

2020 International Borlaug Dialogue Report

HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY OUTCOMES

October 12 - 16, 2020



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Letter from the President

Twenty-twenty marks a year focused on the imperative of increasing resilience in our global food systems to address cracks that have persisted for decades. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team at World Food Prize Foundation (WFPF) **quickly adapted and innovated** programs to continue advancing and supporting the work of those feeding the world. Building on the progress of past years, WFPF planned a robust set of activities for 2020, envisioning new approaches for greater impact with its annual events. The economic challenges of 2020 catalyzed **increased efficiency** to deliver our programs. We were pleased to offer our full array of programs in 2020, including awarding the World Food Prize to our 50th Laureate, Dr. Rattan Lal, and celebrating the 50th anniversary of Dr. Norman E. Borlaug's Nobel Prize.

The 2020 International Borlaug Dialogue hosted 12 reformatted plenary sessions with 60 speakers and expanded to 44 partner-hosted side events. This year's online events offered the opportunity for increasing participation, **extending our reach**, and improving diversity in our participants. We virtually welcomed 1080 total Dialogue attendees, 472 of which were students, mentors, and group leaders in our Global Youth Institute. We demonstrated agility and flexibility to support imminent needs, providing a forum for inspiration and **actionable idea-sharing**. Despite the distance between us, our community came together to stimulate dialogue on 46 community board discussion topics, exchange 2608 messages, and gather on our livestream feed. The successful implementation of the Dialogue and the assembly of this report was made possible with the assistance of our dedicated staff, interns, and Reserve Corps volunteers.

With upcoming milestones such as the 2020 UN Food Systems Summit, WFPF will increase emphasis on local partnerships and global reach to solve hunger by 2030 - now considered to be the critical "Decade of Action." We anticipate advancing key private sector, civil society, government and non-governmental partnerships in order to **feature innovation, increase impact, and connect and elevate those feeding the world**. WFPF will become an even stronger partner to world leaders, supporting our Laureates and sharing our resources with the global food security community. We look forward to working with all of our partners as we progress in our mission of elevating innovations and inspiring action to sustainably increase the quality, quantity and availability of food for all.



Barbara L. Stinson
President
World Food Prize Foundation

12 Plenary Sessions

60 Plenary Speakers

44 Partner Side Events

1080 Total Attendees

472 Global Youth Institute Participants

46 Community Board Topics

2608 Messages Exchanged

4072 Livestream Views

Executive Summary

In 2020, the World Food Prize Foundation (WFPF) held the International Borlaug Dialogue virtually from October 12-16 with more than a thousand registered participants from six geographic regions in the world. The plenary format included four roundtable discussions, three keynote presentations, two special sessions, two workshops, and one panel. Roundtable discussions included 10-12 high-level speakers representing diverse perspectives. These interactive sessions offered participants diverse perspectives on key issues related to the theme: *Breaking New Ground: Building Resilience Today for Improved Food Systems Tomorrow*. Four sub-theme areas focused on **climate change, finance and investment, nutrition, and equity and access**. The virtual conference included 60 plenary speakers and 44 side events.

Seven **cross-cutting recommendations** emerged from speaker remarks across multiple sessions:

1

Planetary health, human health, and soil health are interconnected. Ongoing work in climate, food and nutrition security, and agriculture should recognize the symbiosis and produce integrated policy actions.

2

As the world's primary land stewards, farmers, especially small-holders, are decision-makers and end-users of solutions and should be at the center of agricultural development and climate policy.

3

Equity must permeate all actions by elevating underrepresented voices. Focusing on marginalized groups in solutions development and transforming institutions is crucial. In particular, respect for Indigenous knowledge and peoples should be amplified, and the involvement of women and girls must move from rhetoric to action.

4

Data collection and disaggregation are necessary to strengthen decision-making. Among many barriers to data access, comprehensible interpretation, language diversity, and digital infrastructure growth will be a critical priority in maximizing data utility.

5

Innovative and uncommon partnerships are essential for synergistic resilience building, transformative investments, and efficient crisis responses.

6

In under-resourced communities where inequitable access to food and nutrition creates risk transference, social safety nets are needed for affordable and nutritious food systems.

7

In this unique time during and after the pandemic, the food security community must take advantage of political will and receptiveness for change to act urgently with intersectional goals in mind.

These seven cross-cutting concepts support improved global food systems, action planning, and the continued evolution of issues and solutions.

Access the Content

The 2020 International Borlaug Dialogue was hosted on a virtual platform called Whova. Attendees were able to view sessions live, chat with each other, submit questions, and contribute to community discussion boards. Use the links below to access these features.

Read
Transcripts

Watch
Recordings

Session
Archives

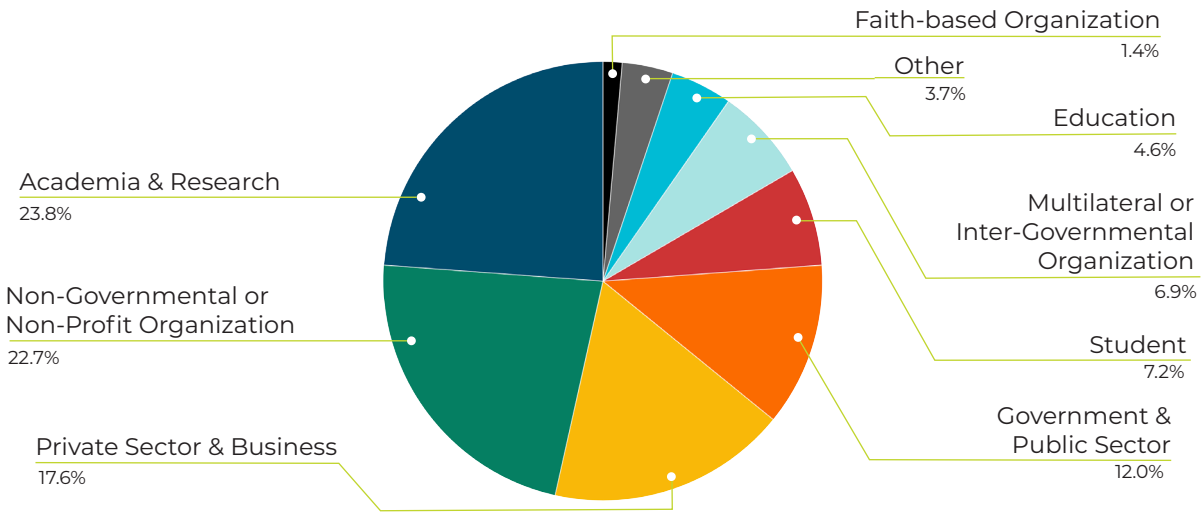
Acronyms

CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COVID-19	Novel CoronaVirus Disease
CRISPR-Cas	Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFAR	Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GAP	Global Agricultural Productivity
GYI	Global Youth Institute
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGNITE	Impacting Gender & Nutrition through Innovative Technical Exchange
MSSRF	M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TAAS	Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WFPF	World Food Prize Foundation

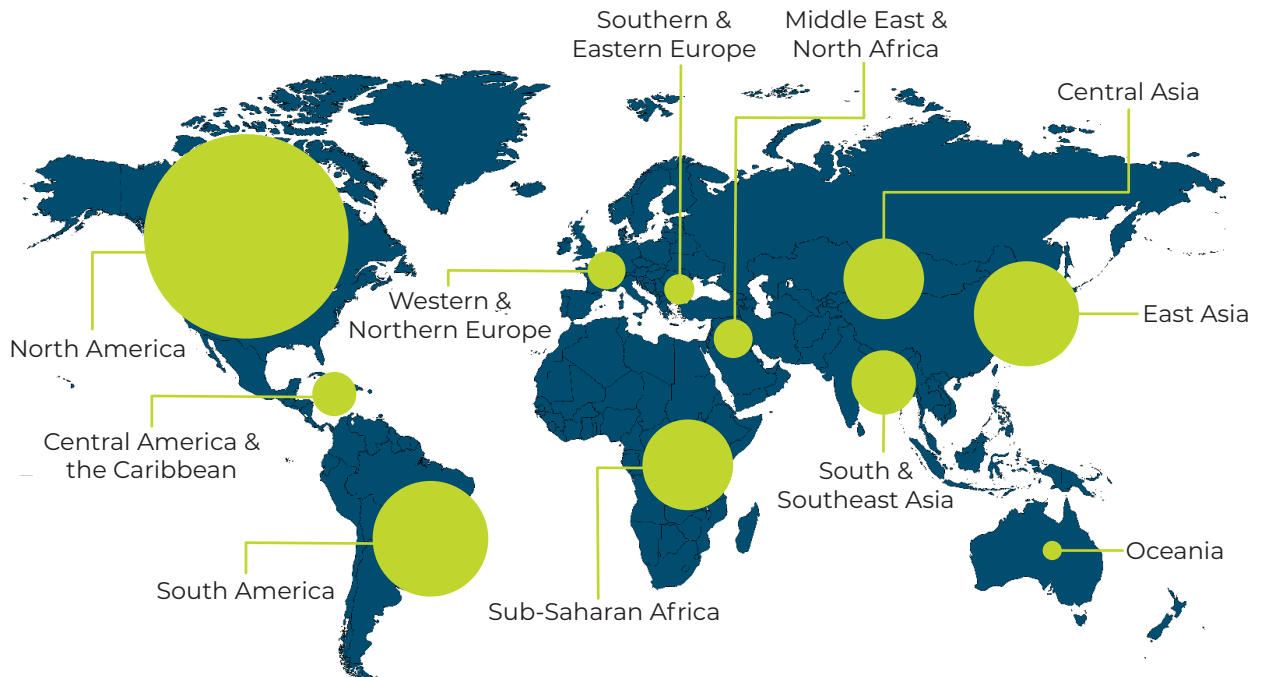


2020 International Borlaug Dialogue By the Numbers

Sectors with which Attendees Professionally Identify



Regions in which Attendees Work



2020 Announcements

During the week, global partners offered a number of major announcements of new initiatives, reports, and other planned activities, including:

Release of the 2020 GAP Report

The [2020 Global Agricultural Productivity \(GAP\) Report](#) by Virginia Tech University was announced on October 12, emphasizing the central role agriculture will play in eliminating nutrition and production gaps that are growing as a result of COVID-19.

Presentation of the 2020 Borlaug CAST Communication Award

The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) awarded Dr. Alexa Lamm, Associate Professor of Science Communication at the University of Georgia, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences the [2020 Borlaug CAST Communication Award](#) for her work in communicating sound scientific thought with the general public. Dr. Lamm presented, “Effectively Communicating Science in Times of Crisis” during the ceremony.

Announcement of Winners in the 2020 Food Systems Dashboard Competition

Dr. Lawrence Haddad (GAIN) and Dr. Jessica Fanzo (Johns Hopkins University) [announced the winners](#) of the 2020 [Food Systems Dashboard](#) Competition. Participants were charged with developing creative and useful applications for the current Food Systems Dashboard built by GAIN, Johns Hopkins University, and the FAO.

Launch of OneCGIAR Reformulation Plan

CGIAR announced a dynamic reformulation of their organizational structure called “[OneCGIAR](#)” that aims for greater integration and impact in the face of the interdependent challenges of today’s world. CGIAR launched a [new research strategy](#) that will work with SDG-aligned impact areas including nutrition, health, food security, poverty reduction, climate adaptation, environmental health, biodiversity, gender equality, youth and social inclusion as the world quickly approaches 2030.

Announcement of Global Youth Institute White Paper to Inform the UN Food Systems Summit

Priscilla Trinh, an undergraduate student at the University of Minnesota [announced, on behalf of the WFPF Global Youth Institute \(GYI\)](#), a plan to create a White Paper in partnership with 215 young leaders. The paper will showcase the research, passion, and lived experiences of young people who have a clear vision of what equitable food systems look like, and how various sectors impacting our food systems must respond. This White Paper will be utilized in the 2021 Food Systems Summit to meaningfully elevate and engage the next generation of food systems leaders.

Key Announcements of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit

Dr. Agnes Kaibata, Special Envoy for the [UN Food Systems Summit](#), announced the various components of the 2021 Summit including the Champions Network, Action Tracks, and Food Systems Dialogues. The Summit is being convened by UN Secretary-General António Guterres as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Keynote Addresses

In a special opening session, former Vice President of the United States Al Gore discussed **translating climate science to action** with 2020 World Food Prize Laureate, Dr. Rattan Lal. Mr. Gore and Dr. Lal set the tone for the International Borlaug Dialogue by discussing the necessary practices to promote agricultural sustainability and the importance of multi-sector alignment to advance climate policy worldwide. Tools like **conservation agriculture, cover-cropping and regenerative agriculture** can help meet growing demand for food, foster healthier and more connected communities, and be key solutions to the climate crisis through soil carbon sequestration. Both speakers urged calls to action and stressed the vital role that youth and the private sector can play in the forthcoming Decade of Action.

Three other keynote speakers included President Gilbert Houngbo of IFAD, His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan, and Executive Director Sara Eckhouse of FoodShot Global, each representing a multilateral organization, a national government, and a non-governmental organization, respectively.

Joined by Ambassador Ertharin Cousin, **President Gilbert Houngbo** focused on the two billion small-holder farmers that produce about half of the world's food calories. Small-holders have been afflicted with COVID-19 disruptions in supply chains and other events like the locust infestation and droughts in Southern Africa. IFAD has received demand from more than 75 countries for help related to the pandemic. With strong personal incentive to **optimize gains** from their land and labor, small-holders tend to grow more diverse crops that are adapted to climate change, less susceptible to diseases, and healthier for soil. Yet, farmers suffer most in food system shocks due to underinvestment. Like any business, small-holders need social safety nets through **access to savings and other financial resources like insurance, information, and technology** to soften impacts of economic hardship. President Houngbo identified six requisites to creating resilience for small-scale farmers:

- 1 Access to science and technology,
- 2 Respect for and incorporation of Indigenous knowledge,
- 3 Tailored approaches and solutions,
- 4 Equity for marginalized populations such as women, youth, Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities,
- 5 Economic opportunities for youth, and
- 6 Synergistic economic and environmental development.

“ It won't be enough to rebuild the old ways. We need to seize the moment to create a better, more effective and more inclusive global system. ”

His Majesty
King Abdullah II
of Jordan

In keynote remarks provided by **King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan**, His Majesty emphasized that for nearly 690 million people, World Food Day is not a celebratory day of food, but rather, another day of hunger. In an **unprecedented global refugee crisis**, Jordan is especially familiar with how food supplies are strained for both refugees and host communities. His Majesty called for action through **re-globalization**, guiding global resources to benefit agricultural infrastructure, knowledge sharing, finance, and social safety nets. At the crossroads of Africa, Asia and Europe, Jordan has a strong history of interregional collaboration as a facilitator of broad international action and as a regional food hub. His Majesty illustrated an optimistic future, **encouraging bold action** to innovate sustainable, affordable, and accessible food for all.

At the close of the 2020 International Borlaug Dialogue, **Sara Eckhouse** of FoodShot Global summarized the thematic connections between the conference's plenary sessions. Eckhouse highlighted five key action-oriented outcomes from the events of the Borlaug Dialogue:

- 1 Collaborate across sectors and geographies to meet the urgency and scale of the challenges,
- 2 Include marginalized voices and lived experiences in decision-making,
- 3 Invest in systems to prioritize long-term viability as well as recognizing the cost of inaction,
- 4 Be willing to depart from operating with a short-term focus, and
- 5 Reconsider the status quo with humility.

Such fundamental shifts, especially in bureaucracies, may appear ambitious, but change is possible with committed leadership and persistent pressure.

Climate Change, Carbon Sequestration, and the Rise of Carbon Markets

The opening session and first roundtable discussion of the International Borlaug Dialogue focused on carbon sequestration and the potential to advance **innovative incentive mechanisms** and policy actions. The climate emergency is at the forefront of global policymaking, and cross-sectoral partnerships are growing rapidly. Debbie Reed of Ecosystems Market Services Consortium advocated for shared action to bring every solution to the table rather than deliberating on a panacea. As extreme weather events worsen in intensity and frequency, the **urgency for action** increases. Effective collaboration should simplify and merge siloed efforts, as Elwyn Grainger-Jones of CGIAR described. Dr. Sally Rockey of FFAR emphasized the promise of public-private partnerships where climate-smart methods must be rooted in evidence and reality. Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan stressed that strong leadership and expertise are paramount to drive progress at this critical juncture while giving credence to all voices.

Improvement in soil health reflects in many related issues such as plant health, human nutrition, deforestation, and climate change. The intersection of soil and human health is particularly noted by Dr. Rattan Lal, who considers soil a living entity for which humans are a mirror image. People are healthy when the soil they live on is healthy. In contrast, poor soil leads to poor health and human suffering. Managing soil health to be more nutritious, climate-resilient, and productive must proceed to break this vicious cycle.

“When people are suffering and desperate, they pass their suffering to the soil, and the soil reciprocates.”

Dr. Rattan Lal

2020 World Food Prize Laureate

As the largest group of land stewards, farmers from around the world play a significant role in advancing climate-smart practices. Farmers are motivated to do the best they can for their families and the planet. Uruguayan farmer Gabriel Carballal provided the example that adoption of **zero tillage practices** was driven by farmers' demand for an erosion control system that allowed them to continue farming without destroying the soil. Incentives will create additional buy-in, but farmers must be supported for success. Carballal described how zero tillage took a few years to implement, highlighting the difficulty with initially low yields and changing soil nutrients. Erik Fyrwald of Syngenta emphasized that when farmers are enabled to succeed, there is additional potential to reward farmers with subsidies for regenerative agricultural practices, increased participation in carbon markets, and improved food labeling.

As many speakers highlighted, climate-smart farming methods need to be rooted in evidence and reality with individuals and communities at the forefront. Tamara Marcus of Linn County, Iowa, emphasized the importance of **Indigenous knowledge** and urged that these traditional knowledge-holders should be integrated into decision-making processes. The feasibility of scaling beyond existing methods and structures will define the future of successfully implementing new farming methods (e.g. right financial incentives, adequate land rights, improved education systems, and increasing digital penetration).

Several speakers highlighted clear, evidence-based benefits to **regenerative agriculture** as a key solution to the climate crisis. former Vice President Al Gore has adopted regenerative practices and encourages others to explore this healthy, realistic approach to farming and grazing. Many farmers are leading the charge to use farming and grazing practices that balance soil restoration and water quality with other benefits.

To advance the development of carbon markets, the **societal value of carbon** must be defined and validated to incentivize farmers. According to Dr. Rattan Lal, verifying this value will be among the greatest challenges. As verification models are constructed, Liam Condon of Bayer AG stressed that they be transparently available in peer-reviewed journals and verified by a third party.



Shifting Investments for Food Systems Transformation

The second roundtable discussion focused on the paradigm shifts needed in **resource reallocation** to transform food systems. Though COVID-19 has disrupted supply chains and economies, the pandemic has revealed existing deficiencies and new opportunities in agricultural finance and investment. Dr. Purvi Mehta of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation shared that 85 countries rolled out significant food welfare programs as a result of the pandemic. Yet, many food programs are based on staple food commodities, so improved nutrition through diversification must be included in these responses. Beth Bechdol of FAO attributed competition of funding, in part, to development donors prioritizing investments in health systems and **social safety nets** as the most direct way to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Sara Eckhouse of FoodShot Global connected human health with planetary health and highlighted agriculture's role in alleviating poverty. Agricultural investment can be positioned as a win-win to achieve goals simultaneously. Dr. Ismail Serageldin of Library of Alexandria affirmed this strategy with a focus on climate change, adding that cycles of flood and drought in Africa will result in challenges with irrigation. Building resilience for increasingly challenging changes in climate requires long-term focus and patience. Many efforts target the short-term, but a localized health crisis has evolved into a long-term, globalized economic crisis. As such, it is essential for all funding entities to take a cross-cutting approach to investment and resource allocation.

Though there is no lack of available capital, access proves to be a major barrier for those who can benefit the most. In Africa, **disrupted supply chains** and decreased imports have created market opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Hilary Barry of LadyAgri argued that entrepreneurs need better tools and training to access funding opportunities. Women especially are excluded when they cannot present collateral such as land due to systemic barriers. As part of the Just Rural Transition initiative, Tony Siantonas of WBCSD indicated that metrics are being incorporated to ensure **equitable and just development**.

Data and evidence-based approaches can inform whether or not financing programs are high impact. Howard W. Buffett of Columbia University made three points that can better frame data-oriented decision-making: 1) Not everything is measurable; therefore, it is critical to prioritize the most useful metrics; 2) Data to support actions must be accessible and affordable to organizations; and 3) Organizations must analyze information. This process is aided by new technology, improved data, standardization of measures, and better analysis options.

Speakers identified **information asymmetry** as an opportunity area for data to improve. For example, there is asymmetry between the limited information that exists about the food value chain post-harvest compared to the much greater amount of data available for pre-harvest production. The pivot point is the market. Achim Steiner of UNDP emphasized the complexity of food systems beyond production, bringing into focus **market-centric thinking** and issues of food waste post-harvest.



Innovations and new technologies have the power to accelerate development. Ted McKinney of USDA identified the private sector as one of the most willing partners to **drive innovation**. Jim Collins of Corteva Agriscience detailed how providing data digitally improves farmer access to information, and the gene-editing tool, CRISPR-Cas, allows specific genetic changes to be made quickly. The pandemic's abrupt disruptions make the ability to respond rapidly highly valuable. A shift is taking place from hesitation over polarized perspectives to eagerness for collaboration. The pandemic has shown that there is no longer the luxury of working in isolation, and multipurpose strategies are the most impactful.

Global Aspirations to Local Applications for Nutrition

The third roundtable centered around the multidimensional challenge of providing safe, nutritious, affordable food year-round. At least two billion people suffer one or more micronutrient deficiencies. 45% of deaths under the age of five are attributable to malnutrition, and children who survive undernutrition are affected throughout their lives due to compromised cognitive and physical development. Shawn Baker of USAID underlined that small-holder farmer communities who provide food for the world are at greatest risk of malnutrition. Dr. Renata Micha of the Global Nutrition Report added that more countries are experiencing the **double burden of malnutrition and undernutrition** that coexists with overweight, **obesity**, and other diet-related, non-communicable diseases.

In addition to the double burden of nutrition, the nexus of nutrition, agriculture, human health, and environmental health emerges in many examples. Dr. Prabhu Pingali of Cornell University highlighted the policy disconnect between agriculture, nutrition, and food systems. He stated the need for food systems to provide more high-nutrient content foods and move away from the lower-nutrition staple crops and grains. 2020 Borlaug Field Award Recipient Dr. Salma Sultana encouraged governments to be more involved with the development of effective food and nutrition policy. Farmers play critical roles in sustainably advancing nutritious food systems, but Polly Ruhland of the United Soybean Board pointed out that farmers are often absent from policy and solution discussions. Everyone agreed that navigating sustainability tradeoffs as they relate to nutrition will prove challenging. Dr. Pedro Sanchez of the University of Florida called for taking advantage of new data to grow more nutritious food on less land. Agricultural intensification must consider **carbon emissions, land management, and waste management**.

Many speakers emphasized that poor diets are not simply personal choices. A dominant constraint in

accessing nutritious food is affordability, especially for those with the highest nutrient needs (e.g. children, pregnant and lactating mothers). Nutrient-dense foods like eggs, fresh milk, and fortified cereals are prohibitively expensive for the poor. This is true for those in the fourth socioeconomic quintile - not even the poorest of the poor - in some countries. In Nigeria, one egg costs 44% of one's daily income in the fourth socioeconomic quintile. As almost everybody, including small-holder farmers, are net purchasers of food, **affordability** is a major determinant of consumer behavior.

Dr. Jessica Fanzo of Johns Hopkins University detailed that data is critical to hold accountable those that have the power to stabilize our food systems. Marginalized populations are more likely to experience the morbidity and mortality that public health systems are designed to prevent. Redesigned policy must include **targeted efforts toward the most vulnerable**. Dr. Madhura Swaminathan of MSSRF urged that data processing and disaggregation, especially in assessing diets, are essential to contextualize food systems challenges and extract meaningful conclusions that can catalyze attitude shifts and political action. Ndidi Nwuneli of Sahel Consulting advocated for **private sector involvement** with the example of advertising, which can change how people view food and shape narratives around what is considered healthy or unhealthy.

“ We need to see a significant convergence of agriculture policy with overall food policy and with nutrition policy in order to make agriculture work for better nutrition outcomes. ”

Dr. Prabhu Pingali
Professor, Cornell University

Despite the unsettling state of nutrition security, there are numerous, auspicious opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has pressure-tested every part of the food system, identifying areas that are crucial to reinforce. Because business as usual has been disrupted and food systems are evolving rapidly, Dr. Lawrence Haddad of GAIN urged immediate, dynamic and audacious action. Prof. Mario Herrero of CSIRO added that a lack of urgent action could lead to the loss of a significant opportunity for **nutrition goals to progress simultaneously** with human and environmental health goals.

Reconstructing Equity and Access in Food Systems

For the fourth roundtable, a sanguine group focused on one of the most crucial aspects of food systems transformation - improving equity and access for marginalized communities. Dr. Ed Mabaya of Cornell University offered that **risk transference** from food system shocks disproportionately impacts poor communities, regardless of the shocks' origins. Building resilience against any type of shock requires resources, and poor people have limited resources by definition. Stefan Caspari of AGCO emphasized that while much of the discussion focuses on developing countries, many under-resourced communities in North America and Europe face similar challenges.

Capacity building and investing in development rather than aid are more equitable and economical approaches to addressing global issues. Dr. Jim Barnhart of USAID shared that for every dollar invested early in agricultural development, three dollars are saved later in humanitarian aid. Small-scale farmers are capable of avoiding food shocks if given the right tools. Marie Haga of IFAD highlighted the **critical importance of listening to women, youth, and Indigenous peoples** to form inclusive approaches to support small-holder farmers. Ruramiso Mashumba of Mnandi Africa identified technology, especially internet infrastructure, as key to improving access to digital information that enables farmers to be more resilient.

Risk Transference



In preparation for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, this inclusive approach will be particularly vital. Listening to diverse voices must be practiced through various avenues, including improving representation and intersectionality of gender, race, and sexuality in agriculture education. Janie Simms Hipp of the Native American Agriculture Fund urged action supporting Indigenous reclamation of **food sovereignty and traditional food production** methods, and yielding decision-making power to the most marginalized people.

Social safety nets or social protection systems must be strengthened. Xavier Morgan of Hormel Foods identified **food deserts** - geographical areas that do not have direct access to plentiful fresh, nutritious food - as a prevalent issue in urban and rural areas. Dr. Raj Paroda of TAAS characterized access to healthy, nutritious food in three dimensions: physical, economic, and ecological. These three dimensions are compounded by structural inequity, such as racist redlining policies in the U.S., enabling food deserts to remain. As a result, residents in food deserts resort to fast food or highly-processed food from convenience stores.

A more recent case for improved social safety nets is evidenced in reduced **access to school lunch** programs due to school closures during COVID-19. Many socioeconomically disadvantaged students rely on these provided meals, especially when it is free or reduced in price. Being unable to attend school eliminates access to a daily, nutritious meal. Catherine Bertini of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs added that while many school districts around the world managed to bridge this gap, it is an issue that persists and requires attention from donors and governments.

Institutional transformation proactively and inherently strengthens food systems more than social safety nets alone. Dr. Claudia Sadoff of CGIAR asserted that it is unsatisfactory to merely diversify representation in deeply biased institutions. She indicated that it is necessary to build educational capacity to address the differential impacts of programs. Dr. Roy Steiner of the Rockefeller Foundation added that there is a tendency to think incrementally about equitable systems when, in reality, dramatic shifts

need to take place. A few possible **institutional transformations** to equitably strengthen food systems include restoring land and water rights; propelling the emphasis on women and girls from rhetoric to action; eliminating gatekeeping of information; and **broadening access to capital**. Caitlin Welsh of CSIS likened the current state of global food security to that of 2007-2008 and predicts that political will and commitment will similarly surge in response despite the differing driving causes, economic landscape, and affected demographics.

The Road to the 2021 Food Systems Summit

On World Food Day, a special session provided details on the upcoming 2021 Food Systems Summit and gathered diverse reflections on the planned impact of the Summit. Entering the Decade of Action, the quality and types of actions taken to advance the SDGs will need to be considered in the context of food systems. Dr. Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit, described the ambitious design of what she called the **“People’s Summit.”**

The Summit will have five objectives to be elevated through five **Action Tracks, Food Systems Dialogues, and a powerful digital platform.** These efforts will be supported by the Special Envoy, an advisory committee, a scientific group, a UN task force, a Champions Network, and the Summit Secretariat.

“We hope that we can use the Food Systems Summit to unleash bold, new actions, innovations, strategies and to develop progress for SDGs.”

Dr. Agnes Kalibata

Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the 2021 Food Systems Summit

Priscilla Trinh, an undergraduate student and representative of the 2020 World Food Prize Foundation Global Youth Institute, outlined the youth perspective, challenging champions of the Food Systems Summit to involve youth voices beyond symbolic gestures. Despite being disillusioned with big institutions, industrial agriculture, neocolonialism, and the mental health crisis, **youth are hopeful and determined for a better future.** A new WFPF youth initiative was launched this year in preparation for the Food Systems Summit. During this year’s GYI, students’ research and ideas were compiled into a white paper. The white paper will be submitted to the Summit secretariat as a conduit representing youth voices.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is paramount in the Summit. Dr. David Nabarro of 4SD emphasized an inclusive approach focused on country-level participation. There are competing visions for what the future of global food systems should be, but the challenges ahead present high stakes. Ambassador Kip Tom of the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome described the Food Systems Summit as an incredible opportunity to work together on common goals. This widens the potential for what Ana Bilik of Tanager called, **“uncommon partnerships.”** Often, partnerships form along a particular crop or supply chain, but partnerships across supply chains that are more location-based can bring stronger impact to local communities.

The importance of tailored approaches for local communities will be emphasized in the Food Systems Summit. Food systems and transformation itself are complex concepts. Dr. Neal Gutterson of Corteva Agriscience emphasized consumer choice within local food systems as an integral part of meaningful progress. Iowa Farmer, Pam Johnson, advocated for **farmers to share their lived experiences** and expertise on specific challenges. While global problems are collected at the macro-level, they are the summation of choices and actions that individuals make daily at the micro-level.

As Dialogues take place, **tradeoffs within food systems** will be considered, and this must be done with improved data and scientific information. Prior to Dialogues, countries will receive inputs from the Food Systems Summit scientific group and the five Action Tracks. Louise Fresco of Wageningen University and Vice-Chair of the scientific group stated that science cannot take positions on what is the best policy option, but it can indicate the consequences of various policy actions. Some decisions will be more political than others, but the Food Systems Summit is not a negotiating summit. For the first time, there are defined scientific, evidence-based approaches to achieve the goals of the five Action Tracks. The Summit will serve as a forum for stakeholders to engage in knowledge, sharing about practical solutions.

Practical solutions must be cross-cutting. For example, gender and partnerships are not clearly linked to the Action Tracks, but taking a matrix approach to include these topics will be a necessary part of the Dialogues. Other cross-cutting issues highlighted by José Andrés of World Central Kitchen are biodiversity, food waste, and energy use.

Shaping Public Engagement in Food Systems

In a special panel session, a diverse set of speakers addressed the role of new and old media in food systems engagement. The media landscape has evolved in the past twenty years with the advent of the internet. To some extent, traditional journalists have been **gatekeepers of media priorities**; however, they have begun to lose this role due to a shift from institutions to individuals - a phenomenon that Adam Roberts of *The Economist* described as the fragmentation of media. Digital media such as social media and blogs have elevated empathetic narratives that are often more capable of garnering attention.

The **democratization of media** has expanded consumer access to information and the ability for anyone to disseminate it. This greater access to information has also led to the World Health Organization declaring the current media state as an **“infodemic.”** According to Dr. Alexa Lamm of the University of Georgia, the increased rapidity of new advancements leads to information being outdated faster, contributing to public mistrust in mainstream news.

Distinguishing reliability becomes a vital skill in this new media landscape. This can be achieved through **developing trusting relationships**, being outcomes-oriented, and regulating the digital space. Relationship building creates community to which people relate their identity and respect. **Prioritizing outcomes** over output is what will create buy-in and drive action. This ultimate goal is greater than adhering to any particular channel of information. **Regulating the digital space** is currently taking place, in part, by algorithms, but writer, artist, and activist Lazarus Lynch cautions that algorithms must carefully balance filtering bad information without suppressing marginalized voices.

Interactive Workshops

Two workshops in this year’s International Borlaug Dialogue aimed to engage participants with **policy and scientific tools** that enhance decision-making, translating science into action. Workshops focused on the Food Systems Dashboard by GAIN and Johns Hopkins University as well as the IGNITE Diagnostic Tool by Tanager.

Both tools aid in decision-making and improve understanding of food systems. The Food Systems Dashboard achieves this by **increasing the intuitiveness of connections between different indicators**. Similarly, the IGNITE Gender Diagnostic Tool draws a relationship between gender and agricultural work. These insights are critical at the country and community level, and these tools organize data to create tailored approaches.

2018 World Food Prize Laureate, Dr. Lawrence Haddad, described the Food Systems Dashboard and made the point that creating solutions is difficult when data is lacking or disorganized. This was evident in the examples given in both workshops that showed variations between countries and communities. Sarah Sahlaney of Tanager led the IGNITE Gender Diagnostic Tool workshop with the goal of seeing **how institutional actions are impactful at the household level** which speaks to the effectiveness of and productivity under the SDGs.

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Conclusion

The 2020 International Borlaug Dialogue successfully convened diverse stakeholders to characterize critical food systems challenges, current progress, and budding opportunities. Cross-cutting topics permeated discussions across the four sub-themes of climate change, finance and investment, nutrition, and equity and access. The **sybiotic relationship between soil health, the environment, nutrition, human health, and agriculture** has prompted greater consideration of all components and effects when identifying and remedying global issues. An example of this intersection is the impact of food waste on food and nutrition security, natural resources, and agriculture. The **post-market supply chain** (e.g. food waste, consumer choice, food labeling) will be a focal point in forthcoming global food security discussions.

Solutions development and **policy must focus on small-holder farmers, Indigenous peoples, and women**. These groups have led agricultural development, yet they suffer the most from risk transference in times of crisis. Social safety nets strengthen food systems resilience, and equity is a requisite for broadening access to social safety nets. Upcoming global dialogues such as the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit will elevate these voices and provide a pathway for **all to contribute to the food systems transformation**. Future actions must have an evidence base. Data must be made accessible in order to support decision-making. Gene editing has this potential as the application of CRISPR-Cas technology grows in significance across industries and sectors. Decisions and advancements can be optimized if made in partnership with diverse stakeholders. In a time where the will for change is unparalleled, development of comprehensive solutions will benefit multiple challenge areas, synergistically.

As 2021 approaches, major challenges such as soil degradation, climate change, food and nutrition security, and many others persist. The global impacts on food systems of the COVID-19 pandemic will continue well into the future, while members of the community work to collaboratively address these critical issues. Multiple stakeholders must **celebrate effective solutions** and look toward an abundance of new opportunities. The 2020 International Borlaug Dialogue highlighted **strategies for increased resilience** and challenged everyone to actively participate in the transformation of their food systems in the coming Decade of Action.

About the World Food Prize Foundation

The World Food Prize Foundation elevates innovations and inspires action to sustainably increase the quality, quantity and availability of food for all. The Foundation supports this through a variety of innovative programs year-round including by: **recognizing and rewarding** individuals making exceptional achievements in addressing food security; **convening global leaders** in Des Moines each year to address the latest issues and innovations in food and agriculture; **inspiring and empowering students** around the world by providing educational and professional experiences on pressing food security and agriculture issues; and **addressing Iowa's challenges and successes in fighting hunger** and poverty.

About the International Borlaug Dialogue

The Norman E. Borlaug International Symposium, known informally as the "International Borlaug Dialogue," each year brings together over 1,200 people from nearly 50 countries to address cutting-edge issues related to food systems. The two-and-a-half-day conference usually held in Des Moines, Iowa convenes a wide array of scientific experts, policy leaders, heads of non-governmental organizations, government representatives, business executives, and farmers to build alliances in the fight against global food insecurity.

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