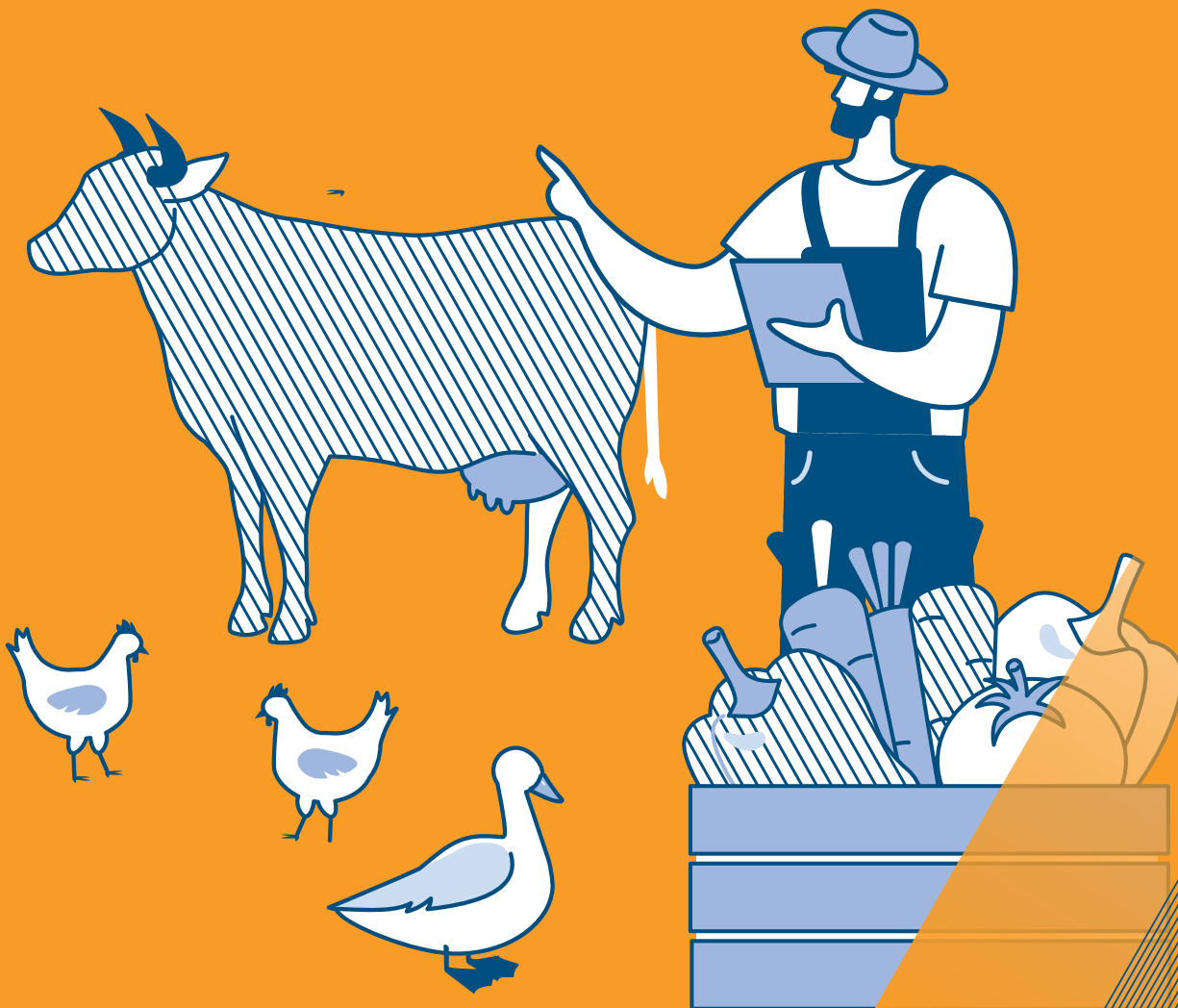


Kosovo's Food System: Its Sustainability and Missing Policies



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Acronyms

Agency of Statistics of Kosovo - **ASK**

Gross Domestic Product - **GDP**

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development - **MAFRD**

Sustainable Development Goals - **SDGs**

United Nations - **UN**

United Nations Team in Kosovo - **UNKT**

Western Balkans - **WB**

1. Introduction

Daily consumption of many food items, thus nutritious intake, support the functioning of one's organism. In different cultures, food is also known to gather people around one single table as a means for social interaction. Besides being a necessity and a mean for social interaction, food has become also a source of income for many members of communities in urban and rural areas.

But until these food items get served to us for consumption it undergoes through a complex system referred to as food system. A food system includes *"the chains of market and non-market activities and actors connecting food production, aggregation, transportation and storage, processing and catering, distribution, preparation and consumption"*¹. Nevertheless, the food systems go beyond these activities, such as the management of food waste and food loss, packaging, fertilizers, etc². All of these activities and actors that interact with each other create a very complex system which in most cases (as observed worldwide) is not sustainable. So, the big challenge of the last decade is how we can transform the conventional food systems into those that are sustainable and inclusive.

This challenge is present also in Kosovo. Food system is faced with many obstacles, as such lack of monitoring of food production, highly processed food items that do not promote healthy and nutritious diet, poor food waste management, to name a few. This imposes problems in 3 dimensions, such as social, economic and environmental. Sustainable food production and consumption, alongside the development of rural areas and farmers, are also foreseen in the regional agreements and declara-

tions for the Western Balkans in which case Kosovo is involved too.

One of these agreements is the Sofia Declaration, signed in November 2020 by the region's leaders where jointly committed to work towards a more carbon-free, clean and green environment in the WB by 2050. According to the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, the transformation of the agriculture practices applied in WB plays a significant role just like the need for energy transition, depollution of air, water and soil, protection of biodiversity and circular economy.

Under the forth component of this agreement, namely *Sustainable agriculture and food production*, Kosovo has committed towards aligning its agriculture and primary production sectors (like farming, logging, and mining) with the EU standards, increasing sanitary controls on the food chain, improve the quality infrastructure of the food, promote environmental sustainability in farming (through organic practices), proper treatment of food waste and encourage sustainable development in rural areas.³ If by 2050, Kosovo reaches the set and agreed objectives in these terms, the benefits will be enormous, as such faster progress towards EU integration, completion of the chapters of European Integration, no Carbon taxation for products exported throughout the European territory, and overall a greener, safer and cleaner environment for the citizens.

In addition to these, transitioning into sustainable food systems is in compliance to also another framework, which is the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which promote the end of hunger, reach food security and im-

1 Sandrine Dury, Pauline Bendjebbar, Étienne Hainzelin, Thierry Giordano and Nicolas Bricas (Eds). "Food Systems at Risk New Trends and Challenges". (2019). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Le Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche and Agronomique pour le Développement and the European Commission. Pg. 16. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Food_systems_at_risk/jla4DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

2 Ibid.

3 EU Commission. (2020). 'Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans'. Pg. 4. <https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Leaders-Declaration-on-the-Green-Agenda-for-the-WB.pdf>

prove the nutritious intake and diets⁴. If initially the majority would believe that only certain SDGs correlate to the food systems, it happens that all 17 SDGs are related to it. With the transitioning of the conventional food systems into sustainable, the goals set by the 17 SDGs will immensely mark

progress, as such creation of new jobs, improving food access, increase food security and promote healthy and balance diet.⁵ For detailed benefits of investing and progressing in SDGs reflecting on the food system are presented below.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Correlation to sustainable food systems
Goal 1: No poverty	Creation of new jobs, improved access on food and progress towards healthy communities
Goal 2: Zero hunger	Address lasting hunger challenges, shocks (e.g. disease outbreaks, pandemics, etc.) and climate change effects
Goal 3: Good health and well-being	Increase life expectancy, improve nutritious intake and achieve great health
Goal 4: Quality education	Improved health and diet that helps students succeed
Goal 5: Gender equality	Empowered women and enhanced livelihoods
Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation	Rational use of water sources, decreased pollution and increased access to it for drinking purposes for those in need
Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy	Maximization of clean and green energy sources that decrease the pollution impact on environment by the food sector and increased access to green and affordable energy sources

4 Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO). "Sustainable food systems Concept and framework". Pg. 1 <http://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>

5 UN. "Food Systems Summit x SDGs". <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/sdgs>

Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth	Creation of decent jobs and support stable incomes for all
Goal 9: Industry innovation and infrastructure	Delivery of benefits to the largest extend to the people and the planet
Goal 10: Reduced inequalities	Reduced poverty and provision of decent work and income
Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities	Safeguard the purchasing power in urban areas and ensure good nourishment
Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production	Reduction of food waste and empowerment of consumers on food consumption
Goal 13: Climate action	Reduction of climate change effects through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO ₂) and methane (CH ₄)
Goal 14: Life below water	Ensure sustaining development of fisheries and protection of their ecosystems
Goal 15: Life on land	Reduce deforestation and ensure healthy ecosystems
Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	Empower institutions for problems within food systems that families, communities and nations in overall face
Goal 17: Partnerships for goals	Delivery of benefits shared throughout the globe

Table 1. Correlation of SDGs with Sustainable Food Systems

In general, Kosovo's economy has been hit drastically by the pandemic, especially the sector of agriculture which is a sector which contributes highly in the overall country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At the end of 2019, the agriculture has contributed with 7.7% on the overall economic growth of Kosovo⁶. With the unprecedented circumstances with the pandemic, this sector in Kosovo was undoubtedly hit hard. This can be seen by the drop of the share of agriculture in GDP by 0.31% at the end of 2020⁷. While according to the statistics of 2021, this drop was even more significant with it reaching 0.90%⁸. Considering this, it is critical for the Government of Republic of Kosovo to encourage the recovery of this sector through drafting of different policies in local and central level. Moreover, this poses a great momentum for the institutions to encourage recovery which is sustainable in socio-economic and environmental aspects.

With this declines in the GDP share, it can be indicated that a considerable number of employees in this sector have lost their jobs. This specifically impinges the achievement of SDG 1 and SDG 8 in the food system which aims for creation of new jobs which ensure stable income for the households. Consequently, low income are correlated to low nutritious intake, thus threatening the fulfillment of SDG 1 and SDG 3. Low income households are prone to nourish themselves with low quality nutrients, thus the aim for sustaining healthy communities is put highly at risk⁹. This threatens indirectly SDG 2, SDG 4, SDG 5 and SDG 10.

If the above mentioned factors affect certain SDGs in a socio-economic aspect, the rest of the other SDGs, namely SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 14, SDG 15, relate to the impacts of food production and consumption have on the environment. Kosovo is widely known to be amongst the biggest air polluters in the WB. The agriculture sector of Kosovo remains amongst the sectors that emits the most CO₂ emissions¹⁰.

In 2019, 8% or 706 thousand tonne CO₂ eq. of the total amount of emitted greenhouse gases came from agriculture sector¹¹. The practices which contribute the most to this emission release in 2019 include:

- (1) Enteric fermentation or animal digestive process (67%),
- (2) Emissions from the management of animal manure (10%), and
- (3) Emissions from the soil management (12%).¹²

Similar to being an air pollutant, intensive agriculture contaminates also water sources in Kosovo with it being the second largest sector that consumer water for irrigation purposes¹³. According to the Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency, the quality of water sources in Kosovo is continuously being affected by the usage and discharge of pesticides and fertilizers by the agriculture sector¹⁴. Initially, the underground water sources are contaminated through flow process from the agricultural land which then end up polluting the surface wa-

6 Agency of Statistics of Kosovo (ASK). (2021). "Structure of Gross Domestic Product by economic activities by nace Rev.2 Economic activities, share of GDP by activities and year". https://askdata.rks-gov.net/PXWeb/pxweb/en/askdata/askdata_07%20National%20and%20government%20accounts_National%20accounts_Annual%20national%20accounts/gdp10.px/table/tableViewLayout1?rx-id=ad787284-363a-44a5-bb3d-0f067afa36b7

7 Agency of Statistics of Kosovo (ASK). (2021). "Gross Domestic Product Q4 2020". <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5956/bruto-produkti-anglisht-q4-2020.pdf>

8 Agency of Statistics of Kosovo (ASK). (2021). "Gross Domestic Product Q1 2021". <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6103/gross-domestic-product-gdp-of-the-expenditure-and-production-approach-q1-2021.pdf>

9 Simone A. French, Christy C. Tangney, Melissa M. Crane, Yamin Wang and Bradley M. Appelhans. (2019). "Nutrition quality of food purchases varies by household income: the SHOPPER study". BMC Public Health. <https://bmcpublihealth.biomed-central.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12889-019-6546-2.pdf>

10 Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency. (2021). "Raport për gjendjen e mjedisit në Kosovë 2018-2019". Pg. 71 [https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Shqip_WEB_\(ok\).pdf](https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Shqip_WEB_(ok).pdf)

11 Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency. (2021). "Raport Emetimi i Gazrave Serrë në Kosovë 2014-2019". Pg. 17. [https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Raport_i_GHG_2014-2019_\(final_ueb_version\).pdf](https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Raport_i_GHG_2014-2019_(final_ueb_version).pdf)

12 Ibid.

13 Ministry of Economy and Environment & Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency. (2020). f. 49. https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Mjedisi_i_Kosov%C3%ABs_2020_Raport_i_treguesve_mjedisor%C3%AB_-_SHQIP.pdf

14 Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency. (2021). "Raport për gjendjen e mjedisit në Kosovë 2018-2019". Pg. 89. [https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Shqip_WEB_\(ok\).pdf](https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Shqip_WEB_(ok).pdf)



ter sources¹⁵. This highly threatens the aims of the goals that correlate with protection of ecosystems, either the life below water and life on land, as well as sustaining clear water sources.

Considering all of these effect, both in socio-economic and environmental dimension, imposed by agricultural practices conducted by humans, it is necessary to start rethinking how the food system in Kosovo can be reshuffled and encouraging a transition towards a sustainable food system. Agro-ecology is slowly replacing the perception of traditional agriculture. This new concept indicates an “integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agriculture and food systems”¹⁶. Agro-ecology ensures higher good security, lower CO₂ emission, and overall greater protection and greener environment.

While aiming to promote agro-ecology and sustainable food systems, United Nations (UN) have organized for the first time the Food Systems Summit. This summit aims to provide a global opportunity to empower all stakeholders within the food system, and the system itself, to recover from the pandemic and achieve the agreed 17 SDGs by 2030¹⁷. Through its direct and independent dialogues held in many countries, the Summit aims to transition the production and consumption patterns, alongside the perception towards food. In these lines, Kosovo has already participated with an independent dialogue held in early July 2021 and has already submitted the report to UN under the Food Systems Summit 2021. The dialogue’s convener was Institute for Development Policy (INDEP), and it was organized in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) and United Nations Team in Kosovo (UNKT). The dialogue gathered the stakeholders of the field, namely the public institutions (central and local level), private sector (such as producers, business community, farmers, etc.), international organizations, donor community, civil society organizations, Academia, media and citizens/consumers. The results of the Kosovo’s independent dialogue is accessible for further read under the UN Food Systems Summit website.

15 Ministry of Economy and Environment & Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency. (2020). “Mjedisi i Kosovës Raport i Treguesve Mjedisorë”. Pg. 42. https://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Mjedisi_i_Kosov%C3%ABs_2020_Raport_i_treguesve_mjedisor%C3%AB_-_SHQIP.pdf

16 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). “Agroecology Knowledge Hub”. Par. 1 <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/en/>

17 United Nations (UN). “Food Systems Summit 2021”. Par. 2. <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/summit>

2. Methodology

Food system in Kosovo still is faced with a lot of challenges which moves it far away from transitioning into sustainable system that satisfied all the social, economic and environmental dimensions. In order to get a thorough understanding of such challenges, qualitative research methods were utilized for this report, namely the desk research and focus groups.

Starting with the desk research, this method contributed towards collecting data on a global scale, but also for Kosovo's background on the food system. In this process, problems were defined, jointly with the legal and institutional framework of food system in Kosovo. The conducted literature review provides evidences and case studies of other countries that succeeded in their transitions of food systems which methods could be adapted by Kosovo as well.

Besides the desk research and literature review, focus groups were held as part of the Kosovo's independent dialogue where both sides of food systems, production and consumption, were treated in detail with the participants. These focus groups, besides that helped on identifying the challenges within the sector, they helped in designing the solutions and recommendations which can be adapted for Kosovo to start its transition towards a sustainable food system. The participants were divided into 3 focus groups with the themes being as presented below:

1. Sustainable food production
2. Sustainable food consumption
3. Circular use of food resources

The discussions were approximately 1 hour long and gathered more than 10 participants per each group. The participants were guided into discussion through semi-structured questions in which case they could discuss on certain issues, identify the problems within the food system in Kosovo, and jointly identify the solutions and recommendations. The findings of the 3 focus groups were integrated within the report submitted to the UN Food Systems Summit.

As per limitations, there were a few while conducting this research paper. At first, there is a lack of data on waste management; information which should be published by local authorities. These data are limited in numbers as the reporting is not done periodically, hence one has to vaguely estimate the missing data based on what is available and public. This leads to assuming the numbers of the current waste generation and other variables associated with this sector. Even during interviews with the stakeholders, they tend to not have a clear picture of the situation in the field nor are they well acquainted with number and data regarding waste management sector. Furthermore, many of the identified and potential interviewees taken from both central and local level were reluctant and not willing to participate in the interview, therefore in combination with the available information extracted from the desk research and meetings with some of the stakeholders, the paper attempts to give a realistic insight of this sector in Kosovo.

In Annex A, the full feedback form submitted under the UN's Food System Summit can be found. The form includes also some of the main discussions and findings of the focus groups.

3. Problems and challenges in the food system in Kosovo and their categorization in social, economic and environmental terms

The fourth part of the paper explains more about what a food system is and what its components are, starting from the growth and cultivation of products, to the processing, packaging, transportation, consumption and complete disposal of the food item. Considering local statistics, this section also presents the latest data on urban and rural population, unemployment, the level of malnutrition and diseases associated with the latter such as obesity, etc., which are closely related to the food system.

The special focus of this section will be defining the problems of the food system in Kosovo. The identified problems will be addressed in 3 dimensions, social, economic and environmental. The social aspect is more related to CSO 2 where the issues of nutrition and nutrition values needed for each individual are addressed, while the economic aspect addresses the issue of changes or non-stability of prices for basic products. Last but not least, the environmental aspect, which is related to CSO 12, discusses the importance of changing production and consumption practices, including food waste management and food loss in general.

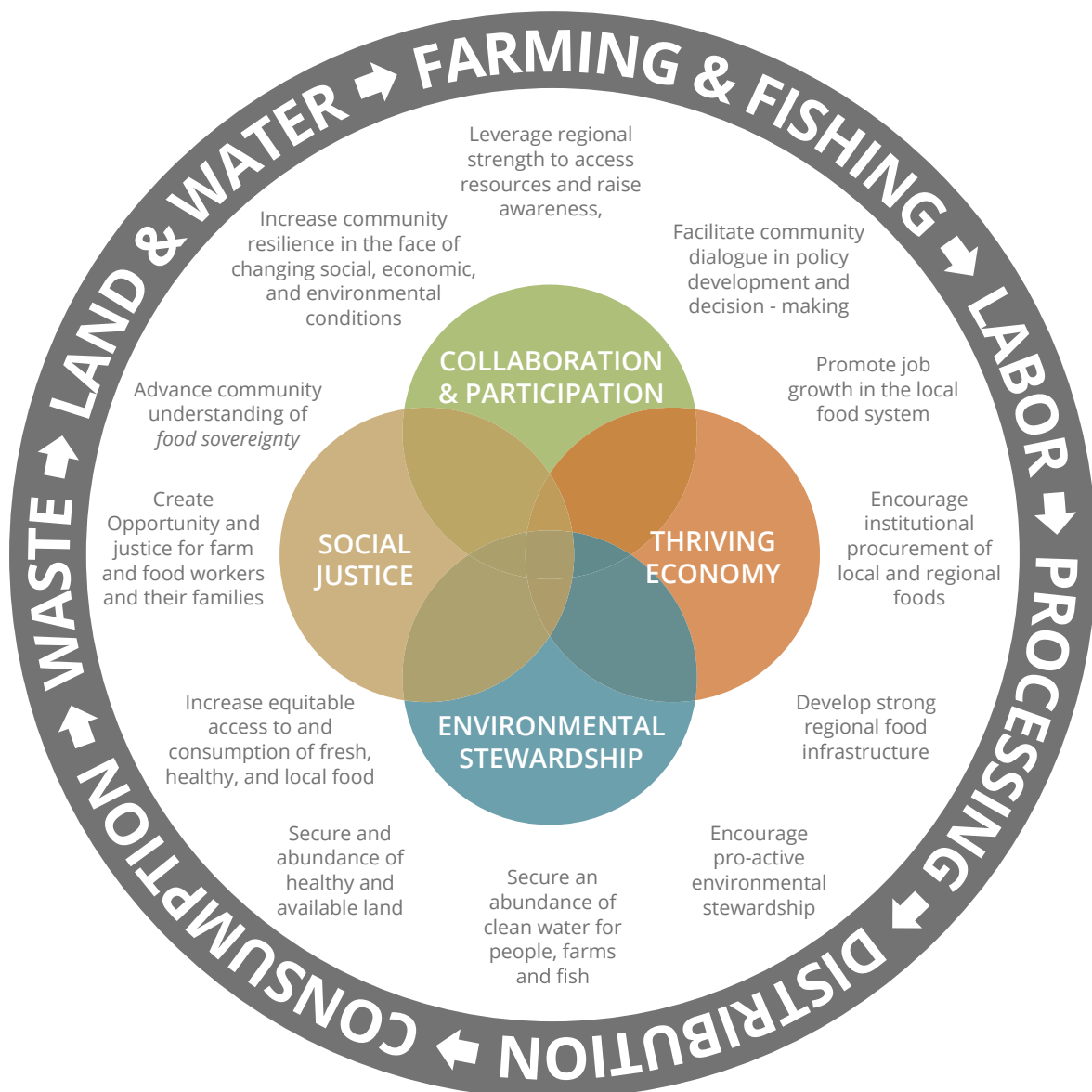
In addition, this chapter tends to address urbanization (urban sprawl and high internal migration) and how feeding patterns are transforming at this time. In this regard, the chapter seeks to assess how much work is being done towards the transformation from a traditional food system to Kosovo towards such a sustainable one.

4. Policies and Practices of the Food Systems in Kosovo

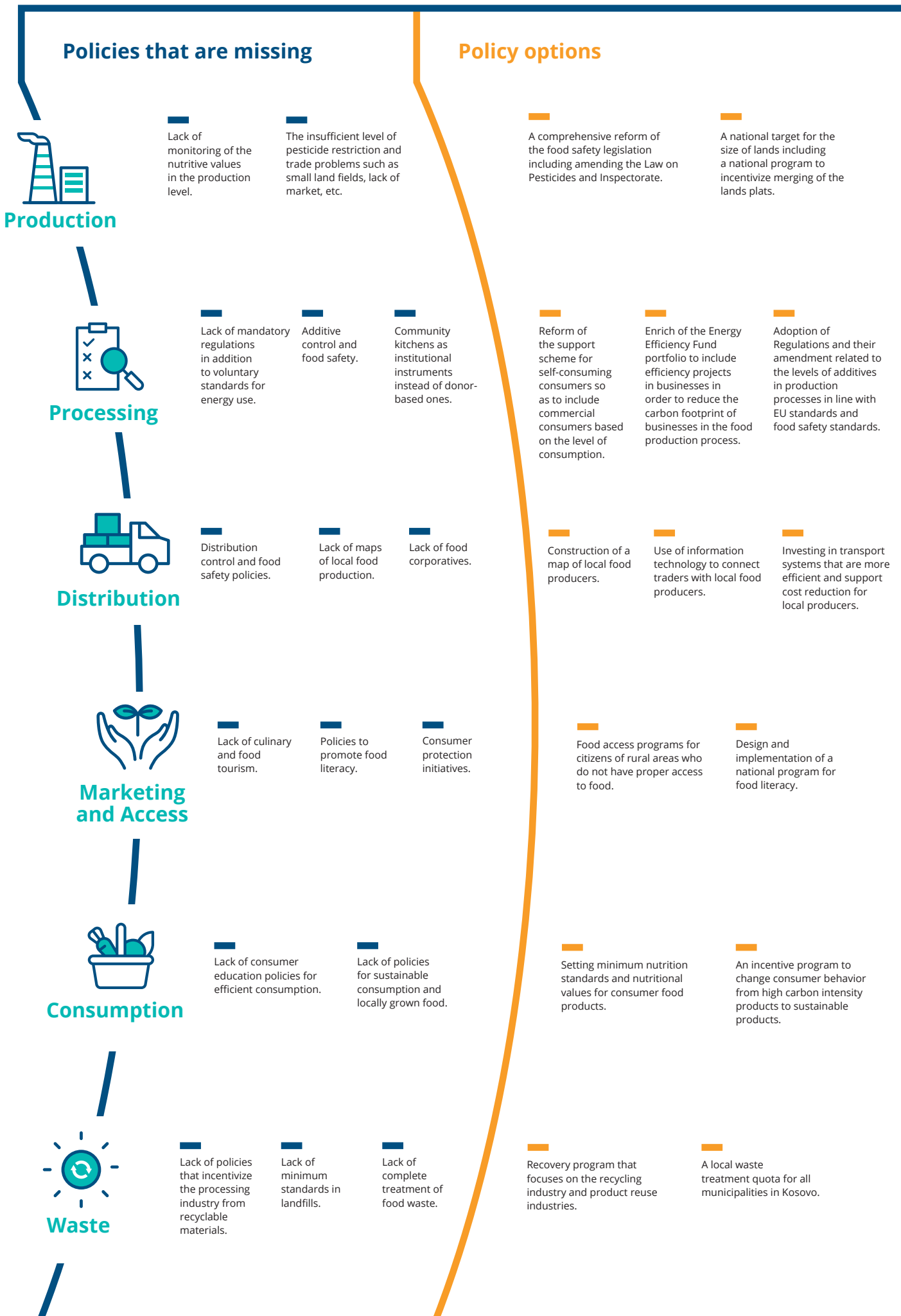
While the previous chapter defines the problems in the food system in Kosovo, this chapter aims to identify solutions to these problems. A concrete solution is provided for each defined problem. Furthermore, this chapter provides comparative examples of countries in the region, but also other countries in the world, which have addressed simi-

lar problems and made progress in the sustainable transformation of their food system.

In the food system chain, production, processing, distribution, market & access, consumption and waste, there are a number of policies and shortcomings in our political system.



Food cycle – policy options framework



Conclusions and Recommendations

The first part of this chapter concludes the findings of the paper. But the main part is that of concrete recommendations. Listing the solutions to each identified problem, this chapter presents the recommendations which are addressed to the responsible institutions and serve as an advocacy tool for the transformation of the food system in Kosovo. These recommendations may include legal aspects, awareness campaigns to change choices as consumers and their behavior in consumption, encouraging a change in diet and nutrition, adequate treatment of food waste, etc.

Data management for degraded and consumed lands is not yet at the required level. This lack of data is due to an inconsistent communication between the community, local and central institutions. In order to have a proper planning for land use, such as for agricultural products, construction or economic activities, we need to have a database with accurate data.

There should be more quality check and controlling of food items, as this is a practice which Kosovo lacks. A proper implementation of legislation in place is needed and better monitoring mechanisms for the whole food system legislative framework. Farmers and producers should be more aware on the importance of professional consulting services and provided training programmes in order to increase their capacities on sustainable production practices.

Women should be empowered in other parts of the food system, namely in management and decision-making in business and farms. Central institutions should provide financial support to local farmers, especially women entrepreneur in order for the interest in loans to be more affordable or deducted.

The inspectorate capacities within the central and local level institutions should be increased in order to have more quality check and control of food items. Moreover, there should be a better coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and municipal agricultural directorates. There should be more investments in irrigation systems and purification of water sources.

Central level institutions should intertwine policies in order to promote agriculture among youth and discourage migration. Regular analysis, data collection and reporting should be conducted for consumer food basket in order receive insights on the basic nutritious values and to provide evidence-based policies that support sustainable food system.

The inspectorate capacities within the central and local level institutions should be increased in order to have more quality check and control of food items. Moreover, there should be a better coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and municipal agricultural directorates. There should be more investments in irrigation systems and purification of water sources.

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development in collaboration with Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure with municipalities should complete the digitalization of land lots and work on the categorization of lands which contribute to need for greater size of land lots. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development should establish supporting schemes for slow food systems which would encourage local producers to introduce sustainable systems of productions, economize the local area, and encourage citizens to consume locally produced food items.

Ministry of Trade, Entrepreneurship and Industry should create a special programme to support innovation in urban agriculture which would contribute to higher socialization within community members, promotion of green low carbon intensity products and inclusion of the members that are left behind in the community.

Agro-ecology as a concept should be integrated within the policy framework and educational curricula. Organic pesticides should receive policy and financial incentives from the central level institutions. Standardization of food labeling should be a priority in order improve both consumer's rights as well as to reduce food waste and promote low energy intensity food items. Educational materials promoting sustainable food should be included in the pre-school curricula as well as elementary school and a special training programme for teachers should be introduced.

'Polluter Pays' principle should be deeply integrated in the policy framework covering inter-institutional policies. Any financial revenue deriving from the 'Polluter Pays' principle policies should be treated as a dedicated to fund programmes specifically promoting environmental protection and sustainable food system.

Annex A: Kosovo's Independent Dialogue Official Feedback Form

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM



DIALOGUE DATE	Tuesday, 13 July 2021 10:00 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Transforming Kosovo's food system: Opportunities to boost sustainable food production and consumption to build back better from COVID-19
CONVENED BY	Institute for Development Policy (INDEP)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/31394/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Independent
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Non-UN Member State

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

50

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

6

19-30

35

31-50

9

51-65

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

28 Male

22 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

Agriculture/crops

Fish and aquaculture

Livestock

Agro-forestry

Environment and ecology

1 Trade and commerce

4 Education

Communication

1 Food processing

Food retail, markets

1 Food industry

1 Financial Services

Health care

4 Nutrition

14 National or local government

Utilities

2 Industrial

22 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

2 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

1 Large national business

Multi-national corporation

Small-scale farmer

Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

7 Local Non-Governmental Organization

International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

4 Science and academia

Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

5 Local authority

9 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

5 United Nations

1 International financial institution

4 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

1 Consumer group

11 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

Our dialogue fully incorporated the principles of engagement under UN Food systems dialogues. As food systems are complex and covering all three main dimensions (economic, social, and environmental) we adopted a systemic, cross-sector approach to collect the views and perspectives of all participants on Kosovo's food system through breakout groups/sessions. The event brought together people from multiple sectors to fully address the complexity of food systems and how we need to look at this issue in Kosovo from a lens beyond just one angle. The participants were invited considering the sectors, interests, their role and engagement with Kosovo's food system. The dialogue was held on July 13, organized by INDEP, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and UN Kosovo team. The objective of the dialogue was to:

- Promote and share practical experiences and insights to identify common challenges, priorities, and policy recommendations on sustainable food system
- Help coordinate, foster knowledge and align support across different sectors for locally driven and actionable initiatives to advance food systems transformation in Kosovo
- Encourage concrete measures and active engagement by all actors of society to contribute towards more sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems

Organisers took advantage of recently relaxed guidelines on public gatherings to organize a much-welcomed in-person discussion, albeit within COVID guidelines and hence a selected audience. Participants were given the opportunity to listen to each other. They were divided in three breakout groups, covering respectively the issues of (1) sustainable food production, (2) sustainable food consumption and (3) circular use of food resources. The discussions allowed them to look at challenges and areas where next steps in the short and long term are needed. In addition, a livestream on the INDEP Facebook page opened the dialogue to a wider audience.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Our dialogue embraced multi-stakeholder inclusivity by targeting participants from a wide range of backgrounds, profiles, and regions around Kosovo. Over 50 participants representing governments, business, organizations, academia, civil society, farmers, restaurant owners as well as university students representing the next generation of sustainability leaders, were brought together to discuss the current status of Kosovo's food system from the perspective of enabling safe, accessible and healthy nutrition, supporting circular economy and more efficient use of resources; and boosting sustainable production and consumption in Kosovo. Concerted efforts were made to ensure participation of equal numbers of women and a representative number of non-majority groups. Overall, the dialogue consisted of 3 breakout groups, preceded by keynote remarks by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and the UN Development Coordinator, which included an introduction of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit and objectives of the dialogues as well as a brief overview on the status of Kosovo's food system. This was accompanied by a short intervention by a food system specialist from the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, who presented the key concepts and principles of a food system and the linkages between food systems and our economies, livelihoods and wellbeing. The three thematic Discussion Topics (•1: sustainable food production • 2: sustainable food consumption • 3: circular use of food resources) were formulated together with a list of short questions and supporting/preparatory materials, to guide the discussions and the moderators in the definition of a call for action/statements to be realized up to 2030. Finally, our dialogue was complemented by the expertise of the UN Kosovo Team and the Ministry of Agriculture of Kosovo, to ensure that the main themes and outcomes of the discussions would help address the needs and priorities of the people of Kosovo, with a view to contributing to long-term development and shared prosperity in Kosovo.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

We recommend that the format and structure of the Dialogue allow all stakeholders to actively participate in the dialogue and have their voices heard and amplified through the discussions. The informal setting of our breakout groups encouraged participants to engage in frank and open discussions with their peers, inspired by the core principles of honesty, respect and open-mindedness. Secondly, moderation and presentation of all action tracks should be done in a clear, concise language that can be easily understood and adopted by all, and is localized/adapted to the situation of the food system in the country and the main challenges that the country is facing. Finally, the selection of participants should enable to draw a comprehensive picture of the main challenges, recommendations and lessons relating to the food system in the country. Considering that the food systems are complex, the Dialogue should use a multisector and inter-disciplinary approach to bring together people and stakeholders at all levels (Ex. individual, organizational, institutional; national, regional local, etc) to look at this topic from a lens beyond just one angle (ex. economic, social, environmental).

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

Yes

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

We all must work together to transform the way Kosovo produces, consumes and thinks about food. Kosovo's Food System plays a central role in ensuring sustainable development and the achievement of Agenda 2030 in Kosovo. Issues of food production, consumption, food trade, agriculture and animal husbandry as a means of livelihoods, advancing equality and equity for marginalised populations, environmental challenges and building resilience, are all topics that resonate soundly in Kosovo. The production and consumption of sufficient, affordable and nutritious food for all is vital, while also conserving the natural resources and ecosystems on which the food system depends. Kosovo's food system is under increasing pressure to respond to numerous and complex challenges. These include:

- Food price impact on food security and wellbeing
- High reliance on food imports
- High share of agricultural economy and reliance on subsistence farming
- Women account for almost 50% of Kosovo's population but only 5% of them are agriculture landowners
- A legal and institutional framework with opportunities to strengthen implementation
- An unfinished agenda to support agriculture financing for small businesses
- Lack of a unified, comprehensive system to deal with urban waste management
- Lack of statistics and available evidence
- Limited attention on nutrition issues
- High Land fragmentation
- Recognised need for stronger attention on sustainable agriculture and food production
- Potential to expand local agriculture and businesses
- Opportunities to involve the private sector in waste management

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for strong and functional food systems to respond effectively to vulnerabilities and shocks. Kosovo government subsidies for the agricultural sector were about 1% of GDP in 2020, including planned recovery measures. At Western Balkans level, agriculture was the third most affected sector in the economy (after services and industry). At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to build recovery plans that reverse current trends and change consumption and production patterns towards a more sustainable future.

Moving towards more sustainable food systems is critical. Sustainable consumption and production is about doing more and better with less. But it is also about decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, increasing resource efficiency and promoting sustainable lifestyles. Sustainable food system in Kosovo can thus play a critical role to resolving issues of food security, poverty alleviation and adequate nutrition, and can contribute to building resilience in communities. Urgent attention is required to address existing challenges, as well as new and evolving demands on our food systems. Within this framework, our Dialogue explored ways and solutions to raise awareness as well as catalyse locally-driven action around the themes of (1) Sustainable food production (2) Sustainable food consumption (3) Circular use of food resources

ACTION TRACKS

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

KEYWORDS

- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
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MAIN FINDINGS

Overall, participants stressed the importance of access to healthy, nutritious, safe AND affordable food as a “must” for all people in Kosovo and future generations but also as an inextricable part of Kosovo’s efforts to achieve progress on long-term development and shared prosperity. Both food producers and consumers carry the responsibility to create a more equitable food system in Kosovo and there is a need to better align the interests and drivers behind their decisions on food consumption and production, with the three components of the “livelihood-nutrition-environment”. Furthermore, participants highlighted how the combination of economic, social and environmental principles are key to addressing both inclusivity and affordability issues around the topic of access to healthy, nutritious and safe food in Kosovo.

In order for Kosovo’s food system to be more inclusive, sustainable and healthy, further efforts are needed to 1) create the right mix of incentives for businesses and producers to shift their behaviours and patterns, 2) review the institutional, legislative and regulatory framework to better integrate environmental protection and climate concepts 3) reduce risks (access, affordability, income) for those most marginalized within the system, and 4) support income-earning opportunities across food value chains. Additionally, there must be special attention paid to enhancing gender equality in Kosovo’s food system, including the need to provide more opportunities for women in agricultural value chains, such as access to land, jobs, finance and decision-making.

With regard to the upcoming Food Systems Summit, participants look forward to continuing the conversation around building a sustainable food system in Kosovo and work together to transform a wealth of ideas, evidence and recommendations into concrete and practical solutions to advance equitable livelihoods in Kosovo’s food system. Efforts will be made to better integrate these into ongoing initiatives already taking place all over Kosovo. To name a few, these include: initiatives to reduce food waste (ex. UNDP Food Waste Challenge), municipalities’ plans to improve local livelihoods, CSO efforts to promote a culture of recycling and more responsible use of resources.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/3

1/3 Discussion Topic #1: Sustainable food production

1. Strengthening the role of women not just in processing food but in managing food processing companies
2. Role and partnerships between the private sector AND government, local partners, farmers, academia, education etc. to understand the interests and needs of all stakeholders along with the food system.
3. Supporting deeper integration into regional agro-food value chains, particularly in those sectors (e.g. fruits, olives, etc) where Kosovo enjoys somewhat a competitive advantage.
4. Invest in skills to increase financial literacy in small/family farms (particularly among women)
5. Improve farmers' resilience by investing in adaptive and mitigation needs to climate change
6. Promote local product development – agricultural extension and other rural entrepreneurship/advisory e.g. branding, name recognition and identification with geographic region
7. The importance of ecological and biological agriculture related to the use of pesticides, and accompanying regulation to ensure safe and adequate use of these. Linkages with organic agriculture, tourism and consumer health.
8. Use of natural resources, especially those related to soil degradation, erosion, forests, and pastures, as one of the important natural resources, which contribute to the development of tourism, protection from erosion, but also contribute to the economic aspect and green economy.
9. Reduce barriers for small farmers and other particular groups in agriculture through the provision of microcredit and more accessible and affordable financing mechanisms .
10. Give attention to emerging food insecurity – households prone to food insecurity – flexible safety nets at the municipal level
11. Promote value chain development involving food production linked to tourism, beekeeping, local products (ex. peppers and aromatic herbs) – inter alia for rural women's economic empowerment
12. There should be proper implementation of legislation in place and better monitoring mechanisms for the whole food system legislative framework
13. Farmers and producers should be more aware on the importance of professional consulting services and provided training programmes in order to increase their capacities on sustainable production practices.
14. The inspectorate capacities within the central and local level institutions should be increased in order to have more quality check and control of food items. Moreover, there should be a better coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and municipal agricultural directorates.
15. There should be more investments in irrigation systems and purification of water sources.
16. Central level institutions should intertwine policies in order to promote agriculture among youth and discourage migration.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/3

2/3 Discussion Topic #2: Sustainable food consumption

The second discussion focused on sustainable agricultural development and food consumption as a pathway to ensuring better food system livelihoods, by citing practical examples and solutions from participants' experiences and knowledge. Participants agreed that inclusivity and equity, based on a people-centered approach, is key to ensuring better food livelihoods in rural as well as urban areas for vulnerable groups including women, youth, non-majority communities and other communities with distinct livelihood systems. Several participants noted that skills development, including digital skills related to the use of ICT and modern online tools, are important enablers for transforming farmers into competitive entrepreneurs. This would ensure better economic empowerment of women and attract more younger workers.

With regard to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food system livelihoods in Kosovo, participants noted that the immediate impact of the pandemic was felt through the weakening of Kosovo food demand and the closure of many businesses such as caterers and hotels. There is therefore a need to strengthen resilience in Kosovo's food system, to enable "direct selling" by small agricultural producers to local consumers, which could allow many farmers and small players to continue their businesses and promote especially women and youth participation as digital mediators of food value chains. On the other hand, this could help reduce problems of food waste, by donating excess food from producers to those most in need. In this regard, digital platforms have a bigger role to play, for instance to optimize production and minimize food waste.

On recent changes to the demand base of agricultural food, some participants also noted the growing trend in people's diets towards more animal-based food (ex. Meat) and processed food, which requires adjustments in agricultural production patterns, with the latter lacking the same quantity of nutrients.

Additional points were raised on the importance for Kosovo institutions to target government subsidies to the most vulnerable to maximize inclusion and ensure equitable livelihoods. The importance of partnerships with businesses was also underscored, which would enable multidisciplinary collaboration among farmers, NGOs, governments and restaurant owners to design projects that can connect small farmers (especially those from rural areas) to large commercial areas and urban centers.

Additional recommendations include:

- Regular analysis, data collection and reporting should be conducted on consumer food basket in order to collect insights on basic nutritious values and provide evidence based policies that support sustainable food system.
- Complete the digitalization of land lots and enhance the categorization of land to address current challenges due to the fragmentation and small size of land lots.
- Establish supporting schemes for slow food systems, with a view to encouraging local producers to introduce sustainable systems of production, economize the local area, and encourage citizens to consume locally-produced food items.
- Support innovation in urban agriculture through dedicated funds and programmes, which would contribute to higher social cohesion among community members, promotion of green, low-carbon intensity products and better inclusivity of all members of society to leave no one behind.

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/3

3/3 Discussion Topic #3: Circular use of food resources

1. Integrating environmental, economic and social impacts as part of the overall assessments (cost-benefits assessments, impact evaluation etc) relating to food and agriculture policies, decisions and investments by governments and private sector
2. Integrating issues on Food Loss and Waste as a core element of Kosovo's education system and curricula for all (e.g. local municipalities, public servants, businesses etc), including main concepts and principles to analyze where we have losses, at what levels and why but also how to reduce them
3. Strengthening vocational and educational trainings /curricula through targeted programs to educate younger generations on the need to understand the status and challenges of the system
4. Educating consumers about making healthy choices on the type and quantity of food they consume
5. Need to better detect, analyze and report on the use of pesticides and chemicals in agriculture production, through a better food control system that is capable to monitor standard operating procedures on food and feed control at all stages
6. Need for certification and traceability in production systems, especially related to organic and local products, to understand the origin and processing of agricultural products along the value chain and communicate it to consumers through appropriate labelling, thereby increasing consumer confidence
7. Leverage the potential of agro-tourism in Kosovo, as a leading example of sectors (other include eco-tourism) that have been undergoing transformation to promote a shift towards more sustainable ways of doing business, which put sustainability and environment at the core of their model
8. Agro-ecology as a concept should be integrated within the policy framework and educational curricula.
9. Need to analyze the costs as well as the benefits of a healthy diet, in such a way as to prepare policy and financial support packages guided by sound and up-to-date evidence and a robust assessment of the alternatives.
10. Strengthen available evidence and assessments to assess the linkages and impact of food production and agriculture on environment (ex. deforestation) and contribution to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions
11. 'Polluter Pays' principle should be deeply integrated in the policy framework covering inter-institutional policies. Any financial revenue deriving from the 'Polluter Pays' principle policies should be treated as a dedicated to fund programmes specifically promoting environmental protection and sustainable food system.
12. Leverage the power of innovation and digital technologies to switch agricultural production from input-intensive to knowledge-intensive systems and expanding employment opportunities effectively.

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

In all groups, there was a diversity of thoughts and views. However, all discussions took place in a spirit of mutual respect and by appreciating different opinions. In the field of sustainable production, there were different opinions whether the promotion of healthy food, and organic food should be done through state mechanisms such as fiscal incentives, taxes, etc., or through market economy instruments, i.e. through the promotion of demand by raising awareness and increasing purchasing power in general.

The same divergences were seen in the part of sustainable consumption and the circular economy. The question of what should be the role of the Government in promoting sustainable production was answered in various forms by representatives of different sectors. While farmers saw subsidies as the best way, the food processing industry and policymakers considered other fiscal and indirect mechanisms to be equally important. There were different, but also complementary opinions regarding the role of citizens' awareness. There were opinions that the doctors' association should be involved to encourage sustainable consumption while also taking into account the fact that food safety should not be confused with food quality and that the state can work on raising citizens' awareness of food quality but that the demand for sustainably produced-food must come from the bottom-up.

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ATTACHMENTS AND RELEVANT LINKS

RELEVANT LINKS

- **Opening speeches of the Kosovo's Independent Dialogue**
<https://www.facebook.com/252697314788253/videos/1380726692320681>
- **Concluding remarks of the Kosovo's Independent Dialogue**
<https://fb.watch/6WwjUkOkzt/>
- **Interview of the Convenor on the Kosovo Public Radio-Television**
<https://fb.watch/6WwnpzwPUc/>
- **Press release: INDEP and United Nations Event Will Ensure Kosovo Voices Heard at Global Summit on the future of food**
<https://indep.info/en/press-release-indep-and-united-nations-event-will-ensure-kosovo-voices-heard-at-global-summit-on-the-future-of-food/>

