

NOURISH DIALOGUE DINNERS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

The Nourish Dialogue Dinners were hosted by National Dairy Council (NDC) and local dairy councils across the United States in 2018 and 2019. They brought together stakeholders from across the food system to have conversations and explore areas of common ground, goals, challenges and solutions to benefit people and the planet. The vision was to deepen understanding, build relationships and ignite momentum for greater impact together.

While we regularly hear perspectives that the food system is broken and needs transformative change to ensure human and planetary health, the thoughtful discussions at these dinners uncovered a hopeful perspective — one seeing the potential for solutions that can lead to a flourishing future with healthy people living on a healthy planet.

The complex, multi-sector nature of food systems can make it challenging for stakeholders from diverse areas to view themselves as part of an interdependent system. Even when they are in the same local community, professionals from across the food supply chain may not interact, much less collaborate, to impact nutrition and health outcomes or inform their local sustainable food systems. Yet, the dinner participants, inclusive of practitioners and leaders representing various sectors of the food system, were able to come together for dinner and discussion about how to collaborate to advance sustainable food systems.

Interaction is needed now more than ever. By 2050, there will be at least two billion more people on the planet and millions of people already face food insecurity and public health issues in the U.S. and around the globe. With our natural resources at risk, sustaining and improving human and planetary health will require collaboration, innovation and new systems thinking.

Environmental sustainability is core to healthy, sustainable food systems that will reflect a future where nutritious food is responsibly produced, people and the planet are healthy, and communities thrive.

Quantitative analysis of notes from the dinners informed the report's insights and recommendations. The report also highlights stakeholders and their grassroots efforts to improve community health and well-being, including examples in farming and food production, food security and access, food waste and recycling, and educating and empowering the next generation of food systems leaders.

INSIGHTS & INSPIRATION

The Nourish Dialogue Dinners followed a consistent format, with the hosts asking pre-determined questions over the course of the evening to facilitate the discussion.

While each dinner included unique points of view from stakeholders representing multiple sectors, analysis of the conversation notes revealed common areas of interest around 19 areas of opportunity. The report details these opportunity areas, which provide the foundation for broader focus areas and recommendations for three calls to action:

CALL TO ACTION #1:

Set the record straight: Develop creative approaches to improve food literacy so the next generation is empowered to make healthier, more sustainable food choices.

CALL TO ACTION #2:

Embrace comprehensive sustainability: Ensure that the four domains of food system sustainability – environment, health, economic and social – are addressed in the development and implementation of all food and nutrition programs and practices, locally and globally.

CALL TO ACTION #3:

Be solution-oriented: Partner with other stakeholders to create solutions, and raise awareness about new, innovative ways that stakeholders are supporting sustainable food systems.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT

By the end of each Nourish Dialogue Dinner, there was palpable excitement and energy around what could come next — ideas, possibilities, and interesting takeaways. In other words, a lot to digest.

Like anything, improvement in all areas that make up sustainable food systems starts with commitment — prioritizing efforts to build relationships with diverse stakeholders in the food system by breaking down barriers and opening dialogue. Even smaller, continual steps can add up to collective action that causes significant change.

The stories shared by the dinner participants inspired short-, near- and long-term action steps that can be applied at the individual and group level.



CONCLUSION

National Dairy Council was inspired by the idea that bringing diverse stakeholders together for a casual dinner and discussion to deepen understanding, build relationships and create momentum could lead to greater impact. We believed that by coming together, we would find more common ground than differences. This includes a shared vision of a world well-nourished, reflected by a future where nutritious foods are responsibly produced, where communities thrive, and people are healthy and can meet their full potential. This is the essence of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, which call for all sectors of civil society to work together to achieve a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity.

The connections between agriculture, nutrient-rich food, health and sustainability are at the forefront of this desired food future, and we have a shared responsibility to contribute to and advance healthy sustainable food systems.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to state and regional dairy councils for co-hosting the Nourish Dialogue Dinners with National Dairy Council across the U.S. We extend our gratitude to the participants who attended the dinners. We appreciate the conversations, insights and optimism that informed this report. We look forward to continuing our collective momentum and collaboration to advance sustainable food systems.

Since 1915, National Dairy Council (NDC) has been a non-profit organization founded by dairy farmers and funded through the national dairy checkoff program. NDC has been, and will continue to be, committed to providing science-based education about the nutrition and health benefits that dairy foods provide, while bringing to life hard-working dairy farmers' shared vision of a healthy, happy, sustainable world.

With more than 100 years of experience and a staff of registered dietitian nutritionists, nutrition scientists and communication experts, NDC works to provide practical information about how dairy contributes to health and sustainable food systems. This includes sharing the benefits of how eating three daily servings of low-fat and fat-free dairy foods like milk, cheese and yogurt can offer great taste, nutritional value and health benefits.



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