

Talanoa Dialogue Submission

Putting Food System Transformation
at the Core of the Climate Discourse

October 2018

A hand is holding a small green plant with feathery leaves and small green buds. Two large orange circles are positioned above the plant, and the letters 'E', 'A', and 'T' are overlaid in large orange font. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white.

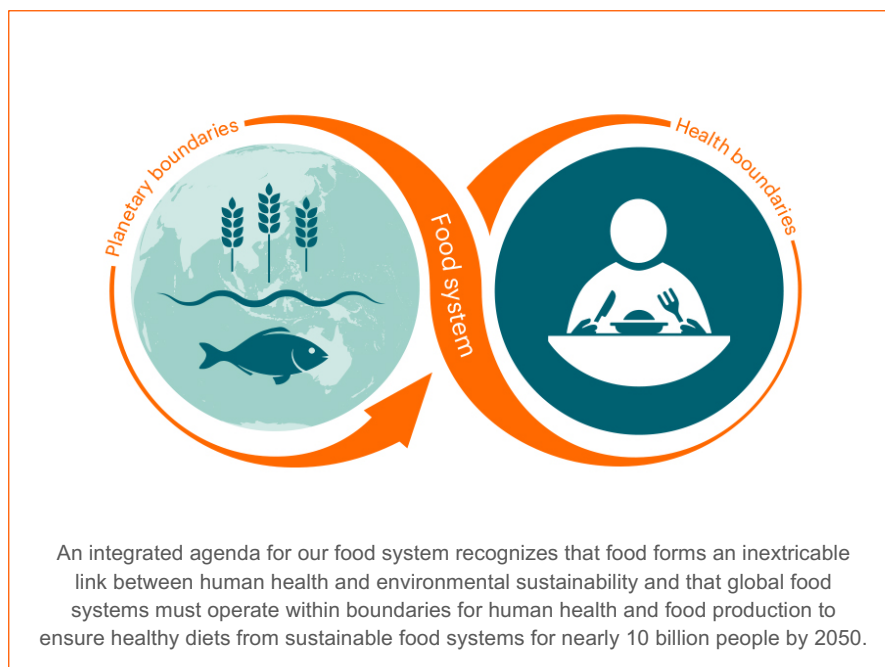
E

A T

Introduction

Food has the potential to achieve the Paris Agreement and support environmental sustainability. Instead, our food is threatening both. In addition to being one of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs), food production is a major contributor to deforestation, biodiversity loss, pollution, and depletion of marine ecosystems. Moreover, food is at the heart of a global health crisis, driving a triple burden of malnutrition and an epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), with 2017 seeing the reverse in the global trend of decreasing hunger, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Providing the growing global population with healthy diets from sustainable food systems represents one of the greatest and most urgent health and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century. The urgency to act has been made even more clear with the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Global Warming of 1.5°C report.

To date, large-scale and coordinated efforts to transform the global food system has been hindered by no clear consensus on what constitutes healthy and sustainable diets. The EAT-Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems will fill this gap by providing global scientific targets for healthy diets and sustainable food production. This is the world's first attempt to set scientific targets for healthy diets and sustainable food production and is a critical step towards global sustainability and achieving the Paris Agreement.



In this Talanoa Dialogue, we do not propose a simple, magic global fix or provide specific recommendations for how to achieve a global food system transformation. We avoid this because solutions are context specific and, in most cases, require local, national, or regional solutions. Instead, we present general lessons from past successful global transformations, high level strategies, and tools that we believe are necessary to spur a global food system transformation. Silver-bullet solutions neither exist nor would allow the diverse users of this Talanoa Dialogue to adopt a holistic concept for food system transformation that will be needed.

Key points

1. To achieve the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals, a global food system transformation is needed. This universal goal for all humans is within reach but will require unprecedented collaboration between governments, the private sector, and civil society.

2. Transformation to healthy diets by 2050 will require moving away from unhealthy and GHG intensive foods towards a nutritious and diverse diet with more reliance on plant-based foods. This shift toward healthy diets for all humans takes into full consideration regional differences and socio-economic realities.
3. A full suite of solutions is necessary including reorienting agricultural policies towards efficient production of healthy foods, improving governance of land and oceans, and dramatically reducing food loss and waste.

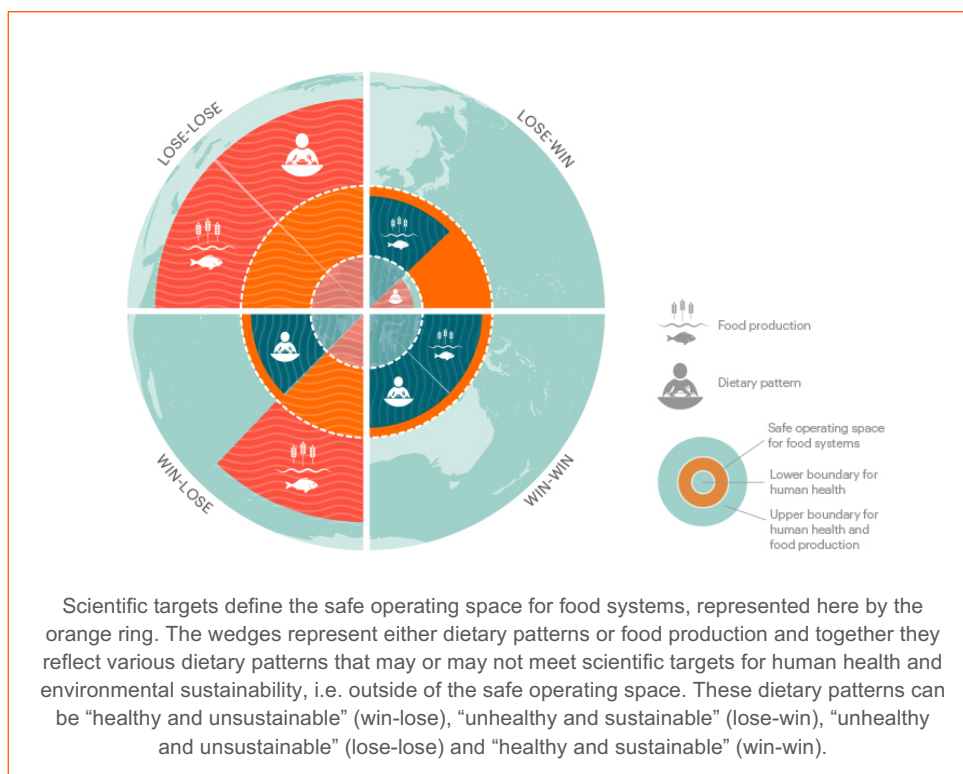
Lessons: where we want to go is achievable

Past experience shows that large-scale systemic change is possible and three overarching lessons from these transformations can guide our way. First, systems change requires multisectoral collaboration across all levels, working towards a shared set of ambitions. No single actor or breakthrough will be able to achieve systems change by themselves. Second, scientific evidence is key to guiding action. While long-term research is important, research is needed now to help policy actors operate on a sound basis at a pace in line with the urgency of what is known already. Third, the full spectrum of policy levers is necessary for transformation. This includes both “soft” measures such as food labeling and consumer information and “hard” approaches such as laws and fiscal measures; the soft measures alone will not get us there.

Strategies: how do we get there?

The evidence of the problems of food systems and their potential to achieve the Paris Agreement are both sufficient and strong enough to warrant action. We know enough today to take immediate action and the evidence suggests that feeding nearly 10 billion people a healthy and sustainable diet while meeting climate goals is possible. Five readily implementable strategies to achieve healthy and sustainable diets for all were discussed at the 2018 EAT Stockholm Food Forum. These are:

- Shifts to healthy diets
- Greater production of nutrition-enhancing foods
- Implementation of sustainable intensification
- Strict management of land and ocean use
- Significant reduction of food loss and waste



Commitments to shift to healthy diets

The single greatest strategy toward reducing GHG emissions from the global food system is a shift toward healthy diets. This includes a significant global increase in the production and consumption of plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes and a corresponding reduction in animal source foods, while accounting for localized differences according to nutritional needs. Shifting from current diets to healthy diets is likely to also result in significant health and social economic benefits, including averting millions of premature deaths per year and reducing private and public sector health expenditures.

Greater production of nutrition-enhancing foods

Agriculture and fisheries must not only produce enough calories to feed a growing global population but must also produce a diversity of foods that nurture human health and support environmental sustainability. Hand-in-hand with dietary shifts, agricultural and marine policies must be reoriented towards a variety of nutritious foods that enhance biodiversity rather than aiming for increased volume of a few crops, much of which is now used for animal production. Animal production needs to be considered in specific contexts and should reorient toward 'less and better' production practices while using a holistic evaluation of context specific trade-offs.

Implementation of sustainable intensification

In addition to growing the right kinds of foods, we need to sustainably intensify food production to radically improve efficiency, increase crop yields, close nutrient loops, and integrate climate change mitigation techniques. Precision agriculture can optimize nutrient application and irrigation use and get more "crop per drop." Nutrient fixing or recycling techniques can improve air and water quality, and fertilizer redistribution can increase food production globally by shifting fertilizer use from over-applying regions to under-applying regions. Food production needs to go from being a carbon source to a carbon sink, thereby helping to achieve negative emission goals by 2050.

Strict management of land and ocean use

To meet the Paris Agreement, we need to drastically reduce GHG emissions from land conversion and halt agricultural expansion at the expense of natural areas. In addition, reforestation and afforestation have the greatest potential for helping to achieve negative emissions targets. A shift toward healthy diets and away from animal source foods may require a greater reliance on fish and seafood. Therefore, careful management of ocean resources is essential to ensure a sustainable supply of wild seafood. With most of the wild fish stocks already fully fished, a greater reliance on aquaculture may be needed. However, a rapidly expanding aquaculture sector can have negative impacts on coastal habitats, freshwater, and terrestrial systems and therefore any expansion must be done within environmental limits.

Significant reduction of food loss and waste

Food loss and waste along the value chain is inefficient and exacerbates climate change and to meet climate targets, significant reductions in food loss and waste are required. This could be achieved through measures such as improved infrastructure for harvesting, distribution, and storage and policies promoting a circular economy. Alongside these measures, there is a need for improved cooperation among actors across the food value chain, educating producers and individuals to reduce loss and waste, and incorporating food loss and waste into policies.

What's needed

Bold steps are required to achieve a global food system transformation. There was a broad consensus at the EAT Stockholm Food Forum around the urgent need for coordination and partnerships across public and private sectors and civil society. While recognizing the key role of national governments in delivering on the Paris Agreement, a new platform or set of institutions may be required to champion this type and scale of transformation. In addition, there needs to be a rapid translation of the EAT-

Lancet scientific targets into science-based targets (SBTs) for business and policy makers. This translation into SBTs will spur rapid action and innovation in the timeframe necessary to achieve the Paris Agreement and stay within a 1.5°C global temperature increase.

Food will be a defining issue of the 21st century and unlocking its potential will catalyse pathways for global adoption of healthy diets from sustainable food systems, which is fundamental to achieving the Paris Agreement and SDGs. An unprecedented opportunity exists to develop food systems as a common thread between many international, national, and business policy frameworks aiming for improved human health and environmental sustainability. Establishing clear, scientific targets to guide food system transformation is an important step in realizing this opportunity.

What is EAT and the EAT Stockholm Food Forum?

EAT is a non-profit organization with the mission to transform our global food system through sound science, impatient disruption, and novel partnerships. We envision a fair and sustainable food system for healthy people, animals, and planet – leaving no one behind. To accelerate food system transformation and spur cross-sectoral collaboration, EAT convenes top leaders from science, politics, business and civil society in the annual EAT Stockholm Food Forum. This year's Forum gathered over 600 delegates from a range of sectors and geographies across over 50 countries in mid-June. The format consisted of keynotes, interactive plenaries, disruptive dialogues, workshops, and side events including a dedicated Talanoa Dialogue session.