

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Tuesday, 27 April 2021
DIALOGUE TITLE	Pathways for the future of food systems in the Mediterranean
CONVENED BY	CIHEAM; FAO; UfMS; UN One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme; PRIMA Foundation
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/6814/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	No borders

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

132

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0 0-18 5 19-30 68 31-50 48 51-65 11 66-80 80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

74 Male 55 Female 3 Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

2	Agriculture/crops	35	Education	2	Health care
8	Fish and aquaculture		Communication		Nutrition
	Livestock	3	Food processing	8	National or local government
5	Agro-forestry		Food retail, markets		Utilities
25	Environment and ecology	1	Food industry		Industrial
4	Trade and commerce		Financial Services	39	Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

4	Small/medium enterprise/artisan		Workers and trade union
1	Large national business		Member of Parliament
3	Multi-national corporation	5	Local authority
1	Small-scale farmer	12	Government and national institution
1	Medium-scale farmer	4	Regional economic community
	Large-scale farmer	26	United Nations
5	Local Non-Governmental Organization		International financial institution
14	International Non-Governmental Organization	1	Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance
	Indigenous People		Consumer group
38	Science and academia	17	Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

The five convenors paid careful attention to ensuring that the Summit principles of engagement were fully incorporated in the organization of this dialogue. The urgency to act for accelerating progress on the achievement of the SDGs in the Mediterranean by 2030 was strongly highlighted. The participants were identified and invited from diverse stakeholder groups, ensuring balance in gender and geographical representation from countries on all shores of the Mediterranean. The eight discussion topics were designed as entry points to capture the multiple aspects and perspectives of the complexity of food systems. The facilitators and notetakers of the discussion groups were carefully briefed to ensure that they created a space for dialogue that was conducive to respect and trust. Participants in the eight discussion groups were able to openly voice their opinions and exchange broadly on potential solutions to the complex and interconnected challenges that Mediterranean food systems are facing. This Dialogue acted as a catalyst of people, organizations and existing networks that have the potential to join forces and bring concrete impact on the ground, leading food systems in the Mediterranean towards sustainability, ultimately advancing regional progress on the 2030 Agenda. All participants embraced the principle of “acting with urgency”, recognizing the importance of accelerating the pace of change in their recommendations and committing to act. They were all committed to contribute to the Food Systems Summit’s preparation and follow-up, recognizing it as an important milestone to catalyse further action on the transformation of food systems in the Mediterranean.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

The design of the Dialogue reflected the principles of complexity, respect and trust. Discussions in the eight groups were open and enriching for all participants, and followed the Chatham House rule. The 130+ participants were all given the opportunity to voice their opinions equally and inclusively in the discussion sessions. Participants came from 21 different countries across the Mediterranean and beyond, and belonged to more than 13 different stakeholders groups. The discussion sessions served their purpose of highlighting new and linking up already existing game-changing ideas and science- and knowledge-based solutions for the coming years, highly relevant in the context of the Summit’s vision, Action Tracks and Levers of Change. Reflections highlighted the complexity of food systems and the urgent necessity of a common understanding that could lead to the development of a SFS conceptual framework specific to the Mediterranean context, taking into consideration local specificities and cultural aspects. The Dialogue was also an opportunity for some stakeholders to link up and continue the discussions further in other contexts, such as the “SFS-MED Platform”, a multi-stakeholder initiative currently under co-development by CIHEAM, FAO and UfMS, as an affiliated project of the One Planet network’s Sustainable Food Systems Programme (OPN-SFSP).

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

Bringing together stakeholders groups that are very different can be challenging, but is a crucial opportunity to capitalize on ideas emerging from possible areas of divergence, and to create synergies and partnerships with potentially high impact on areas of consensus.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

Yes

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The first SFS-MED Independent Food Systems Summit Dialogue on “Pathways for the future of food systems in the Mediterranean” was conceived with the aim of fostering a broader common understanding of the complex environment of Sustainable Food Systems (SFS), with a context-specific focus on the Mediterranean. The Dialogue allowed the identification of pathways based on both science and local knowledge for coping with the multiple and interdependent challenges that the region is facing, further exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objectives of the Dialogue were:

- Ensuring a deeper understanding of the interconnections and interdependences within Mediterranean food systems at every stage (from production, processing, distribution, marketing to the consumption of food, including food waste), based on consolidated scientific evidence and local knowledge.
- Catalysing joint action, using the Mediterranean Diet as one of the levers to improve the sustainability and resilience of Mediterranean food systems, by bridging Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP).
- Engaging a wide network of food systems stakeholders within the broader frameworks of green, blue and circular economy, to design future scenarios of sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean region.

More than 130 participants from different geographical locations and stakeholder groups came together to explore the complexity of sustainable food systems and to advance a common understanding through inclusive discussions in eight discussion groups. The eight break-out sessions, each focusing on a given key entry point for more sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean, were:

1. Leveraging the science-policy nexus to understand interconnections and interdependences within Mediterranean food systems;
2. Sustainable food from the sea: a key pillar of an SDG-oriented blue and circular economy in the Mediterranean;
3. Towards a green and circular economy for sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean;
4. Sustainable management of land and water in the context of climate change in the Mediterranean;
5. The Mediterranean diet as a lever for sustainable consumption and production in the Mediterranean;
6. The role of cities in building more sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean;
7. Equitable and inclusive livelihoods in food systems through skills and entrepreneurship;
8. Technological and organizational innovation for accelerating food systems transformation to achieve the SDGs in the Mediterranean.

Thanks to the high participation rate and the effective coordination provided by the facilitators and notetakers, the discussion sessions were extremely fruitful; the outcomes of this first Dialogue will be a core component of the second on 21 June 2021 (<https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/15756>), during which high-level participants will exchange views on the key enablers needed to advance food systems’ sustainability in the Mediterranean.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ 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

KEYWORDS

- Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
- Data & Evidence
- ✓ Governance
- Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

One key outcome that emerged from this first SFS-MED Dialogue was the need to strengthen a common understanding of sustainable food systems and their complexities, through a holistic approach, specific for the Mediterranean context. It was recognized that the multiple challenges of the Mediterranean, further exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are deeply interrelated. Food system transformation is a very complex and dynamic process that requires considering food systems in their entirety, linking production and consumption, and in a cross-sectorial as well as inter-disciplinary manner. The importance of the nexus approach, which allows to connect and valorise the connection among different aspects and areas related to food, was also acknowledged. To this effect, it was recognised that: green, blue and circular economy are pivotal to food systems transformation; mainstreaming biodiversity and sustainable land and water management are key issues to climate change resilience; sustainable fisheries and aquaculture are also central to improve the sustainability of food systems; cities and local food policies play a critical role in moving towards more sustainable food systems. Furthermore, the Mediterranean diet was highlighted as one of the levers of change for bridging sustainable consumption and production.

Solutions alone, however, were recognized as not enough: they need to be taken up by stakeholders in a collaborative manner. Common, crosscutting aspects highlighted in all discussion groups include:

- The need of multi-stakeholder dialogue on SFS among all shores of the Mediterranean. Platforms and networks were recognized by most of the groups as important mechanisms to raise awareness, share lessons and ideas, co-create solutions and approaches, foster action, etc.
- Integrated policies and governance as key to promote the sustainability of food systems in the Mediterranean region. This emerged throughout all the entry points considered, e.g.: pricing, regulatory frameworks, voluntary guidelines, food procurement, school feeding, education programmes, food waste and circular economy, links with tourism, among others.
- Finance and investment (public and private) for enabling the transformation of food systems towards sustainability, with a focus on inclusiveness.
- The crucial role of innovation, sustainable technologies, digitalization and data, both quantitative and qualitative. These need to be inclusive and accessible especially to small-scale farmers, fishers and small-holders.
- Education, training and awareness raising as potential game changers in transforming both production and consumption patterns.
- Other crosscutting actions touching different entry points, such as shortening food value chains, food labelling, etc. as mechanisms to improve the sustainability of food systems as a whole.
- Research and evidence generation to identify and upscale resilient and sustainable solutions and to advice investors/policy makers on sustainable choices.

The inception of the SFS-MED Platform, under co-development by CIHEAM, FAO and UfMS as an affiliated initiative of the OPN-SFSP, was foreseen as a solution to integrate different entry points and networks/initiatives under a common sustainable food systems approach.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/8

- Bottlenecks:

- o Need for holistic food systems policies, that are based on both science and local knowledge;
- o Need to address trade-offs among different sustainability dimensions and also among different food systems actors;
- o Overcome the silos of knowledge and disciplinary boundaries;
- o The need for reliable data both quantitative, and especially qualitative;
- o Counter power imbalances by participatory decision making;
- o Directing trans-disciplinary science to involve the civil society;
- o The overriding importance of political will;
- o The need for transformational changes in the whole system

- Concrete Actions:

- o Include all relevant stakeholders, including science, civil society, and in particular also those that are the most vulnerable in our food systems, in the policy-making process.
- o Inclusive multi-stakeholder mechanisms to allow for participatory decision-making that address power imbalances among food systems actors;
- o Encourage “productive conflict” for problem solving together with mutual trust and respect, placing producers and vulnerable groups at the centre as co-decision-makers and co-innovators;
- o Ensure proper governance;
- o Develop the concept of local territories to shorten value chains and provide livelihoods.

- Key examples (positive deviants) of success:

- o City level food councils
- o Examples from France, Morocco (generation green and zero pesticides) as well as local and national level food policy or advisory councils as new mechanisms for collaborative decision-making and implementation (e.g. Canada);
- o In Italy, school mealtime as an educative experience to learn about sustainability – eating fruits and vegetables, avoiding waste and develop social skills in eating behavior around the table (culture);
- o Agricultural transformation to work closer with farmer’s market and the local populations in order to shorten value chains and advance the 13 principles on agroecology and other innovations of the HLPE report.

- Note:

All of the discussions concerning Sustainable Food Systems have been overshadowed by the current COVID pandemic. While the health outcomes continue to be tragic, the economic fall-outs have yet to make their full impact and are likely to be a global problem in the coming years especially regarding small scale farmers, SMEs and livelihoods in the hospitality sector and more. Hence, resilience and coping strategies, as well as availability, accessibility, stability and agency dimensions to food security, must now be factored into all our deliberations towards the Food Systems Summit.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/8

- Improving the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture practices in the Mediterranean basin
In spite of positive changes, the sustainability of fisheries in the region remains a critical issue. On the other hand, the continuous growth of aquaculture provides sustainability issues related to the farm models and their practices.
 - o Supporting research on organic aquaculture
 - o Supporting research and private investments on low trophic species, and new seafood products (i.e.: algae)
 - o Supporting the adoption of fisheries management plans at local level – Technical assistants by scientific research centres
 - o Regional Platform for the digitalization and data collection on fisheries and aquaculture
 - o Promoting research on low-impact fishing and aquaculture practices (i.e.: bio-plastic nets for mussels, selectivity of fishing gears)
 - o Regional Network on Best practices for a sustainable fisheries and aquaculture
- Increasing the added value of seafood products
Low income and losses in the seafood value chain as well as the unequal distribution of economic returns among different actors is too high and interventions are needed to balance
 - o Research on nutritional properties of new species and improving the general awareness – Basket of new seafood products
 - o Design and promote a label or recognition system for Mediterranean seafood (diet) products integrating all sustainability dimensions (also enhancing origin)
 - o Design of innovative landing site for the proper management of the seafood value chain and marine litter management on land
 - o Design of Community Lab for processing the SSF products (not highly valued fish, overfishing, commercial value fish) respecting the seafood quality and safety standards
 - o Technical assistance program for supporting innovation in the seafood industrial development: zero waste, better exploitation of by-catch and by-products.
 - o Structuring of social security system for SSF operators
 - o Traceability and control of origin of seafood products (fighting IUU fishing)
- Negative impacts of pollution (plastics and contaminants) and anthropogenic activities on environmental quality of the sea
The Mediterranean Sea is one of the areas most affected by marine litter. Impacts vary: entanglement and ingestion, bio-accumulation and bio-magnification of toxins, introduction of invasive species, damages habitats, etc. The achievement of the conservation goals is hampered.
 - o Promoting Regional Network and supporting actions and plans for the monitoring activities on marine litter (on the sea and biota) and anthropogenic activities impacts
 - o Supporting the decarbonization and maritime activities more eco-friendly
 - o Promoting and drafting regional recommendations for improving the national legislative frameworks for the marine litter collection by fishermen
 - o Design of innovative landing site for the proper management of the seafood value chain and marine litter management on land.
- Supporting skills and entrepreneurship of fishermen and aquaculture operators
Human resource development needs to be carried out thoroughly, directed and integrated in various fields, especially when the main activity fishery, is a high-risk business which needs to promote the diversification of income, generational change, and gender inclusion.
 - o Improving and providing proper capacity building pathways for SSF operators aimed at increasing added value of seafood products and promoting diversification of economic activities, multi-functionality, direct sale, entrepreneurship.

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KEYWORDS

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		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/8

Set in place instruments, mechanisms, programs/projects for the development of greener and circular food systems:

- Improve the efficiency and sustainability of resources use in agriculture and food-processing industry in order to minimize biodiversity losses, climate change impacts and pollution generation;
- Promote circular business models and value chains to maximize the economic value of material, energy and waste flows in food production and consumption, including valorisation of the biomass residues into bio fertilizers and bioproducts within other industrial sectors, while preventing food loss and food waste;
- Minimize the carbon and water footprint of food production, processing and distribution systems by employing more sustainable and resilient food production practices, technologies and renewable energy sources and taking into account also the WEFE (Water Energy Food Ecosystems) nexus perspective;
- Sensitize consumers through awareness raising and ecolabeling for food products to foster demand, acceptance and competitiveness of sustainable products and quality standards;
- Revise regulatory frameworks and adopt appropriate fiscal measures, remove harmful subsidies and mainstream economic incentives; build capacity of local financial institution to boost sustainable financing for SFS in the Mediterranean in order to support transformative, structural changes of food systems;
- Strengthen skills and training across different actors of the value chain, creating communities of green entrepreneurs, foster innovative solutions in the agri-food sector; especially for women and youth;
- Promote organic farming to protect biodiversity, minimize use of chemical fertilizers and enable carbon sequestration while contributing to the supply of sustainable and healthy food;
- Value and promote local markets, shorten food value chains, promoting producer-to-consumer networks as well as food public procurement that promotes fair and sustainable food production.

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KEYWORDS

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✓	Innovation		Data & Evidence
	Human rights		Governance
✓	Women & Youth Empowerment	✓	Trade-offs
		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/8

• Strategic level:

- o Sustainable land and water management (SLWM) become strategic priorities for the Mediterranean.
- o Immediate multi-stakeholders and multi-sectors action to enhance resilience governance that sustains water and land resources and to achieve livelihoods and communities well-being.
- o Establish a regional platform to support SLWM, invest in north-south and south-south cooperation, knowledge exchange, best practices sharing and capacities building for all.
- o Use of costs/benefit analyses for implementing resilience activities.
- o Enhance entrepreneurship in innovative solutions for SLWM and improve investment environment for MSMSE, Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises, that de-risks the business of farming.
- o Define Standardized/harmonized indicators for monitoring of land and water degradation at region level.
- o Review policies at national/regional levels relevant to SFS transformation, including financial incentives.
- o Provide evidence of cost/benefit resilient solutions to advice investors/policy makers on sustainable choices on water, soil, markets, incentives, as current policies and markets incentives push for cereal mono-cropping, leading to food insecurity, imports and prices inflation.
- o Properly consider the correlation between environment governance schemes and appropriate technologies in the design of land and water management policies or interventions.
- o Mainstream WEFE Nexus approach in the national and regional LWM strategies, as in the sustainable growth planning processes.
- o Better understand WEFE within the same context of integrated ecosystems approach and systemic approach, to improve socio-economic-ecological systems response to climate change and maintain a satisfactory services delivery.
- o Harmonise farming strategies with values: tackle the ethical concerns on food production.
- o Highly consider small farmers concerns regarding the SFS: i) Need to access to financial solutions: innovative, equitable and sustainable ii) Better control the value chains to enhance the marketing potential of local products, iii) adopt encouraging pricing policies to produce sustainably while having reasonable benefits, iv) provide and apply relevant political support at on economic , private investment boosting or climate resilience solutions.
- o Apply Economic evaluation of food systems approaches and trade-offs: cost/benefit analysis help decision making to identify appropriate action on water/land management for food systems.
- o Highlight the role of agriculture in the human well-being, as well the potential of farmers in food production.

• Operational level

- o Highlight the grassroots responses to climate change effects on land and water resources.
- o Strengthen diversified and combined farming systems to revive indigenous crops and diets.
- o Implement the circularity principle in the farming systems i.e. recycling of water and products.
- o Invest in technical solutions for productivity with less water i.e. grey water reuse, water harvest, etc especially in the Southern Mediterranean countries that are more fragile to climate hazards.
- o Scale up technologies and local knowledge to enhance SFS implementation and transformation.
- o Scale-up available cascade of tools, mechanisms and best practices at regional level.
- o Use of friendly and low-cost technology, that is available, relevant and context tailored, and that have benefits in more in one area of WEFE.
- o Farming systems need to allow to balance sustainable consumption with sustainable production and promote better relationship between urban and rural sectors.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/8

Consumer understanding of a sustainable diet is limited. Stakeholders need to raise consumer awareness on the value of the Mediterranean diet (MedD) as a sustainable diet, protecting it as cultural heritage, halting its erosion and harnessing its role in resilience. Any voluntary guidelines for a sustainable, healthy MedD need to be country-specific.

Possible actions

Country:

- Study interactions between population groups and various food environments to identify facilitators and barriers for adopting a sustainable MedD.
- Develop targeted MedD campaigns for diverse population groups. Messages should address prevailing food consumption patterns and country production, cultural identity, and aim to reduce less desirable eating habits and increase desirable ones.
- Develop food-based dietary guidelines which are aligned with all MedD sustainability dimensions. Use them to guide actions along the production-consumption chain.

Mediterranean region:

- Develop a 3-year plan of action based on data-driven voluntary guidelines for a sustainable MedD to be piloted in select Mediterranean countries.
- Organise regular conferences and produce a documentary on revitalisation of the MedD.

Policies will need to be reviewed/introduced so that sustainable consumption and production are mainstreamed in Mediterranean food systems. Since food systems interface with different sectors, dialogue between policymakers for integrated policies and policy coherence is crucial.

Possible actions

Country:

- Conduct a situational analysis sensitive to the political context as this impacts food systems policy priorities and implementation.
- Develop structures for an integrated approach when reviewing/developing policy (e.g. involve agriculture, health, environment, trade, safety, education) due to potential synergies and trade-offs.
- Organise for community engagement in policy drafting and implementation
- Prioritise

- o Information and communication policies as these are central to the revitalisation of the MedD.

- o Education and training policies targeting different stakeholders (e.g. agriculture/fisheries, catering, mass/artisanal food producers) and age groups (e.g. children/youth as change agents) so that MedD adoption is facilitated based on desirability, accessibility etc.

- o Pricing policy to make a sustainable MedD affordable.

- o Regulatory measures on marketing in the agri-food and fisheries sectors. Improve transparency to foster the consumer trust needed for MedD adoption.

Knowledge sharing and digital technology are crucial for innovation in the agri-food and fisheries sectors to promote and sustain the MedD. Bridging the gap between academia and the food industry is key.

Possible actions

- Set up platforms to promote collaboration between stakeholders:

- o Share research done in academic institutions (e.g. use government training or business incubation centres, co-operatives, farmer/fisher associations, online communities of practice) for food product innovation or marketing.

- o Organise transdisciplinary projects for tertiary students (e.g. sustainability, management, health, education) on real problems in the agri-food and fisheries sectors.

- o Offer opportunities for young people to become MedD innovators/entrepreneurs (e.g. contests, seed funding)

- o Conduct market research to reassure producers of the economic value of MedD revitalisation.

- o Establish country/regional food labelling or a quality seal for the Mediterranean agri-food and fisheries sectors, integrating sustainability dimensions as feasible.

- o Organise a travelling trade/consumer fair promoting MD

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 6/8

- The UN New Urban Agenda (2016) recognizes the centrality of food security and nutrition in planning for sustainable cities. Over 200 cities of the world have signed the Milan Urban Food Policy pact, pledging to «develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse». The FAO has developed a framework for the Urban Food Agenda, and the CFS has developed Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition.
- Several actions were proposed as potential game-changers to support food systems transformation in the Mediterranean:
- Promote integrated urban/local food policies with a focus of territorial systems, considering the links between town and countryside, as a way to adopt a systemic approach. Examples include food procurement, school feeding, education programmes, food waste and circular economy, links with tourism, among others; policy support should also include actions to promote the inclusion of food systems in urban territorial planning in Mediterranean cities.
- Support multi-stakeholder governance at local level, such as Food Policy Councils, food alliances or similar governance tools in Mediterranean cities to include all voices in the decision-making related to food in cities, as well as to facilitate alignment among different levels where food policy is developed and/or implemented.
- Promote and support food systems networks in the Mediterranean, involving cities from all shores (Northern, Southern, Eastern). These may include networks of cities (e.g. possibly within existing networks, such as the MUFPP) and networks of practitioners (e.g. within existing platforms, such as the SFS-MED Platform). Such networks have a critical role not only to raise awareness and exchange experiences and knowledge, but also to push the change in policies, legislations and consumers perceptions.
- Improve availability and quality of data and information on food systems at local level to inform the development of local policies, including through food systems assessments, mapping of food systems and stakeholders at local level in the Mediterranean, assessment of the impact of policies on sustainability dimensions (including nutrition), and others.
- Promote knowledge sharing, in particular of innovative practices on citizen-driven food system transformation and other existing good practices and local experiences in leveraging the role of cities for more sustainable food systems. A first step could be to map and consolidate what is known already (including from traditional systems, policy, governance, technologies, etc.) within a knowledge platform on Mediterranean cities and local food systems. Another channel is organizing city-to-city exchanges and knowledge sharing events.
- Opportunities include digitalisation, as a way to facilitate a change of organizational patterns between consumers and producers, e.g. supporting the efficiency of short food supply chains, and to give small farmers more power and access to diverse markets and information.
- Ongoing processes, such as the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, the Food Systems Summit at global level, and the SFS-MED Platform at regional level provide an opportunity to open-up to other countries and to link up initiatives at municipal level to higher levels (regional, national, international) in order to facilitate the implementation of the above actions.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 7/8

- Youth and women constitute a huge resource as agent for change and the future of each country's development. They are and can be a catalyst for positive change and a source of creativity and innovation, if an enabling environment is provided.
- In the MENA region, the female labour force participation rate is about 20% - the lowest in the world.
- There is a general need to invest in processes that boost gender equality, breaking silos training, building professionalization pathways and avoiding "itemising" youth and women empowerment, instead pushing for horizontal integration in Food Systems. In order to this, co-creation and co-design is key. Particularly, women need to be fully recognized as agents of change.
- Innovative approaches, such as social economy based on social inclusion and right based agriculture are also their role to play in job creation for all.
- Other risks of exclusion are brought by skill mismatch, which risks leaving behind youth whose skills are not responding to the labour market or are unable to create enterprises. There is therefore a need for fostering employability and entrepreneurship in the region using SFS as a lever (e.g. targeting food production for improving child nutrition).
- Innovation and communication systems easily involve youth. ICT can be used for increasing information about agriculture through participatory systems.
- We need to increase awareness of Food systems through all sectors, including social, climate change, food security, ITC for rural women, which are the majority in rural areas (60%). Awareness contributes also to shaping consumer demand, which in turn influences the economy. Pilot actions should also be considering approaches on a sub-region level.
- We need to improve data gathering in rural area and also do a proper recognition of existing funding instruments.
- There is a need to understand how to minimize trade-offs, e.g. in the case of innovation (see below).
- Research and academia can contribute significantly more to development and a systemic effort should be done in order to explore how to ensure this connection. Additionally, most efforts are done on startups and established initiatives, while more should be done for investing in transition, from startup to stability. Research needs to be more connected to the field, and pilot actions can help on this regard.
- Research bodies in earth and maritime sciences should integrate gender studies. At the moment this is insufficient, and this is important because trained students are tomorrow's policymakers.

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			Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 8/8

The group has reiterated the multi-faceted aspect of innovation, intended to be technological, organizational, social and ecological. The different dimensions have been highlighted, including frugal innovation and those experiences that enhance a stronger connection between farmers and consumers.

Political and institutional stability is much needed in the region and it is considered a pre-condition for innovative ecosystems. Therefore, adequate support by relevant organizations is required, as well as more coherent and ambitious investments plans towards research and innovation.

A first concrete action to be considered is an incentive for researchers to opt for innovation with specific rewards and recognition for their professional advancements. Too often, in fact, academia requires researchers to mainly focus on publications and theoretical knowledge disregarding applied research, with the consequence that oftentimes researchers do not engage in confronting challenge-based solutions, or market-oriented innovations, since these experiences would have a very limited impact for their professional career. Bridging the gap between University and Business might be beneficial in favouring an innovative ecosystem.

An important legal framework and support concerning the protection of Intellectual Property is also considered useful in promoting innovation. The current mechanisms are perceived as inadequate and unfriendly for researchers and innovators in the region. To strengthen further innovation, a suggested action entails putting in place or strengthening existing financial mechanisms to de-risk the costs related to innovation. Specific insurance schemes or financial support for early stage innovation could be expanded and mainstreamed, thanks to the relevant public and private alliance.

Considering the multi-dimension of innovation and the specificities of the Mediterranean area, it is worth emphasizing that specific profiles and expertise are required. To that end, it would be impactful to invest in education and learning activities meant to create those competences and professional figures, such as innovation brokers, that could facilitate the uptake of innovation, promote access to it and implement scaling-up tracks. Investing in those competences and profiles would enhance the transfer of knowledge from research centres to applied fields. In this perspective, in addition to innovation brokers and innovation managers as key figures to be valorised, a pivotal role is also attributed to those centres such as living labs, characterized by a multi-stakeholder, where a co-creation experience can take place, oftentimes with a specific challenge-based approach.

The debate has also put together innovation and Mediterranean Diet. The latter is well aligned with the different dimensions of sustainability (economic, social, environmental) and it has a positive contribution in terms of health. Therefore, the valorisation of the Med diet can constitute a lever for innovation for the business sector, which is progressively called upon to adopt sustainable models. In that transition, innovation is a fundamental instrument.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ 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

KEYWORDS

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| ✓ | Finance | ✓ | Policy |
| ✓ | Innovation | ✓ | Data & Evidence |
| | Human rights | ✓ | Governance |
| | Women & Youth Empowerment | ✓ | Trade-offs |
| | | | Environment and Climate |

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

No critical divergences emerged between participants' views and opinions, although some potential areas of conflict/trade-off were identified:

- Discussions on actions are driven by political concepts, preventing their translation into on-the-ground actions, and not shaped to real priorities and challenges specific to the Mediterranean context.
- The challenge of the diversity of Mediterranean countries, the variety of their food cultures and systems, and how dietary patterns differ across dimensions (environmental, economic, socio-cultural, health) and countries emerged strongly. Devising a single, common label that addresses all sustainability dimensions was also acknowledged to be a challenge.
- Decision-making processes were felt to not always be inclusive of all stakeholders, in particular the most vulnerable. For example, it was noted that while sustainable development is linked to innovation and there is a general need for new ideas, there are possible trade-offs in terms of social inclusion. We need to be vigilant in order to avoid that technology fosters exclusion in the most fragile parts of society. Women can lead on this process. Exchanges and peer to peer interactions were recognised as providing a way to bridge the skill gap in this regard.
- How to overcome the limited interaction between SMEs and R&I Centres was debated. To manage this aspect, it was recognized that it would be useful to promote innovation-transfer pathways, co-creation experiences (e.g. living labs), knowledge-exchanges, and greater recognition of different professional development for researchers and academics.

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KEYWORDS

- Finance
- Innovation
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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Second SFS-MED FSS Dialogue - "Pathways for the future of sustainable food systems in the Mediterranean"**
<https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/15756/>