

EAT Forum 2018

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The stage is set for the start of EAT Forum 2018

The American anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” This quote nicely summarizes both the atmosphere and the task confronting delegates at this year’s EAT Forum. The forum took place on June 11–12 in Stockholm, and was jointly hosted by EAT and the Government of Sweden. More than 600 delegates from more than 50 countries attended.

The aim of the two-day event was “to strengthen existing partnerships and forge new collaborations across a broad range of sectors and groups to compel science-led action” (EAT Forum, 2018). The conference focus areas included:

- > shifting towards healthy diets;
- > sustainably managing lands and oceans;

- > eliminating food loss and waste;
- > technology transforming the food system; and
- > recipes for better yields and better nutrition.

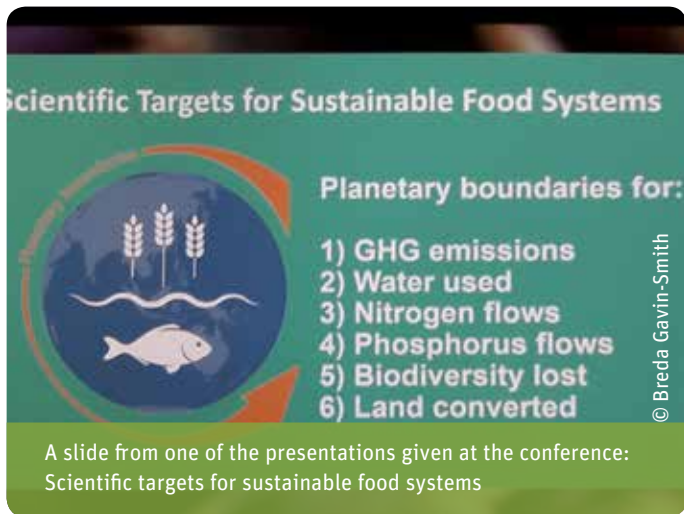
Day One – Setting the scene

The Forum was opened by Dr Gunhild A. Stordalen, the founder and Executive Chair of EAT. Her introduction was a rallying cry for all players in the food system to come together and collaborate to enable food transformation. Challenges to real collaboration were highlighted. One challenge is a lack of common reference points, which contributes to growing polarization rather than a coming together for change. Currently, no goals examine the food system with regard to the health of both people and the planet. The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health is an attempt to bring this together, and its results will be released in early 2019. The expectation is that these evidence-based global targets will support more constructive dialogue and collaboration, and will monitor transformation in the food system. In conclusion, Dr Stordalen encouraged all actors to ask difficult questions and address complexities and disagreements. We must look from “all sides of the table” if real food transformation is to become a reality.

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The Deputy Prime Minister, H. E. Isabella Lovin, followed the opening address and summarized the current situation regarding hunger, undernutrition and overnutrition. She emphasized the role of food production in global environmental degradation, with the “agricultural sector [being] the single-largest contributor to climate change, deforestation and biodiversity loss.”

The State of the Union address by Prof. Johan Rockstrom from the Stockholm Resilience Center and Dr Sania Nishtar, Co-Chair for the High-level Commission on Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) of the World Health Organization (WHO), followed. Both



presented current trends with regard to health, the food system and the planet. Issues such as the double burden of malnutrition, the increasing prevalence of diabetes and the general global shifts to unhealthy diets were key themes.

The final presenter setting the scene was Christiana Figueres, convener of Mission 2020, the global campaign driving action on greenhouse gas emissions. Again, Christiana Figueres challenged the audience over the coming days to discuss how to feed a growing population in a sustainable way while keeping impacts on the environment front and center. She encouraged participants to bring others into the debate and be “stubborn optimists.”

Sustainably managing land and ocean

The late morning session, day one, focused on examining how to manage land and oceans differently to support a food system that produces healthy, nutritious foods within planetary boundaries. Whether technology is the answer and whether our oceans could be the farms of the future were some of the questions posed. Speakers ranged from EAT’s Science Director, Dr Fabrice DeClerck, and Jan Eliasson from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. An interview-style discussion with the Chair of the Farmers’ Forum India, Ajay Vir Jakhar, was a real highlight. Ajay Vir Jakhar gave an impassioned plea to build capacity among farmers, supporting them as part of the solution. A change in the food system will require their trust and knowledge. It was also highlighted that two-thirds of fish comes from small-scale fisheries and that 80% of food produced in sub-Saharan Africa comes from small farms. These need to be front and center in food system planning. The need for better funding mechanisms for new initiatives and small-scale producers was also highlighted. While there are no silver-bullet solutions, new technology developments and aquaculture are starting to emerge as potential opportunities. Finally, a significant increase in protected areas from fishing, which is currently only 2% globally, is required.

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Nothing to spare: How to end food loss and waste

Prof. Jessica Fanzo from Johns Hopkins University kicked off the afternoon session with a great quote from Lauren Singer: “Our collective actions make up the state of the world.” This reflects, according to Prof. Fanzo, the food waste issue, where personal change with regard to food waste is required. Forty percent of food waste in Europe and North America is lost at the hands of the consumer and retailer. In Africa and South-East Asia, 40% of food waste occurs at the food gate or during transportation. Transforming the food waste issue involves developing new technologies, changing consumer behavior, better labeling of foods, innovations across the food chain, incentives and improved measures to combat food waste in the first place.

The rest of the afternoon focused on solutions to food waste. Highlights included a personal story from the founder of Trash is for Tossers (<http://trashisfortossers.com>), a government regulation in France directed at retailers and the role of chefs in reducing food waste.

Day Two – Disruptive dialogues

The second day was structured in terms of a series of disruptive dialogues, enabling smaller groups to come together and discuss issues in greater depth. I attended the *Putting Food in Food* session, where a four-dimension solutions framework as a tool to access new packaged food products was presented. The four-dimensions were: environmental, social, dietary health and business case.





Products included (a) a new Kellogg's 'Force of Nature' granola-type cereal with lower sugar, recyclable packaging materials and a good taste; (b) a good-tasting fruit smoothie (froosh) containing only fruit (the fruit fibers giving it a smoothie feel), packaged with recyclable materials; (c) reformulated Nesquik cereal (two versions, one to meet WHO guidelines on sugar and salt and one to meet the Chilean standards necessary to avoid the black warning labels on the front of pack); and (d) ModuMax, a 'taste modulator' from DSM that helps to moderate negative organoleptic characteristics in foods that have been reformulated to have lower sugar and salt. The four-dimension framework proved a useful approach when assessing products against a variety of criteria. The session also highlighted the role that incremental changes in product formulation can potentially play in improving nutritional intake as well as the significance of innovative new technology in overcoming technical challenges. It was highlighted that low- and high-income countries may require different approaches.

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Day two – Afternoon session

Making healthy and sustainable the new normal was the final question posed by the EAT Forum. While it is not possible to include all the details covered in the afternoon session in this report, here are some highlights.

Chilean doctor Senator Guido Girardi presented on a law he spearheaded in Chile prohibiting the advertisement of junk food during television programs and websites targeting young

audiences. The law also bans the sale of such products in the country's schools, and requires companies to clearly label foods that are high in calories, salt, sugar, or saturated fat. Studies show that this law is having an effect. In fact, more than 68% of individuals in Chile have changed their eating habits, and 20% of the industry has modified its products since the law came into force.

Sam Kass, former White House Chef and Senior Policy Advisor for Nutrition in the Obama administration, made some salient points. He wisely stated it is not just about public policy, and that food is the deepest expression of our culture. When you ask someone to change, you are asking them to change themselves, and an approach that takes this reality into account is essential. He suggested we should not spend too much time on ideals and the perfect way to work. We need policies that are pragmatic, that work and that deliver easy wins.

The concluding comments from the final panel at the EAT Forum neatly sum up key challenges and next steps based on the 2018 EAT Forum's aims. Different perspectives lead to difficult conversations, but without them, transformation is not possible. A solutions-oriented dialogue that places health issues center stage is key to move forward.

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