

CFS 49 | “Healthy diets at the nexus of food systems, biodiversity, climate and nutrition: Global summits, local transformation and the CFS VGFSYN” 12 October 2021

Stineke Oenema, UN Nutrition, led a dynamic group of speakers who articulated the nexus of food systems, biodiversity, climate and nutrition as the year 2021 offers the opportunity to consolidate multi-sectoral actions through the global events including upcoming COP26 and Nutrition for Growth Summit.

Julian Lampietti, The World Bank, shared compelling reasons why transforming food systems is needed. “Global food systems have a market value of 10 trillion dollars per year, but cause 12 trillion in hidden costs.” Lampietti, discussed the costs for human and planetary health, and emphasized that the CFS VGFSYN is the central thread across the key global summits that are taking place in 2021. VGFSYN provides a frame for food systems action on governance, food supply chains, access to diets, food safety, consumer education, women’s empowerment, and resilience in humanitarian contexts.

Saskia de Pee, World Food Programme, discussed how we can tailor transformation pathways to the needs and possibilities of countries in her keynote presentation. “Dietary diversity must increase to meet nutrient needs.” De Pee discussed the tradeoffs between meeting nutrient, environment, and affordability targets and showed how diets that are closest to meeting nutrient and health needs can be highest on GHG emissions.

Mandefro Nigussie, Ministry of Agriculture in Ethiopia, discussed the need for shifting away from producing solely grains and mentioned (bio) fortification of grains as making a good contribution to better meeting nutrition goals. **Kavita Gandhi**, SWISSAID India, echoed the call for shifting away from just grains and diversifying diets, which can protect farmers from the climate change impacts. “Develop new products based on healthy crops such as millets and other forgotten crops.” Gandhi added the important element of local diets and consumer awareness on nutritious food. **Reinhold Muschler**, CATIE Costa Rica, reminded us that human, agricultural, and environmental health depend fundamentally on biodiversity (including our gut flora). “We need to revalue traditional knowledge and promote diversified agroecological production systems for multi-functionality, sustainability and resilience”. Muschler called for both a bottom-up and a top-down approach.

During the Q&A session, questions about processed food, local production and consumption, food sovereignty, and a circular economy arose. “Processed foods are often much cheaper than healthy foods; it is a problem of agricultural policies which focuses on limited number of crops.” de Pee called for reducing the gap between the cost of unhealthy and healthy diets. “Food and nutrition education is essential.” Muschler emphasised the need to motivate people from a young age to consume nutritious fresh or, fermented local products.

Nancy Aburto, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, acknowledged that 3 billion people that do not have economic access to healthy diets and emphasized that diversity in farming can translate to diversity in diets. She also highlighted that transforming food systems must be context specific meeting local needs and opportunities. The timely session underscored that the VGFSyN provides a framework to translate global

commitments to local action to build resilient, inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems, which ensure access to healthy diets for all.