as an annex to this report.

The participants expressed that they were content with the format of dialogue and the mix of invited participants in the group discussions. The diverse background and different perspectives of the participants contributed to rich and diversified discussions, a greater common understanding and illustrated the complexity of the present and future challenges related to sustainable food systems. The participants in the dialogue also stressed the need to follow up the UN Food System Summit in the months and years to come, and they hoped that the Government would reconvene similar dialogue meetings.

In his summary, the National Convenor emphasized that the dialogue has shown us the complexity of these issues and that this kind of dialogue is important in our efforts to establish a common platform of knowledge. The ambitions in the 2030-agenda can be fulfilled only if we secure the same kind of competency throughout society for sustainable and incremental change. He also underlined that a 60 % increase in food production as such by 2050 is not possible. Food and nutrition security can only be achieved through concerted action for sustainable production, better distribution of food and a reduction of food loss and waste. In Norway, national and international food security is linked in a number of ways. We are a large exporter of fish and seafood, and a large importer of feed ingredients. International seasonal workers are important in national food production, especially in the production of vegetables. However, this production is equally dependent on the national resources in terms of land/acreage and production inputs. We need both to secure this part of the food system and cooperation is the key here and not something we can take for granted. SDG 17, on cooperation, is therefore fundamental to tackle the challenges within countries and across borders. Our main job ahead is not the preparations for the summit, but rather our efforts after the summit to achieve the SDGs.

Key messages from the National Dialogue

The discussions in the groups were varied and rich, and the dialogue was good. In general, there was broad consensus around many of the main issues and challenges as well as possible measures to ensure sustainable food systems. Key messages from the dialogue are summarized here under thematic headings as a more focused input from the dialogue and may serve as a guidance to the more detailed summaries from the groups that are annexed to this report. However it was also stressed that the food systems and the understanding of sustainability are complex issues. Given the relatively short time available for discussions, the participants had limited time to delve into details of proposed actions or to elaborate on possible divergent views and priorities.

Sustainable management of natural resources

Biological diversity and ecosystems in good shape, enabling a robust response to climate change and continuously delivering ecosystem services, are prerequisites for sustainable food production and harvesting. Norway should reduce its import of feed from abroad and rather increase the use of grazing and locally produced feed, including from the ocean. Small scale actors in food production are important to ensure local use of natural resources. Land use change, such as mining and establishing wind mills, creates challenges for reindeer herders, and there is need for reducing the converting of agricultural land. Experiences from organic agriculture may contribute towards improved soil health and increased carbon binding in soil. Plant breeding for more diversified and adapted plant material is also needed.

Sustainable management of natural resources is challenging as economic costs related to this are often subjected to the farm level without sufficient economic compensation to the food producers. Another dilemma is that if the costs of more sustainable food products are directly transferred to the consumers, only those who can afford it can buy it.

Important building blocks in the Norwegian food system

Norway has a number of advantages to build on to develop more sustainable food systems. Good governance is well established. There is strong cooperation between the research sector and public as well as private sector. Cooperatives are a strong characteristic of Norwegian agriculture, and public-private cooperation and partnerships are well-working and strong. There is still a large reserve of underutilized resources both on land and in water.

Blue and green food production

There is great opportunity in a strengthened interaction and cooperation between the green and blue side of the food value chain. This would bolster a sustainable food system in Norway. It would also connect national and global food and nutrition security in a better way. There is a need for new and sustainable job-creation, something which requires a strengthened focus on research and innovation in both aquaculture and agriculture.

A more holistic and systemic approach could enable use of new feed ingredients. For instance, seaweed may be used as feed for animals and ruminants. Production should make better use of local resources. We also need more research and knowledge, in addition to technology, in order to trigger the potential for interaction and cooperation between the two sectors in food production. The green sector has good access to new technology, but could utilise resources better. The circular economy can pave the way for cross sectorial collaboration, sustainability and better resource efficiency.

Skills, knowledge and competency

Knowledge must be built from an early age. It is important that the education system teaches children and young people what constitutes a sustainable food system and what possibilities it may offer in terms of career opportunities. The term sustainability is frequently used, but it is important to make sure that everybody knows what sustainability actually means.

Further, a solid basic education including basic knowledge of food, cooking and the origins of food is important to give rise to well-informed consumers in the future. This must be part of lifelong learning and education about the SDGs. Also, for long, there has been poor recruitment of skilled workers to the entire food industry, including catering/restaurants etc. This was a rising challenge before the Covid19-pandemic and the situation has worsened further. All actors in the food system must have access to high quality, reliable and updated knowledge to ensure that national food and nutrition security is upheld. It is therefore a joint challenge for society to secure recruitment to the entire food value chain through coordinated and joint efforts.

Teachers must be continuously updated to build knowledge and competency in children and young people. Courses in sustainability, about the sustainability goals and about what we need to do to reach them should be available to everyone.

Research, technology and development

Research, innovation and new technology is important to further develop and uphold a sustainable food system. The development and implementation of new methods, innovation and new technologies for both green and blue food production is of vital importance. R & D is important in itself, but also to trigger the potential for development in the food system. Research and development of new technologies may also have an important role to play in emergency preparedness as rising temperatures and other climate-related challenges are increasing. It is important that available new technology is adopted by actors in the entire food system.

There is great potential in stronger collaboration between research disciplines, especially between climate and environmental scientists on the one hand and nutrition scientists on the other. An holistic approach is needed in combination with specific research questions leading to practical solutions for actors in the food system. There is also a need for continuous plant breeding for more diversified and adapted plant material.

Consumers and the role of food labelling

Reliable and updated information is important to make sustainable and healthy choices. Consumers must be enabled to make these informed choices based on open and transparent information in the form of food labelling. Competent consumers and trustworthy labelling of food are thus closely linked and necessary to build a sustainable food system. Public procurement should function as a beacon to increase demand for food from sustainable value chains and to change attitudes to steer the food systems towards sustainability.

Sustainability in the entire food value chain

To achieve sustainability in the food value chain, there must be emphasis on all three dimensions of sustainability at the same time. There is a need for further reduced climate gas emissions, reduced food waste, reduced use of unnecessary packaging and reduced littering/pollution of the natural environment. Food loss and waste should be reduced substantially in all parts of the food chain, from producer to the consumer. This requires more knowledge about i.e. harvesting, transport, processing and storage.

A sustainable food system is also one in which all economic actors in the food value chain receive a fair share of the economic revenue. This is a challenge nationally as primary producers are losing out to stronger actors in the food value chain. The Norwegian retail market for food is divided by three major actors and the power distribution in the market is uneven. In the global South there is a similarly uneven situation. The most pressing issue there is poor food producer's right to have their fair share of the profit from food production.

Production factors and production forms

Use of antibiotics and pesticides is low in Norwegian food production, both in aquaculture and in agriculture. Still, there is need for more knowledge about the use of inputs. The low use of antibiotics in Norway is partly linked to our socio-economic system. It is important to keep the consensus that antibiotics is an input that needs to be minimized, and that it's possible to produce food with low use of antibiotics. In this, it is imperative to take a systematic approach and see blue and green sector as one, in combination with the environment, to keep this good status. This is One Health in practice and shows clearly that animal and human health are interconnected. Healthy animals and good

animal welfare with low use of medicines are positive for food security and also important to build confidence among consumers.

Regulations and subsidies - the role of the state

We do need regulations and other legal measures to ensure sustainable food systems. The state has an important role to play in formalizing demands for all actors in the food value chain and for ensuring that there is a consistency in policies and regulations which are relevant to the food system. Regulations need to adapt to the development, and must be knowledge based. There is a need for more research. Subsidies must be used wisely to ensure sustainable development on all accounts. There must be clear obligations, such as the new Transparency Act, for businesses to ensure that they contribute positively to sustainable development at home and abroad. Economic incentives are powerful tools to ensure sustainability. It should be profitable to be sustainable, state regulations should be formulated accordingly.

Sustainability is context-specific

The three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, environmental and societal – are in many ways aggregate measures. We should not overlook the fact that sustainability is also context-specific both in time and space. There will be dilemmas which must be dealt with on a day-to-day basis at the same time as we feel a sense of urgency and the need to act fast. The most striking dilemma is precisely the need for rapid transformation in the food system whereas traditionally change and development in the sector is incremental. This may be offset by clearer demands and definitions and also regulations to ensure a development towards more sustainable food systems. A suggestion came up to establish an "ombudsman for the future " who can assist us in thinking more globally and long term and to strengthen the perspectives of the youth.

Divergent views

In general, there was broad consensus on many issues. Despite this, some divergence in views were identified in regards to the following:

- The degree of urgency: some stress the urgent need for rapid change of the food systems, while others are of the view that changes should be gradual and step-wise. Some highlight the dilemma between the need for rapid transformation in food and agriculture whereas change in this sector is normally slow and incremental. There is broad consensus that changes and transformation should be knowledge based.
- The need for transformation: Some stressed that the challenges in Norway are different from other parts of the world and there is less need for transformation. Others highlighted the potential for improvement also in Norway and that e.g. more improved Norwegian food systems, including reduced import of feed and climate emissions, could also have positive impacts in the rest of the world. There is also a lack of consensus of what constitutes a sustainable diet.
- Possible options for transformation: some highlighted that there is huge potential for transformation also in Norway. E.g. large areas are used to grazing and more plant based diets could be more efficient land use. Others stressed the challenging topographic and climate of Norway, with limited potential to cultivate different crops. Broad consensus that public support and clear regulations are prerequisite for improved sustainability in food systems.