

Sustainable, Equitable, Resilient

An Ethical Approach to Global Food Systems



A Report from the Faith + Food Coalition

Andrew Schwartz with the Faith + Food Coalition Steering Committee

September 2021

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has set back the fight against hunger and malnutrition.¹ Projections suggest that more than 800 million worldwide could go hungry by 2030 unless significant action is taken.² At the same time, obesity, heart disease, and diabetes are on the rise in countries globally due to an increased diet of processed foods heavy in sugars, preservatives, and animal proteins. Moreover, the mass-production of these foods directly and negatively impacts land, air, and water across the world.³

Humanity's deteriorating health is tied to the world's deteriorating ecosystems. Soil health is worsening due to chemical-heavy farming practices. Forests are under threat, notably in South America, where they are being leveled to make room for cattle farms and fields devoted to palm oil and sugar cane.⁴ Greenhouse gases are damaging the atmosphere we breathe, raising the planet's temperature, and disrupting the natural cycles upon which farmers depend.

We cannot hope to solve the climate and biodiversity crises without solving the crisis in our food systems.

The [United Nations Food Systems Summit](#), convened by the Secretary-General António Guterres for September 23, 2021 in New York, will be an unprecedented opportunity to think critically and develop solutions for the problems within current food systems. Solutions will need to go beyond the technological. The world needs to orient itself to a way of life that supports the common good and coexists sustainably within the boundaries set on us by the Earth, our common home that sustains us all.

The challenge is to solve the most immediate problems in our current food systems—reducing meat consumption, halting agricultural deforestation, increasing access and reducing the costs of nutritious food—while laying the groundwork and developing financing structures for sustainable, equitable, and resilient agricultural practices.

To contribute to the UN Food Systems Summit, the [Faith + Food Coalition](#) hosted five interfaith, multilateral dialogues to examine these fundamental problems through the lens of faith and ethics.

Engaging faith and Indigenous communities in productive dialogue is essential to shift global worldviews toward food and the natural world. This Faith + Food Interfaith Statement, issued for the Summit (see Appendix A), and this report embody the findings and themes that emerged from the dialogues.

Critiques

“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” Audre Lorde famously said.⁵ A quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions come from the agricultural sector⁶ and yet there is little indication coming from the Food Systems Summit process that meaningful changes to the status quo are in store. The emphasis remains on efficiency and profits, and the industrialization and commodification of food systems, rather than listening to experts worldwide calling for investment and scaling to be put toward small holders, agroecology, and food sovereignty,

For this reason, the Summit has attracted the ire of knowledgeable, thoughtful critics before it has even begun. La Via Campesina, the world’s largest peasants organization, condemned the Summit process for “its opacity and non-inclusiveness” and for “giving agribusinesses a free rein to shape the future of our food systems.”⁷ Michael Fakhri, Hilal Elver and Olivier De Schutter—current and former UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food—warned that the process bypasses the existing UN Committee on World Food Security and ignores the fundamental need for a “food system transformation” rooted in food sovereignty, agroecology, and local traditions and knowledge.⁸ “Ideas that should have been the starting point for a ‘people’s summit’ have effectively been shut out,” they write.

*“the UN’s own advisers are
urging a rethink...”*

Such concerns have prompted hundreds of individuals and civil society organizations to boycott the Summit process altogether. In July, Slow Food reported that more than “300 organizations representing civil society, small food producers, researchers and Indigenous Peoples from across the world will” protest the Summit.⁹ The Guardian noted that “the UN’s own advisers are urging a rethink of the way [the Summit] is run.”¹⁰

These critiques are valid and merit attention. We share concerns about the “corporate capture” of the process and the exclusion of Indigenous and front-line voices, both in planning the Summit and developing solutions. The people working within the Summit and its respective Action Tracks are dedicated, passionate individuals who understand the gravity of the situation and the need for urgent, meaningful action. But the United Nations is beholden to a variety of powers—each with its own agenda—and has not lived up to its highest ideals in this case, so far.

The Pre-Summit in Rome at the end of July provided some encouraging signals. The Coalition and a few other civil society organizations were invited to host forums alongside the formal UN agenda. But there were many red flags, too. We were disappointed by the continued emphasis on corporate-driven solutions that address production efficiencies rather than focusing on health, small holders, and localized solutions. Value chains do need improvement. But if those systems do not deliver healthy, nutritious foods from local ecosystems, we will continue down a disastrous path.

The challenge—as well as the opportunity—is to create positive change in the midst of all these competing forces.

Faith + Food Coalition

The Coalition is an alliance of organizations bringing voices from faith-based groups, Indigenous communities, small farmers and food producers, and underrepresented populations from around the world to the UN Food Systems Summit.

Bhumi Global

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

Center for Earth Ethics

Islamic Medical Association of North America

Interfaith Public Health Network

Parliament of the World's Religions

World Evangelical Alliance

See Appendix C for a description of each organization.

Approach

The deficiencies of the Summit process prompted the Food + Faith Coalition, an alliance of faith-based organizations contributing faith-based, ethical perspectives about global food issues, to engage further rather than to withdraw. We explored the role of faith, spirituality, and values-based actions in reshaping our narratives about food and in transforming our food systems.

FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT ACTION TRACKS

1. Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
2. Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
3. Boost nature-positive production
4. Advance equitable livelihoods
5. Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress

Over five weeks in May and June, the Coalition hosted five multilateral dialogues that examined our food systems through the lens of faith and values. Each Faith + Food dialogue corresponded to one of the Summit’s “Action Tracks.” The dialogues—and subsequent events—brought together more than 40 faith leaders, activists, Indigenous advocates, farmers, workers, and policymakers to gather insights and develop recommendations.

Nearly 1,500 people also took part in the dialogues via live streams on Zoom, Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. These individuals represent a global community of major faith groups, advocacy organizations, farmers, Indigenous communities, and NGOs. Their contributions and questions were essential to the success of these dialogues.

We posted each dialogue online and submitted our findings to the Summit Secretariat through the UN’s formal procedure for civil society contributions.

Our dialogues affirmed a universal right to healthy food, the imperative for sustainable agriculture, respect for Indigenous knowledge and local traditions, and the value of reinvigorating local food systems. Our contributors focused on agroecology and localization, which takes the power away from agribusinesses and corporate interests and puts it into the hands of small and community-based producers. Our recommendations promote full ecosystem health, which mitigates climate change and works with wildlife populations, rather than

destroying them. These concepts are not unknown inside the Summit, but they have become tokenized—and often trivialized—in favor of industrialized, profit-driven farming models.

“If you’re not at the table, then you’re on the menu.”

The challenge facing us is not simply to feed the world. We could do that right now with all the food we waste each day. (The UN Environment Programme reports that “roughly one-third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year—approximately 1.3 billion tonnes—gets lost or wasted.”¹¹) The challenge is to change our value systems—to create systems that do feed the hungry, that eliminate waste, and that create a sustainable, regenerative path forward.

FAITH + FOOD COALITION DIALOGUES
REGENERATING THE EARTH
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UNITED NATIONS FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT 2021

ACTION TRACK #33 BOOST NATURE-POSITIVE PRODUCTION
 @foodsystems @unfoodsystems

JOSHUA AMPONSEM **IYAD ABUMOGHLI** **LYLA JUNE JOHNSTON**

MARCELO SALAZAR **TOSI MPUNA-MPUNA** **FELIPE CARAZO**

BIBI LA LUZ GONZALEZ
 MODERATOR



Seven Principles

From our five dialogues, the Coalition identified seven principles that it carried forward throughout its work.

Interdependence

Human health is linked to the health of the Earth. We affirm the adoption of the One Health model¹² to create nutritious and climate-resilient food systems.

Truth

Science and faith are not at odds. They inform, enrich, complement, and challenge each other in the pursuit of truth.

Reverence

Our traditions teach us that the Earth and the food it provides is sacred, nourishing both our minds and bodies. We must reconnect our rituals with an ethical and ecologically sound food system with minimal food waste.

Respect

We must respect and protect the wisdom of Indigenous traditions on sustainable ecosystems, healthy food systems, and safeguarding biodiversity.

Compassion

We must ensure that marginalized communities and workers at risk of being left behind are centered and uplifted as part of a just recovery and sustainability initiatives.

Solidarity

We only have one common planetary home, and all life is dependent upon it. We should set aside our differences to work together as one human family for the common good.

Empowerment

Resilience lies within ourselves.

Themes

The Coalition organized the dialogues according to the five Food Systems Summit Action Tracks, and developed a coherent set of themes to go with each one, which we invited the experts to advance. The five themes are critical when considering not only what solutions are implemented but how they are implemented and who are the core beneficiaries.

Healthy and Nutritious Food. Commoditized diets of processed foods and beverages high in calories, fats, sugars, and salt and large amounts of industrially produced meat are triggering worsening worldwide health consequences, ranging from hunger and undernutrition to obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases.¹³ How can faith leaders, advocates, governments, and the private sector work together to bring about safe, healthy, sustainable, and affordable diets?

Empowering Women and Girls. Studies demonstrate that when women have more access to income and education, entire households experiences positive impacts, especially improved food consumption behaviors.¹⁴ What steps can faith communities take within and external to their communities to elevate women leaders in food production and consumption and to support women's rights and access to education and jobs?

Systemic Racism and Inequality. Food deserts and food insecurity often are functions of profit-driven models that select which communities to serve and what kinds of food to provide.¹⁵ How can faith traditions deconstruct institutionalized structures of racism that limit accessibility to nutritious foods and create food insecurity?

Localization and Supporting Smallholders. Global food production is disproportionately reliant upon large-scale operations that sequestered nearly 50 percent of food production to six primary growing locations.¹⁶ This model unbalances the food system away from food sovereignty and agroecology, both of which are cornerstones for cross-beneficial food systems transformations. How can we balance our food systems to support smallholder and localized food production?

One Health. Prevailing economic structures and business models allow for externalized damages to land, water, air, and non-human beings. The resulting pollution has poisoned natural habitats and is tied to myriad health problems.¹⁷ How can faith traditions help integrate One Health approach into food systems, similar to Indigenous traditions?



*Dialogues
&
Findings*

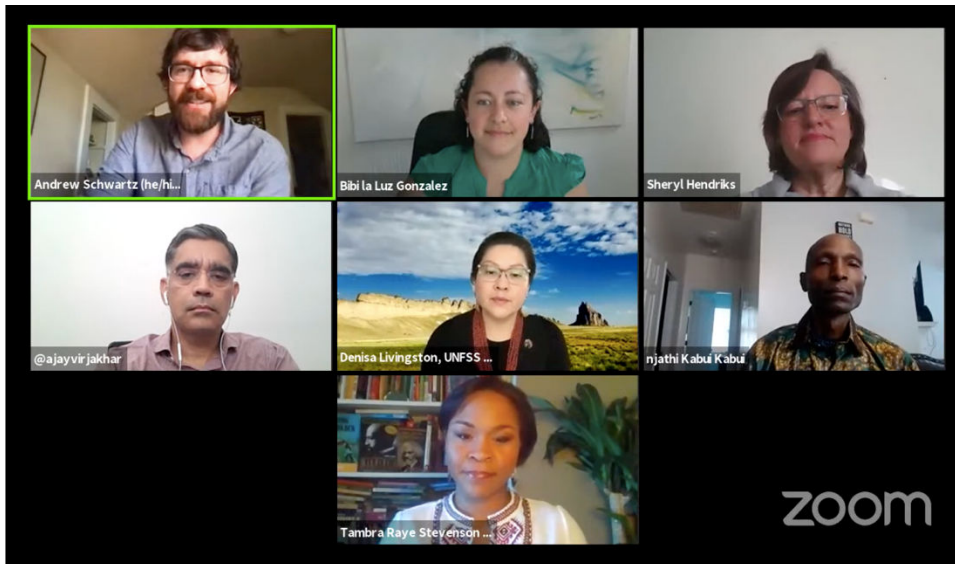


Dialogue 1 – Food Security, Access, and Justice

Thursday, May 6, 2021

Facilitator: Kelly Moltzen

The first dialogue focused on how to create localized, equitable food systems that are sustainable and oriented toward zero hunger. Through the theme “Food Security, Access and Justice,” the dialogue explored the barriers faced by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers around the world (with speakers from the United States, Kenya, South Africa, and India).



The food industry, government regulations, and subsidies have facilitated a global explosion of unhealthy, processed, and ultra-processed foods. The proliferation of commodified, processed foods has contributed to “nutritional trauma” in communities from Kenya to the United States, leaving in its wake decreased food security and avoidable health crises. Whether one has access to too much or too little food is determined by race, class, and nationality.

Policy, governance, education, and finance systems need to shift so BIPOC and farmers from the Global South can innovate and create business models for themselves. BIPOC and traditional agriculture need to be uplifted through research and academia which influences policy. Models should also shift to empower women and girls.

We need to acknowledge the historical connection between hierarchy and diet-related diseases. One panelist noted that diseases, once common only among the rich who had their servants prepare extravagant food, had become common among the lower-income groups when foods high in sugar, salt, and fat became widely available.

Decolonizing the food system to shift supply and demand toward traditional, nutritious foods would allow for BIPOC (and all people) to consume healthier

diets. In order to do this, power and financial capital should invest in an equitable food infrastructure and in a transformation of what it means to eat “good” food. In addition, communities that continue to suffer disparities from the effects of colonization and apartheid should receive improved access to nutritious foods (of local varieties).

“Lots of traditional food is not available in the market. And we’re not growing it, so we’re losing it. We’re losing our culture because of it.”

- Ajay Vir Jakhar

In particular, more agricultural research should focus on Indigenous varieties of fruits and vegetables. Innovations should emphasize ways of maintaining healthy traditional diets (instead of highly processed versions of traditional foods) and reducing the cooking footprint while relieving the burden on low-income communities.

Participants acknowledged that all faith traditions can contribute to a more equitable and sustainable food system, and that people practicing these faith traditions should consider how values are reflected in the food system. People of faith should do more than just pray that wars over food will end, but put faith into practice through action and believe that activism will improve government accountability to creating equitable food systems.

DIALOGUE 1 SPEAKERS

Sheryl Hendriks – Head of Department and Professor of Food Security, Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria (South Africa)

Ajay Vir Jakhar – Citrus Farmer, Advocate, and Chairman of Bharat Krishak Samaj (India)

Chef Njathi Kabui – Organic Chef, Food Strategist, Urban Farmer, and Food Activist (Kenya)

Denisa Livingston – Diné Community Advocacy Alliance (USA)

Tambra Stevenson – Founder and CEO, WANDA: Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture (USA)

Moderator: Bibi la Luz Gonzalez – Founder, Eat Better Wa’ik (Guatemala)

Dialogue 2 – Healing the Earth, Healing Our Bodies

Thursday, May 13, 2021

Facilitator: Marium Husain

This dialogue highlighted the link between human and planetary health. This dialogue focused on how the decline in human health and the natural world are interconnected, and what can and should be done to bring healing to both. Additionally, the panelists explored how faith communities can bridge the gap between science and faith as well as the gap between health and food in different parts of the world



The report of the EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health is abundantly clear: human and planetary health are inextricably linked.¹⁸ The food system has steadily oriented itself to a profit-making endeavor, the result of which has caused the system to focus on making the most money instead of on how to produce healthy, sustainable foods. Due to marketing and lack of education, many global communities are unaware of the negative health impacts from processed and ultra-processed foods. In addition, globalism, climate change, and market drivers have estranged communities from traditional ways of eating.

The panelists encouraged the adoption of a One Health lens when approaching food systems and food systems education. Physicians, faith leaders, and community elders—especially in Indigenous communities—have a unique opportunity to encourage better and healthier eating within their contexts as well as in pushing for better food policy. For example, in pastoral communities in Kenya, imams (faith leaders) discuss certain aspects of Qur’anic text, like prayers or fasting, but do not discuss more global issues like our relationship to food as beings on this planet.

We also need to reclaim our food narratives. We have lost a sense of gratitude and spiritual connection to the land and the food we eat. Our narratives have been overwhelmed by flashy advertising campaigns that make food into a commodity to be consumed and little more.

“Unless we make real changes in the forces we are unleashing on earth, on its biophysical systems, on the interplay of the web of life, it will get out of control.”

- Olav Kjørven

In many rural, urban, and economically disadvantaged areas, accessing healthy affordable food is a significant challenge. Many poor communities in developed countries rely on cheap fast food and ultra-processed foods as their primary food sources. These products are cheap due to large subsidies granted to producers of animal proteins, sugars, and grains.

The world is consuming unsustainable and unhealthy amounts of animal proteins. Animal protein, palm oil, and cane sugar production practices are some of the largest drivers of biodiversity loss and the largest contributors to NDCs.¹⁹ To preserve human and planetary health, our food systems must transition to majority plant-based diets that rely on a wide diversity of fruits, vegetables, and grains that are culturally and bio-regionally appropriate.

DIALOGUE 2 SPEAKERS

Dr. Rev. Darriel Harris – Founding Member, Black Church Food Security Network; Pastor, Newborn Community of Faith Church, Baltimore (USA)

Olav Kjørven – Senior Director of Strategy, EAT Forum (Norway)

Dr. Ming Nan Lin – Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital, Taiwan (Taiwan)

Mona Polacca – Indigenous Grandmother; Senior Fellow, Center for Earth Ethics (USA)

Moderator: Bibi Ia Luz Gonzalez – Founder, Eat Better Wa'ik, (Guatemala)

Dialogue 3 – Regenerating the Earth

Thursday, May 20, 2021

Facilitators: Joshua Basofin, Chris Elisara

Our appetites are overwhelming the planet. Increased global demand for animal proteins and sugars and other crop types—all part of the “cheaper food” production paradigm—drives global ecosystem loss to make way for crops and pasture lands. This dialogue examined the intersection of food production, biodiversity loss, faith, and ecosystem health.



Women play a vital role in connecting us to sustainable food systems. For example, the Diné community combines matriarchy and patriarchy. Men are in charge of the sky and women are in charge of the Earth. While everything hinges on equality, women’s role as guardians of the Earth makes them central to decisions regarding food.

Modern food systems are far from equitable, but making them so is a critical component of any genuine reform. Major obstacles include the complexity of global supply chains, market forces, and disparities between the Global North and the Global South. But the problem of our orientation toward food is fundamental. If food is considered only to be a commodity, people will continue to use and abuse it to meet market demands.

Transforming food systems requires transforming our worldview. We need to build alliances to prevent deforestation and protect biodiversity. We must tackle deforestation, including the ongoing destruction of the Amazon rainforest, as part of any “nature-positive” solution.

The word “nature” can split us from the natural world. An important step in creating an “economy of care” is radical listening to Indigenous communities, who have thousands of years of experience managing forests and the natural

environment. Indigenous peoples have been engaged in co-creation of natural systems and must be allowed to continue these practices—including forest management, seed distribution, and species management. Promoting the equitable return of land to Indigenous peoples will reinvigorate food systems and knowledge.

*“We don’t understand that we are nature.
Nature positivity equals human positivity.”*

- Lyla June Johnston

Faith institutions are the fourth largest economic power in the world. They control immense amounts of land and invest in forestry, mining, industries, and energy. If we want to practice what we preach, faith institutions must remember prayers when doing business. We must bring values and principles of religions and ethical approaches to investments currently focused on the bottom line. Faith is about believing. Beyond religion, it is about having faith in each other, finding common ground, and trusting each other.

DIALOGUE 3 SPEAKERS

Joshua Amponsem – Founder, Green Africa Youth Organization (Ghana)

Felipe Carazo – Tropical Forest Alliance, Head of Public Engagement (Costa Rica)

Lyla June Johnston – Artist, Scholar, and Community Organizer (USA)

Iyad Abu Moghli – Senior Principal Advisor, UN Environment Programme (Jordan)

Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu – Ambassador, Delegate of the Democratic Republic of Congo in climate negotiations; Chair, Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (Congo)

Marcelo Salazar – Brazil Program Coordinator, Health in Harmony (Brazil)

Moderator: Bibi la Luz Gonzalez – Founder, Eat Better Wa’ik (Guatemala)

Dialogue 4 – Farm and Food Worker Rights

Thursday, May 27, 2021

Facilitators: Andrew Schwartz, Gopal Patel

COVID-19 has been especially challenging for frontline food and farm workers who are expected to maintain global food systems with limited protections or compensation. The pandemic exacerbated working conditions for individuals who were already vulnerable to systemic inequality and exploitation. This dialogue focused on questions of how our food systems need to change in order to be more just, equitable, and humane for the workers who keep food on the world's table.



Our food systems are imbalanced, and intentionally so. They are imbalanced to benefit large agro-corporations who exploit workers and the land. The majority of the speakers in our session were from countries that had been colonized by Europeans who exploited the land and people of the colonized territories for the benefit of the colonizers. “After so many years of colonization and slavery, they look at the land as the scene of the crime,” said Dr. Louis Petersen.

This sentiment was shared strongly by Dr. Aliou Niang, originally from Senegal, and Dr. Meera Baidur, from India. They both spoke to the exploitation of land and people alike by colonizing agents. The colonizers’ tactics have been adopted by modern day agro-corporations: workers and the land are needlessly exploited and the benefit of their outcomes are funneled away from the community into the agents who exploit them.

Our current food system exploits and abuses land, just like it does workers. The panelists emphasized the need to rectify our relationship with the land so that it is not seen as a commodity or an object. Global supply and value chains are extremely long, and consumers have no relationship with the producers other than a transactional one. Farm and food workers have little say in what they farm or produce, which further dehumanizes the relationship between people and the land.

An antidote to this broad objectification is to re-engage our spiritual connectedness to the land and recognize the sanctity of the relationship.

“After so many years of colonization and slavery, they look at the land as the scene of the crime.”

- Dr. Louis Petersen

From the highlands of Guatemala to the island of Puerto Rico, increased storms and droughts and floods devastate crops. There must be increased safety nets for farm and food workers when their crops fail. Collectives and cooperatives need to be expanded to provide support structures to provide resilience in the face of climate disasters.

DIALOGUE 4 SPEAKERS

Meera Baidur – Associate Professor in Philosophy, Department of Arts, Manipal University, Jaipur (India)

Juan Echanove – Senior Director, Food and Water Systems CARE, Rural Development (Spain)

Aliou Niang – Associate Professor of New Testament, Union Theological Seminary (USA/Senegal)

Louis Petersen – District Supervisor/Assistant Director, University of the Virgin Islands (US Virgin Islands)

Amanda Sanfiorenzo – Northwoods Stewardship Center (Puerto Rico)

Moderator: Bibi la Luz Gonzalez – Founder, Eat Better Wa'ik (Guatemala)

Dialogue 5 – Empowering Local Communities

Thursday, June 3, 2021

Facilitator: Steve Chiu

COVID-19 continues to reveal the fragility of our global food systems. This dialogue focused on game changing solutions created by faith-based organizations that build local food systems resilience, enhance access to local food, and strengthen marginalized communities' ability to mitigate and adapt to emergent climate risks.



The vast majority of the world's farmers are small holders and yet they have limited power in the crops they grow or the price those crops are sold because of the outsized influence and power agro-corporations have in the food system.²⁰ Transforming this power imbalance is essential to the long term efficacy of our food systems.

Finance and development organizations need to fund and incentivize localization so that farmers are able to grow bio-regionally appropriate foods that serve the community. Farmers often do not get to grow what they want, but instead must grow what is subsidized to sell. They need to be able to diversify crop productions and yields to fortify healthy diets

There is a need for education-based action that not only utilizes modern science and technology but also is informed by the wisdom of Indigenous traditions and models of ethics and equity. Faith, spiritual, and religious institutions can open their doors to facilitate action while also transforming their buildings and landholding to be more engaged with local food systems.

Faith-based organizations and institutions have a unique role to play in empowering local development. They can leverage their buildings and landholdings to support local production while also providing a spiritual and ethical foundation to inspire the just transition we need to see toward healthier

and more sustainable local foods. Additionally, faith and spiritual care is needed for communities rattled by climate change and experiencing climate anxiety.

Through collectives, farmers, producers, and sellers can create food sovereignty—crafting regulations and focusing development funds toward small holders and community development projects. These movements can be detached from global food systems and ,in their autonomy, can help build local resilience to increased climate impacts.

*“Everybody has a place in building
just food systems.”*

- Sha’Von Terrel

Most important, we need to see a shift in food policy. Communities impacted by policy decisions must be at the table where decisions are being made. Faith groups must demand ethical and fair treatment for all, and support farmers and farm workers. Governments must hold corporations accountable: instituting regulations on agro-corporations to mandate climate mitigating practices, build resilience in their value chains, and account for the environmental, social, and economic consequences of our food systems.

DIALOGUE 5 SPEAKERS

Rabbi Nate DeGroot – Spiritual & Program Director, Hazon Detroit (USA)

Sandrine Dixson-Declève – Co-President, Club of Rome (Belgium)

Carolina Ballivian Fernandez – Co-Founder, Yindah Foundation (Bolivia)

Lucy Mulenkei – Executive Director, Indigenous Information Network (Kenya)

Ravneet Singh – South-Asia Project Manager, Eco-Sikh (India)

Sha’Von Terrel – Food Sovereignty Fellow, Black Church Food Security Network (USA)

Moderator: Bibi la Luz Gonzalez – Founder, Eat Better Wa’ik (Guatemala)

Calls to Action

We call upon Heads of State and Governments at the Food Systems Summit to implement bold and decisive actions that align their countries' production and consumption toward sustainable, regenerative limits, centered in equity and care for the most vulnerable:

1. **Committing** to the equitable transformation of food systems that centers Indigenous and smallholder farmers at the heart of development.
2. **Investing** in innovative, evidence-based solutions from Indigenous and faith communities and the organizations that support them, targeted at building the food systems' resilience without acquiescing to corporate capture of critical infrastructure.
3. **Providing** policy, innovation, educational, and business opportunities for underrepresented food system actors, uplifting traditional agriculture in research methodology.
4. **Building** critical alliances among farmers, businesses, NGOs, governments, Indigenous communities, and faith groups.
5. **Restoring** degraded land and protecting ecosystems while connecting farmers to fair and equitable markets to produce better health, social, economic, and ecological outcomes.
6. **Incentivizing** and subsidizing healthy, climate resilient, nutritious, local plant-based foods growing practices to allow competitiveness with global markets at the local level.
7. **Re-aligning** tax systems to drive immediate changes, such as taxing foods that lead to undesirable health outcomes, as well as taxing excessive plastic packaging, particularly the single-use plastics that are embedded into industrial food delivery systems.
8. **Regulating** the marketing of food and beverages to children, preventing non-nutritious, chemically dominated foods from being sold as healthy substitutes to real food.
9. **Protecting**, supporting and promoting breastfeeding, which is the first food system that provides the ideal first food to the most vulnerable human beings.

10. **Promoting** and encouraging the local generation of knowledge to address food security, empowering farmers and youth as the agents of change to play an active role in creating solutions that address the context and reality of local needs.
11. **Guaranteeing** food security through sustainability, nutrition, and equity rather than chasing untested biotechnologies and GMOs to augment food systems; innovating with a moral compass.

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**ACTION TRACK #48
ADVANCE EQUITABLE LIVELIHOODS**

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 AMANDA SANFIORENZO JUAN ECHANOVE ANTONIETA MÉNDEZ BIBI LA LUZ GONZALEZ
 MODERATOR

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A Better Path Forward

The challenge in front of us is a moral one. We must acknowledge that we are neglecting sustainable approaches and failing to respect the dignity and rights of communities. We undermine biodiversity, ignore local knowledge and wisdom, impede food access and food sovereignty, and damage ecosystems by investing in unbalanced food systems.

The wisdom, solutions, and calls to action that came out of the Food + Faith Dialogues point to a better path forward—one that values the dignity of local producers and workers, respects Indigenous practices and wisdom, and sustains both people and planet.

“We already have what we need, in our hearts and in our communities, to be able to carry the solutions forward.”

- Denisa Livingston

By honoring our best traditions and recognizing that food is much more than just a commodity—that it is, in fact, a human right—we can create the change that we need to see.

Why not envision the next 50 years as the best years the world has ever known? Why not believe that we can and will overcome the challenges in front of us? In the first dialogue, Denisa Livingston made the case for hope. “We already have what we need, in our hearts and in our communities, to be able to carry the solutions forward,” she said.

The Food Systems Summit will convene on September 23, during the UN General Assembly in New York. The UN has announced that it will set “the stage for global food systems transformation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.”²¹ We remain cautiously optimistic that it can still mark a genuine “people’s summit” that will lead to equitable, sustainable food security.

The calls to action are clear. We must be bold and decisive. We cannot rely on institutions or the methods that brought our food systems and the natural world to the brink of collapse. We must invest in communities and smallholders, and in the health and vitality of the natural world. We must place women, children, and vulnerable populations and the center of any solution.

The moment to act is now.

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Appendix A. Faith + Food Coalition Interfaith Statement on the Occasion of the United Nations Food Systems Summit

Friday, September 17, 2021

Our story of food is one of sacred joy. Interconnectivity. Dignity. Empathy. These values are enshrined in faith, non-faith, spiritual, and Indigenous traditions' understanding of food. To eat food, especially healthy, nutritious food, is to experience our interdependence with nature, fully embracing the land we live on and those who have nurtured the food that is provided for us to eat.

Food is both a building block of life and a basic human right. Sharing food is an expression of our love, a way we care for each other, exchange culture and history, and remind ourselves that we are a part of the wider world.

Globalization of recent decades has decreased poverty, strengthened women's rights, and increased food production for a growing global population. Over the same time, however, we have replaced the timeless wisdom of how to nourish the land with extractive industrial models that privilege profit and convenience at the cost of workers, the lands, and the waters. We have ceded this most basic aspect of the human experience to the sphere of private profit, resulting in food "products" that are detrimental to the health of consumers and ecosystems. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has erased many of the gains made from globalization—especially for women, children, and other vulnerable populations—is but one of the many outcomes of this exchange.

An unsustainable dependency on industrial agriculture pillages the very earth on which we live, emblematic of unregulated economic greed, and an unchecked desire for an endless more. We have become disconnected from our world and our bodies, entertaining illusions of progress while ignoring the suffering of billions. Progress is measured by market indices and GDP, rather than collective prosperity. The urgency of the climate crisis demands that we no longer let the pursuit of profits define what is best.

The once balanced relationship among humans, animals and plants has become corrupted into an exploitative, and abusive relationship. Nowhere is this more manifest than in the case of industrial animal agriculture. From the Confined Animal Feeding Operations fueling the vast majority of animal product production in the Global North, to the industrialized cattle and dairy industry deforesting mass swathes of rainforest in the Global South, scenarios of irresponsible animal agriculture bring untold environmental destruction and inflicts inexcusable suffering onto animals. Our faith values remind us that eating is sacred; it connects the land and our bodies. We must align our actions to these values so that we consider the impact the production of our food makes, commit to consume responsibly, and incorporate more plant-based and locally cultivated foods into our diets.

In this Decade of Action, maintaining the status quo is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of humanity. The most recent IPCC report has made it more clear than ever that in order for future generations to flourish, we must reorient our relationship to the Earth and its ecological boundaries.

As the United Nations prepares to convene the 2021 Food Systems Summit, we the undersigned call people of faith, spirituality, and goodwill to make a commitment to uphold the following principles as we work towards building forward a more equitable food system for all life:

1. **Interdependence.** Human health is linked to the health of the Earth. We affirm the adoption of the One Health model to create nutritious and climate-resilient food systems.
2. **Truth.** Science and faith are not at odds. They inform, enrich, complement, and challenge each other in the pursuit of truth.
3. **Reverence.** Our traditions teach us that the Earth and the food it provides is sacred and serves to nourish our minds and bodies. We must reconnect our rituals with an ethical and ecologically sound food system with minimal food waste.
4. **Respect.** We must respect and protect the wisdom of Indigenous traditions on sustainable ecosystems, healthy food systems, and safeguarding biodiversity.
5. **Compassion.** We must ensure that marginalized communities and workers at risk of being left behind are centered and uplifted as part of a just recovery and sustainability initiatives
6. **Solidarity.** We only have one common planetary home, and all life is dependent upon it. We should set aside our differences to work together as one human family for the common good
7. **Empowerment.** Resilience lies within ourselves.

We call upon Heads of State and Governments at the Food Systems Summit to implement bold and decisive actions to align their countries' production and consumption toward sustainable, regenerative outcomes, centered in equity and care for the most vulnerable by:

1. **Committing** to the equitable transformation of food systems that centers indigenous and smallholder farmers at the heart of our development
2. **Investing** in innovative, evidence-based solutions from Indigenous and faith communities and the organizations that support them, targeted at building the food systems' resilience without acquiescing to corporate capture of critical infrastructure.
3. **Providing** policy, innovation, educational, and business opportunities for underrepresented food system actors, uplifting traditional agriculture in research methodology.
4. **Building** critical alliances among farmers, businesses, NGOs, governments, Indigenous communities, and faith groups.
5. **Restoring** degraded land and protecting ecosystems while connecting farmers to fair and equitable markets to produce better health, social, economic, and ecological outcomes.
6. **Incentivizing** and subsidizing healthy, climate resilient, nutritious, local plant based foods growing practices to allow competitiveness with global markets at the local level.
7. **Re-aligning** tax systems to drive immediate changes, such as taxing foods that lead to undesirable health outcomes, as well as taxing excessive plastic packaging, particularly the single use plastics that are embedded into industrial food delivery systems
8. **Regulating** the marketing of food and beverages to children, preventing non-nutritious, chemically dominated foods from being sold as healthy substitutes to real food.
9. **Protecting**, supporting and promoting breastfeeding, which is the first food system that provides the ideal first food to the most vulnerable human beings.
10. **Promoting** and encouraging the local generation of knowledge to address food security, empowering farmers and youth, as the agents of change to play an active role in creating solutions that address the context and reality of local needs.
11. **Guaranteeing** food security through sustainability, nutrition, and equity rather than chasing untested biotechnologies and GMOs to augment food systems, innovating with a moral compass.

We are committed to the United Nations' vision of transformed, sustainable food systems and the UN's aspirations to create a more equitable, livable future for all. You may look to us as continued partners of good faith as we all endeavor to build a brighter tomorrow.

Gratefully,

Drafting Team

Andrew Schwartz, Center for Earth Ethics

Chris Elisara, World Evangelical Alliance

Gopal Patel, Bhumi Global

Joshua Basofin, Parliament of the World's Religions

Kelly Moltzen, Interfaith Public Health Network

Marium Husain, Islamic Medical Association of North America

Steve Chiu, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

Signatories (as of September 17, 2021)

50by40

Abibinsroma Foundation

American Indian Law Alliance

Bahá'í International Community

Bhumi Global

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

Center for Earth Ethics, Union Theological Seminary

College of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University

Creation Justice Ministries

Critica

Franciscan Action Network

Global One 2015

Golden Leaf Community Development Center, Inc.

Hazon

HolisticMom, MD

Interfaith Public Health Network

Islamic Medical Association of North America

Lyla June Johnston

NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns - NY

Parliament of the World's Religions

Sacred Lands Coalition

Sustainability Department, The Sisters of St. Joseph

Temple of Understanding

Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue, Iona College

Unitarian Universalist Association

University of Colombo

University of Jordan

Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture (WANDA)

Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE)

Appendix B. List of Dialogue Speakers

Convener

[Andrew Schwartz](#) – Director of Sustainability and Global Affairs, Center for Earth Ethics, Union Theological Seminary (USA)

Moderator

[Bibi la Luz Gonzalez](#) – Founder, Eat Better Wa'ik (Guatemala)

Panelists

[Joshua Amponsem](#) – Founder, Green Africa Youth Organization (Ghana)

[Meera Baindur](#) – Associate Professor in Philosophy, Department of Arts, Manipal University, Jaipur (India)

[Carolina Ballivian Fernandez](#) – Co-Founder, Yindah Foundation (Bolivia)

[Felipe Carazo](#) – Head of Public Engagement, Tropical Forest Alliance (Costa Rica)

[Nate DeGroot](#) – Rabbi; Spiritual & Program Director, Hazon Detroit (USA)

[Sandrine Dixson-Declève](#) – Co-President, Club of Rome (Belgium)

[Juan Echanove](#) – Senior Director, Food and Water Systems CARE, Rural Development (Spain)

[Darriel Harris](#) – Founding Member, Black Church Food Security Network; Pastor, Newborn Community of Faith Church, Baltimore (USA)

[Sheryl Hendriks](#) – Head of Department and Professor of Food Security, Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria (South Africa)

[Ajay Vir Jakhar](#) – Citrus Farmer, Advocate, and Chairman of Bharat Krishak Samaj (India)

[Lyla June Johnston](#) – Artist, Scholar, and Community Organizer (USA)

[Njathi Kabui](#) – Organic Chef, Food Strategist, Urban Farmer, and Food Activist (Kenya)

[Olav Kjørven](#) – Senior Director of Strategy, EAT Forum (Norway)

[Denisa Livingston](#) – Diné Community Advocacy Alliance (USA)

[Ming Nan Lin](#) – Physician, Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital, Taiwan (Taiwan)

[Iyad Abu Moghli](#) – Senior Principal Advisor, UN Environment Programme (Jordan)

[Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu](#) – Ambassador, Delegate of the Democratic Republic of Congo in climate negotiations; Chair, Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (Congo)

[Lucy Mulenkei](#) – Executive Director, Indigenous Information Network (Kenya)

[Aliou Niang](#) – Associate Professor of New Testament, Union Theological Seminary (USA/Senegal)

[Louis Petersen](#) – District Supervisor/Assistant Director, University of the Virgin Islands (US Virgin Islands)

[Mona Polacca](#) - Indigenous Grandmother, Senior Fellow at Center for Earth Ethics (USA)

[Marcelo Salazar](#) – Brazil Program Coordinator, Health in Harmony (Brazil)

[Amanda Sanfiorenzo](#) – Forestry Intern, Northwoods Stewardship Center (Puerto Rico)

[Ravneet Pal Singh](#) – South-Asia Project Manager, Eco-Sikh (India)

[Tambra Raye Stevenson](#) – Founder and CEO, WANDA: Women Advancing Nutrition Dietetics and Agriculture (USA)

[Sha'Von Terrel](#) – Food Sovereignty Fellow, Black Church Food Security Network (USA)

Appendix C. Faith + Food Coalition Member Organizations

The Food + Faith Coalition (<https://www.faithandfood.earth>) is an alliance of organizations bringing voices from faith-based groups, Indigenous communities, small farmers and food producers, and underrepresented populations from around the world to the United Nations Food Systems Summit. Through our interfaith, cross-sector dialogues, we are moving these necessary but neglected perspectives from the periphery to the center of the conversation about the Food Summit process and beyond.

Bhumi Global (<https://www.bhumiglobal.org>) envisions a world where balance is restored between humans and the natural world. Based on Hindu principles of environmental care, Bhumi Global engages, educates, and empowers people and communities to address the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (<https://tzuchi.us>) is a global non-profit humanitarian organization founded in 1966 by Dharma Master Cheng Yen, a Buddhist nun in Taiwan. Its missions of medicine, charity, education, and humanistic culture have brought relief to more than 102 countries. The heart of Tzu Chi is embedded in its name: in Chinese, “tzu” (compassion) and “chi” (relief).

The **Center for Earth Ethics** (<https://centerforearthethics.org>) envisions a world where value is measured according to the sustained well-being of all people and our planet. CEE works to cultivate the public consciousness needed to make changes in policy and culture that will establish a new value system based on this vision.

The **Islamic Medical Association of North America** (<https://imana.org>) positively impacts the health of humanity through integrated programs, with a major emphasis on global medical relief. IMANA fosters health promotion, disease prevention, and health maintenance in communities around the world through direct patient care, health programs, and advocacy.

The **Interfaith Public Health Network** (<https://www.iphnetwork.org>) engages and mobilizes faith communities to improve population health, by addressing the underlying determinants of health (social, commercial, environmental, and political) through connecting potential partners, convening constructive dialogue, cultivating population health understanding, and catalyzing positive social change.

One of the world’s premier interfaith convening organization, the **Parliament of the World’s Religions** (<https://parliamentofreligions.org>) envisions a world of peace, justice, and sustainability. The Parliament cultivates harmony among the world’s religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions to address the critical issues of our time.

The **World Evangelical Alliance** (<https://worlddea.org>) is a network of churches in 129 nations that have joined to give a worldwide identity, voice and platform to more than 600 million evangelical Christians. WEA seeks to strengthen local churches through national alliances, supporting and coordinating grassroots leadership, and seeking practical ways of showing the unity of the body of Christ.

Appendix D. Faith + Food Coalition Steering Committee

Andrew Schwartz (convener)
Director of Sustainability and Global Affairs
Center for Earth Ethics

Joshua Basofin
Director of Climate Action
Parliament of the World's Religions

Steve Chiu
Representative to the United Nations
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

Chris Elisara
Executive Director, Creation Care Task Force
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