

2020 Food Summit Follow Up – St George’s House Consultation

12th July 2021

Meeting note

This meeting followed the [St George's House Consultation Protocol](#) in order to encourage full and open discussion. No comments made during the Consultation should be attributed to individuals as per the Chatham House Rule. This note is a summary of the general discussion, proposed actions, and a list of participants. It can be shared within the participants’ organisations on the basis that the private nature of the discussion is respected.

Background

This meeting was convened to help build cross-sectoral collaboration between sectors of international civil society organisations (CSOs) on food systems change. It follows recognition by a group of CSO leaders that food and agricultural systems are core to all their organisations’ strategies, and that the scale of change needed will only be achieved by a collaborative response.

It is widely anticipated that the outcomes of the UN Food System Summit will be limited, and civil society actors need to build a medium-term collaborative strategy to catalyse change that harnesses the outcomes from the UNFSS, COP26 and COP15. This requires cross-sectoral alignment on food system reform and the development of joint narratives, in order to lead the conversation on global food system reform.

A neutral convening platform is being provided by [St George’s House](#). Situated within Windsor Castle and established by the late HRH Prince Phillip, St George’s House has a long track record and global reach in bringing together cross-sector participants for high-level dialogue, including on food and agriculture. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew are a supporting partner in this dialogue and have helped convene meetings. The process to date has been chaired and facilitated by David Nussbaum (CEO of The Elders) and Mike Clarke (Visiting Professor, Southampton University). Compassion in World Farming are providing budgetary support for capacity building.

Main discussion points

1 Food systems and effecting change

People have woken up to food.

The IPBES and IPCC land use reports have demonstrated that tackling climate heating is not just a case of decarbonising energy – it is clear that food is becoming core to climate strategy. Land and food are strategically significant from the perspective of power/social justice perspective and inter-generational equity. The climate-nature-food crisis is so big that it can only be tackled at a systems level. The debate is at a much earlier stage in a journey compared to the UNFCCC (and CBD) agenda.

The need has become all the more acute. Since the pandemic began, Covid-19 has plunged at least another 130 million people into food insecurity, and the trajectory of nature loss and climate heating continues to accelerate. In the next few years, food systems will be at the intersection of the action pathways needed for a net zero climate response and a nature-positive future, and for tackling the related growing global inequalities.

And it is urgent – food and land-use reform is a growing strategic imperative for global organisations.

2 The UNFSS

We need to be clear that the UNFSS is not going to deliver sufficient change in outcomes.

BUT, the UNFSS has started a political journey and process of engagement, which has the potential to shift normative thinking by the global policy community (UN) and Member States.

We need to be clear about the extent to which the UNFSS can be a catalyst of change itself as opposed to an enabling framework for Member States to regulate the controls on land-use and food production and consumption.

3 Collaborating for collective impact

The main power asset of this group is the ability to shift attitudes and social norms through civil society campaigning, advocacy and education. The immediate challenge is to work out how to come together to be more powerful, while remaining true to each organisations' DNA. We need to review whose voices are involved and how to enable them. The conversation needs to evolve with others. We need to find a way to remain connected to government and business sectors, while concentrating on more effective civil society collaboration which is a huge task in itself (if it was easy we would be doing it already).

To have impact together on the global policy agenda (normative thinking) it is clear that we need a common, over-arching narrative – but we need to recognise that cross-sectoral collaboration on food system change is less mature than some other agendas. We need to understand and work out to how to manage tensions between different strategic goals – for example:

- How do we align poverty reduction and nature recovery/environmental restoration?
- What does change in practice need to look like to achieve sufficient change in outcomes to stay within a safe, just space for humanity and nature?
- What are the solutions around which we can coalesce that can hit multiple (SDG) goals?

The UNFSS and major COPs this year are important, but they are just the start point of moving food to a higher strategic level. Action is needed now to realise a major opportunity to embed the food systems in the UN agenda for the next decade. Collective review of the UNFSS soon after it happens will be crucial.

Narrative-building should be a key goal but we first need to surface differences and sticking points that are potential barriers to collaboration. St George's House is well placed to support this task, which is potentially the focus for the residential Consultation meeting (early next year).

Proposed Actions

1. Widen participation – all to provide suggestions/contacts for other allies to join us (and diversify)
2. Review outcomes from UNFSS in early October (meet 1st couple of weeks October)
3. Agree future strategy
4. Plan a residential Consultation meeting at St George's House early next year to find solutions to potential barriers to collaboration that allow us to frame a shared narrative.

Attendees

Gary McKeone, Programme Director, St George's House and Host

David Nussbaum, CEO, The Elders and Chair

Christine Allen, CEO, CAFOD

Joao Campari, Global Lead Food Practice, WWF International

Mike Clarke, Independent and Facilitator

Graham Gordon, Head of Policy, CAFOD

John Ingram, Food Systems Programme Leader, Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University

James Lomax, Sustainable Food Systems and Agriculture Programme, UNEP

Philip Lymbery, CEO, Compassion in World Farming

Johanna Ralston, CEO, World Obesity Federation

Patrick Watt, Director of Policy, Christian Aid

Angela Wright, Chief Scientific Adviser, Compassion in World Farming and Programme Lead

Yolande Wright, Global Director Poverty Reduction, Gender Equality, Inclusion and Climate, Save the Children

Patricia Zurita, CEO Birdlife International

Apologies (for this meeting):

Richard Deverell, Director of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Marco Lambertini, CEO, WWF International