

#FoodTalks – Summary notes from online discussion
ADDRESSING MULTIPLE EMERGENCIES

21st May 2020, 12.00-13.30



Graphic produced by [Liane Fredericks](#)

The overarching theme of our #FoodTalks in 2020 is ‘*We are all emergency respondents now.*’ In [our first #FoodTalks of 2020](#) (in March), we explored the initial emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis. Then in [our second webinar](#) (in April), we discussed how to build resilience and how we can embed the positive changes we’re starting to see amidst the chaos.

This third #FoodTalks of 2020 explored **how we can widen out to address the multiple and intersecting climate, biodiversity, obesity and democracy emergencies**, and ensure they are not just firmly on the radar of politicians, businesses and food citizens, but are being addressed with the urgency they merit. As important as COVID-19 is, we must not let it push aside other critical concerns. We will also discuss how many of these issues often have similar root causes and require unified efforts.

In challenging times, it is important to carve out spaces to discuss the issues we face, to share thoughts, experience and expertise, and to work out ways to collectively move forward. This event was an online discussion, hosted by Dan Crossley, Executive Director of the [Food Ethics Council](#), and included short expert contributions from:

- **Kimberley Bell**, Founder of the Small Food Bakery, Nottingham
- **Lim Li Ching**, Third World Network and member of IPES-Food
- **Tom Crompton**, Director, Common Cause Foundation
- **Sally Uren**, CEO, Forum for the Future

The event was aimed at people working to create positive change in the food system (including London Food Link members) and members of Impact Hub Kings Cross, but was open to all.

The following notes are a summary of the many questions, insights, experiences, and knowledge shared between the four speakers and c. 125 participants. **The video recording can be found [here](#).**



#FoodTalks is brought to you by a partnership of the [Food Ethics Council](#), [Impact Hub Kings Cross](#), [Organico](#), and [London Food Link](#), part of [Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming](#).



Cracks in the system

- The pandemic has been a wake-up call for food systems around the world, with serious and wide-reaching impacts, not least in relation to growing numbers of households that are food insecure.
- Industrial agriculture has created conditions that may increase the likelihood of viruses spreading.
- The crisis and fragility of food systems will be compounded by intersecting climate, health, economic & biodiversity crisis.
- We are in an accelerated moment of systems transformation and an incredible moment of discontinuity. We are seeing deep change at all levels – at a surface-level but also in terms of mindsets.
- This is a major moment to reimagine and reform. We should harness that dynamism and repattern our food system in line with sustainable development.
- “The future is already here, it’s all around us, it’s just not very evenly distributed” (William Gibson)
- We have seen a glimpse of what new, resilient food systems look like because communities have stepped up to fill the gaps. Some governments have done previously unimaginable, ambitious action.

We face different possible future trajectories:

1. Transform: shift towards an economy & society that has regenerative goals at its heart
2. Disciplinarian: tech-enabled, controlled-way forward e.g. contact-tracing technology
3. Collapse: there is not enough of everything, nation states retreating, corona-xenophobia

We should stop talking about *tweaking* unsustainable food and agriculture systems – we need transformative change. Only by really transforming our food systems will we achieve resilience.

Key principles

Focus on people (social ecologies)

- The people who make our food are often forgotten. The crux of the issue is that these people need to feel differently, as valued participants in the food system rather than workers in a chain.
- If we want to improve food systems, we need to remember who is on the frontline. There is an invitation for everyone to consider the role of food workers, food processors and food retailers (and farmers). These people are powerful agents for change when addressing the interconnected issues and emergencies we face.

Small Food Bakery testimonial:

- The Small Food Bakery (in Nottingham) has always prided itself on being ingredient-, soil- and people-led. It has placed a particular focus on the identify of its ingredients, land and people in the food system, which are too often ignored.
- The motivation for the bakery was to come from a point of critique of the food system to really build things in a better way, hands-on. The bakery began six years ago as an experiment in what a grassroots-led food system could look like
- During the early stages of lockdown, many new customers got in touch claiming to support local business, but really it’s about everyone supporting each other. In particular, food workers have sacrificed a lot of personal privileges to serve in the crisis. This needs to be more readily acknowledged and celebrated.

- The Bakery's response to COVID-19 and lockdown has been an extension of its people-focussed stance:
 - o In the 2-week run-up to lockdown Kimberly (Bell) spent time in 1-2-1 and group meetings with colleagues and suppliers to find out how everyone *felt* about what was going on, so the response was thought-through and tailored to what was needed
 - o Diversity has been central (people go to the shops less frequently and so need to buy more of a range, so the bakery has become more of a grocer for the time being)

"People in the industry should feel proud to serve and it's not about customers supporting us, it's about everyone supporting each other" Kimberly Bell, Small Food Bakery

Focus on agroecology

- We need a paradigm shift to diversified agroecological food systems
- Agroecology is fundamentally about empowering people, the innovations of local communities & farmers, indigenous knowledge, rights of indigenous people, women & other marginalised groups.
- Agroecology:
 1. Is biodiversity-based agriculture
 2. Is a territorial approach which protects important ecosystems
 3. Can help farmers adapt to climate change
- Resilience is about not just withstanding shocks, but recovery from them
- Agroecology depends on territorial markets and short-supply chains or networks, short-circuiting industrial food supply chains
- Agroecology is a movement that needs political support to flourish. 'Food democracy' (Olivier de Schutter) is about developing integrated food policies based on citizens' participation (at local, municipal or national level).

There is evidence that agroecology can work beyond the small scale. Agroecology can improve yields in developing country farms. Farmers can transition to agroecological approaches, with the right institutional and policy support plus financing. If we just focus on yield, it masks lots of other aspects that matter to people. We really need to change the metrics by which we measure 'success' in agriculture.

Food and farming research is vitally important. Research is one aspect of democratising the food system that we have to be alert to. A lot of research that has happened in agriculture in the past has been top-down and has *not* involved farmers. It's time to change that. It is about building from farmers' knowledge and working with science – linking together people from food production through to the general public in short supply chains. That allows better connections. It should not just be about purchasing food; it's about supporting each other.

Focus on values

There are two ends of the spectrum when it comes to responses to environmental or social emergencies. These reflect different kinds of values:

1. Responses that centre on the most vulnerable and oppressed, that place humanitarian concerns above the demands of the market, that take full account of impact on non-human beings, that offer possibility of systemic and durable solutions (**intrinsic values** – values of social justice, equality, broad-mindedness, connection to nature, love).
2. Privileging of personal freedom above protection or care of the most vulnerable, focusing on personal rather than wider collective or government responsibility, privileging of economy over public health and responding callously to people demonstrating personal risk in the course of looking after others (**extrinsic values** – values of wealth, financial success, authority, power over people, social power).

Extrinsic values stand in psychological (and political) opposition to intrinsic ones, which are more collaborative or community-based response. **There is a political opposition between those two.** It is psychologically difficult to hold both intrinsic and extrinsic values to be important at the same time.

Political programmes and public policies model and strengthen certain values, in a way that becomes self-perpetuating. The impact of political programmes and public policy on our shared values are often overlooked by social and environmental organisations and networks.

If political responses to COVID-19 model *extrinsic* values, they are likely to serve to deepen public acceptance of the normality of those values and therefore propel forward a political agenda based on these values in other very different contexts.

If we are to begin to reverse this self-reinforcing process (that is, of a political approach built on extrinsic values strengthening norms around these values, and thereby propelling its political programmes forward) then *we need to strive for greater coherence* in the values to which we appeal, both *within* – but also, crucially, *across* social and environmental organisations and networks.

We can begin by looking beyond our particular “cause” and asking: how might we connect our audiences with other causes (ones that may seem far removed) by surfacing and celebrating shared intrinsic values?

Linking it all together

We should not fixate on environmental impacts alone. Agroecology is fundamentally about empowering people - about empowering producers and communities as agents of change. It recognises innovation of local communities and local farmers, and values traditional knowledge and their practices and experiences. It puts a strong focus on the rights of women, youth and indigenous peoples. This is a unique feature of agroecology – because it is holistic, integrated and can reconcile the economic, social and environmental.

Where is the intersection between agroecology and social ecology? Between those two things, that’s where the answers about building a better food system lie. Part of that is valuing land, resources and people properly, rather than always trading them off against each other.

Now is the time we have to show we can work towards a resilient, localised person-to-person food system.

“We need to address things in a systemic manner, we can’t sit in silence and look at one perspective only. We have to take a much more holistic approach, because the very root causes are holistic and are based on the flawed economic systems and values we have in place at the moment. A food systems approach which incorporates agroecology, social justice, workers’ rights, community rights and sustainability are absolutely essential.” Lim Li Ching, Third World Network and member of IPES-Food

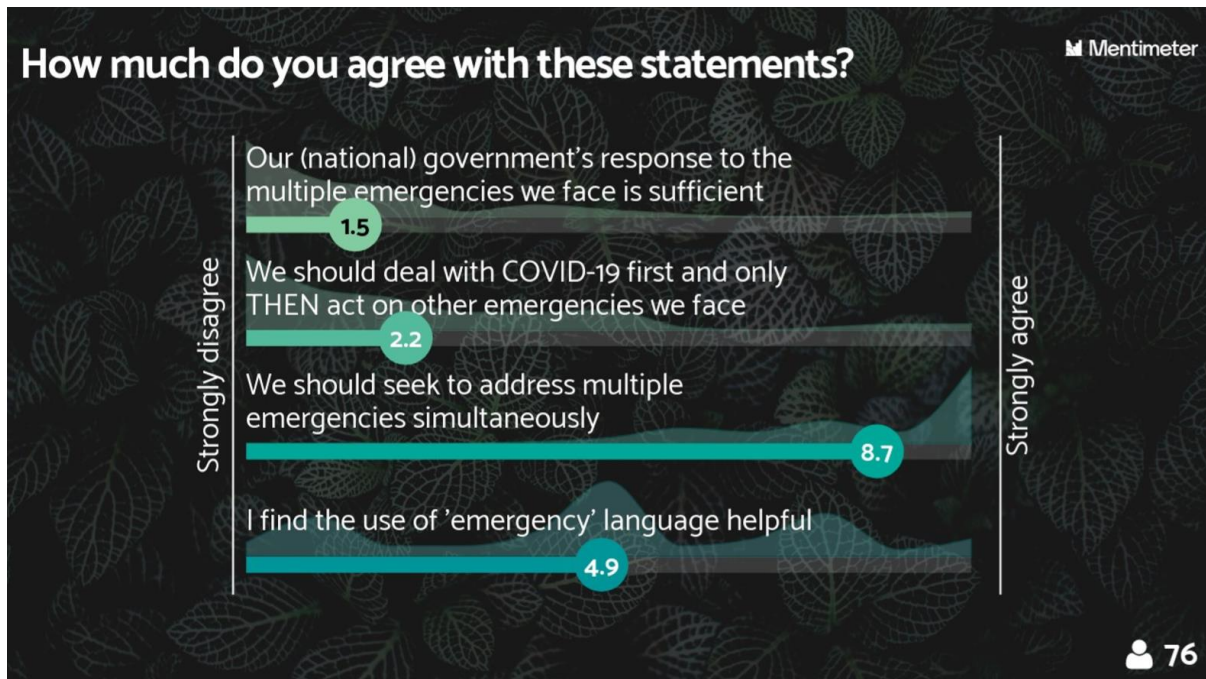
Positive shifts during COVID-19

- Shopping in supermarkets was previously popular due to its convenience and anonymity (food choices aren’t being judged). During the pandemic, these qualities are no longer a favourable part of the supermarket experience (the queues are long and anonymous food selection is no longer so easy) and so smaller retailers finally have a real competitive advantage, despite (sometimes) having more expensive produce.
- There have been more direct links from companies like Small Food Bakery and diverse producers because farmers can no longer supply the hospitality industry. This diversifies the range of the bakery and also produces more direct links between producers and small retailers.
- One of the positive outcomes of this crisis is that the link between planetary health and human health is clearer than ever before.



Systemic action...

Mentimeter is a tool for audience interaction during online events. Using a separate browser or smartphone, participants responded to questions and fed in ideas to the discussion.



... to reframe the goals of the system

We need to work to a different set of goals for our food system and economic system. The food system is not broken. It is working really well if the goals of that system are about efficiency and short-term profit maximisation. Equally the economic system is not broken. It is working really well for the current roles of a capital system. What goals should these systems be striving for?

... to build & maintain understanding of the interconnectivity of these issues

Planetary health, economic health and human health are inextricably linked.

How do we understand the world as an interconnected set of issues and use that understanding to drive multiple benefits in multiple systems? Agroecology and regenerative agriculture are great examples of approaches which drive multiple benefits in multiple systems.

We need to hold multiple time-frames in our mind. It's not just about an immediate response, but also being entrepreneurial and visionary, building into the future.

... to appeal to intrinsic rather than extrinsic values

Organisations and movements have greater potential for collaboration and solidarity building by emphasising shared values rather than shared causes alone. When you frame an issue in terms of values you can see diverse, perhaps unexpected intersections. For example, support for biodiversity protection and same-sex marriage. This is because people carry values from one context to another.

Framing our causes in terms of values will encourage our audiences to connect with other causes. This will increase our collective power and offers a new way for solidarity across environmental and social causes – one that is rooted in intrinsic values. We need this for more systemic and sustained action across multiple emergencies.

...to promote agroecological approaches

Agroecology is a contribution to a systemic issue, but we need to

1. Scale UP - changing institutional, investment, policy & legal environments to support agroecology

2. Scale OUT – replicating agroecological policies, increasing numbers of farmers practising and promoting agroecology
3. Scale DEEP – enabling durable processes of change in mindsets & values

“We can use agroecology to provide the tools to address multiple emergencies, so we build back not just better, but differently, in a transformative way”

... to continue to build resilient communities

- We’ve seen communities really understand what it means to support one another – a strong foundation from which to build since sustainable communities are central to the ‘transform trajectory’
- We should look for where resilience is already happening (see [previous Food Talks](#)) and SHARE THESE STORIES. We need examples that we can address both climate and health issues simultaneously, to share in particular with the business community. (See: Food, Farming and Countryside Commission’s [Road to Renewal](#), sharing stories emerging from COVID-19).

... to create a supportive legislative environment

We need

1. Stimulus packages and fiscal packages that have sustainability outcomes.
2. To ensure multilateralism stays.
3. Relax the red tape.

...to invest in local networks and collaborations

We need to build resilience in supply chains and their communities, encouraging a human-centred in their approach.

We need to carry on [collaborating](#). We’ve seen some brilliant partnerships emerge during the pandemic and should work to ensure their longevity.

... to democratise research

Bringing the voices of farmers to the international level is an ongoing struggle.

... to tap into human power

Covid-19 is a human story – a story of human loss, suffering, endeavour, resilience

The action for us all is to understand our own power, agency and values.

What can we do as individuals and what can we all do as part of a larger collective endeavour? We all have the ability to shape the future we want and so it is down to us all to leverage our skills, values and beliefs. Food citizenship is central in this, allowing citizens to actively shape what the future of food and farming looks like. It’s about developing and integrating participatory food policy – as has happened in Brazil and Canada for example. This includes formal structures like Food Policy Councils.



Remaining questions

- How do we understand the world as an interconnected set of issues and use that understanding to drive multiple benefits in multiple systems?
- How do we reframe goals of economy, so they broaden out and include social and environmental outcomes?
- How do we build and extend some of the excellent collaborations we have seen emerge in the response to the pandemic?
- In our work, are we including food and farm workers in the conversation enough?
- How can we be more adaptable and emergent in policy making?
- What is the role of people and communities in a reframed economy which has regeneration at the heart?



Useful resources

COVID-19 response

- ❖ IPES-Food report on COVID-19: <http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/covid19>
- ❖ Food, Farming and Countryside Commission's [Road to Renewal](#), sharing stories emerging from COVID-19
- ❖ Sustain's work on food and farming: https://www.sustainweb.org/blogs/apr20_covid19_agriculture_bill_elms/
- ❖ Forum the Future, COVID-19 Content Hub: <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/covid-19-content>
- ❖ Sally Uren, Forum for the Future, COVID-19 response: An open letter to global governments: <https://www.forumforthefuture.org/blog/covid-19-response-an-open-letter-to-global-governments>

Values, framing and communications

- ❖ <https://valuesandframes.org/downloads> particularly the Communications Toolkit (?)
- ❖ Common Cause Foundation, 'Perceptions Matters: The Common Cause UK Values survey' – https://valuesandframes.org/resources/CCF_survey_perceptions_matter_full_report.pdf
- ❖ Harnessing the power of food citizenship – <https://foodcitizenship.info/>
- ❖ Food citizenship communications toolkit: https://foodcitizenship.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/fec_food_citizenship_comms_toolkit_final_march16.pdf

Agroecology

- ❖ Agroecology in Action report: https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Agroecology_in_action.pdf
- ❖ <https://www.soilassociation.org/iddri-report-ten-years-for-agroecology-in-europe/>
- ❖ https://www.academia.edu/5617519/Farmers_Agroecological_Resistance_to_Hurricane_Mitch_AEE
- ❖ IPES-Food, From Uniformity to Diversity http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/UniformityToDiversity_ExecSummary.pdf
- ❖ [Agriculture at a crossroad](#) report from IAASTD
- ❖ <https://www.permaculture.org.uk/>

Food democracy and sovereignty

- ❖ <http://www.srfood.org/en/democracy-and-diversity-can-mend-broken-food-systems-final-diagnosis-from-un-right-to-food-expert> - on food democracy
- ❖ food sovereignty the Nyeleni declaration - <https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>
- ❖ Community wealth building: <https://cles.org.uk/news/community-wealth-building-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>

Businesses embracing ethics during the crisis

- ❖ Food Ethics Council, '[Embracing ethics at a time of crisis](#)' Business Forum report
- ❖ Real Bread Campaign has also shared some stories today of bakeries bouncing back from Lockdown: https://www.sustainweb.org/realbread/articles/may20_bakeries_locked_down_but_not_out/
- ❖ <https://betterfoodtraders.org/become-a-better-food-trader/>
- ❖ LEAF Marque Global Impacts Report demonstrates impacts and performance that you might be interested in do visit <https://leafuk.org/about-leaf/our-impacts>

- ❖ Food Systems Academy, Geoff Tansey with Tim Lang and his book, 'Feeding Britain: our food problems and how to fix them' and with Carolyn Steel on her book 'Sitopia: how food can save the world' <https://geofftansey.wordpress.com/>

Key insights that participants told us they took away

What insight/s have you taken from today's Food Talks? Mentimeter

Slide 1:

- Transform not tweak
- Diversify
- The work of Tom Crompton and Common Cause: evidence and resources to consider extrinsic v intrinsic values in communications.
- more diverse approach to food systems
- shining a light on interconnections
- Learning how many organisations are working on these issues!
- Need to all work together in a collaborative way from multiple extrinsic and intrinsic ways
- Trust in people and their intrinsic values
- People focussed

Slide 2:

- Not customers supporting businesses, people supporting people
- what is "value" of food?
- Community, togetherness
- Diversity
- Change goals of food system
- the wide wide shared attention focusing on these linked issues right now- I am inspired and hopeful. The next 10 years will be amazing
- Health and diversity critical
- Mindsets and values matter. We need to seek to change those in order to transform society, economy, food systems.
- I'm encouraged by the shift towards local foods and short supply chains.

Slide 3:

- One health
- We need to define and work towards a different set of goals for our food system
- Challenge of persuading Government that we need to transform not tinker
- The importance of agroecology - also intrinsic v extrinsic drivers
- The power of appealing to people's intrinsic values across different campaigns
- Appeal to values in a consistent/ nonconflicting way
- view on food producers support local community, not just customers feeling their need to support us.
- The focus on values, intrinsic and extrinsic. Powerful.
- The importance of grassroots action for change

Interconnectivity, collaboration, values, relationships.

Interconnection

without system change we are lost

The emphasis on shared values

Creating community

Promote more respect towards people in our food system

Let's start value signalling as opposed to virtue signalling - had never thought about the anonymity of the supermarket shop before - great insight from Kimberley

That community wealth building is not widely known- given that it builds resilience in food, economy and increases social value it needs to be more known!

Interconnectivity

Change systems goals. Need for values based conversations with all stakeholders.

There is still a high desire to change the food system but we are still ignoring the elephant in the room of health - and how food can support this - and the difficult issue of what constitutes healthy food!

My values have changed during the lockdown and is great that there is a large community out there with the same values. Change is possible

dominance of extrinsic motivation in most discussions

Importance of championing intrinsic values; the value of individual relationships with local food suppliers and producers.

holistic . interconnectivity

Interconnectivity & collaboration

toolkit on food citizenship, and the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic values

Current food / economic systems are not broken, they deliver their goals e.g. efficiency, growth. But do they deliver for the greater good?

positive feel, need to think about the extrinsic/intrinsic distinction (may be too sharp)

Circular support: Local support with community and business.

The amount of motivated and influential people wanting a new food paradigm is fantastic. How do we join across our causes with our common values. This is a serious movement but at the moment we seem much smaller than we actually are

A real opportunity to build back better - to take the 'transform trajectory'. Need to remember inequalities and protecting the needs of those in lower SES groups who don't have capacity to access some solutions discussed.