

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE TITLE	Food and Tourism Nexus, challenges and opportunities
DIALOGUE DATE	Friday, 5 July 2024 11:00 GMT +01:00
CONVENED BY	Amélia Maria Sousa Martins Muralha Delgado (PhD), European Climate Pact Ambassador
EVENT LANGUAGE	Portuguese
HOST LOCATION	Lisbon, Portugal
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	Europe, (Portugal as study-case)
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/56510/



The outcomes from Nutrition Dialogues will contribute to developing and identifying the most urgent and powerful ways to improve nutrition for all, with a focus on women and children and young people. Each Dialogue contributes in four distinct ways:

- Published as publicly available PDFs on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal
- Available as public data on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal "Explore Feedback" page
- Available publicly within a .xls file alongside all Feedback Form data for advanced analysis
- Synthesised into reports that cover which nutrition challenges are faced, what actions are urgently needed and how should these be taken forward - particular, in advance of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris, March 2025.

SECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

6

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0	0-11	0	12-18	1	19-29
2	30-49	2	50-74	0	75+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

4	Female	2	Male	0	Other/Prefer not to say
---	--------	---	------	---	-------------------------

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

0	Children, Youth Groups and Students	1	Civil Society Organisations (including consumer groups and environmental organisations)
0	Educators and Teachers	0	Faith Leaders/Faith Communities
0	Financial Institutions and Technical Partners	1	Food Producers (including farmers)
1	Healthcare Professionals	0	Indigenous Peoples
0	Information and Technology Providers	1	Large Business and Food Retailers
1	Marketing and Advertising Experts	0	National/Federal Government Officials and Representatives
0	News and Media (e.g. Journalists)	0	Parents and Caregivers
3	Science and Academia	2	Small/Medium Enterprises
0	Sub-National/Local Government Officials and Representatives	0	United Nations
0	Women's Groups	3	Other (please state)

OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

The focus group integrates expert stakeholders in the tourism value chain, and may have double roles. e.g, Chef and restaurants' owner (categorised as food retailer).

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPANT DIVERSITY

The group was diverse in age (active adults from trainee to senior levels), gender, background & expertise, assuming distinct political sides and roles in the value chain. The farmer lives in a rural area at a natural park. All others are urban. 3 out of 6 provide knowledge for policy design; All participants have high education diplomas (from BSc to PhD/Full Professor). A potential weakness (from the group diversity viewpoint) is the absence of participant(s) from vulnerable group(s).

SECTION TWO: FRAMING AND DISCUSSION

FRAMING

Participants expressed their educated viewpoints on their areas of expertise about the role of the tourism sector on food habits and nutrition of the visited populations (study-case: Portugal). Being previously selected as a focus group, knowledge on a specific area was prioritised, aiming at analysing tourism outcomes on food habits, availability, price, as well as heritage-related issues in the food system (e.g., natural and cultural assets, such as local gastronomy and agrobiodiversity). The current report is part of an exploratory study addressing the question: "Can the tourism sector be leveraged to highlight local cultural identity and biodiversity, by promoting local and seasonal foods as distinctive assets?" Such study also aimed at inspecting the relevance of gastronomy in the tourism sector and how it may help to raise awareness on local issues and to help preserve local cultural identity, food availability, biodiversity and hence a varied, nutritious diet. This report conveys the perspectives of diverse stakeholders on the food-tourism nexus about the challenges of ensuring a good nutrition for all. It explores whether tourism promotes local and seasonal foods, or if, instead, it promotes eating habits based on monotonous choices (e.g. international menu and fast food), disregarding nutritional guidelines (The Mediterranean Diet, in Portugal). Addressed topics encompass political challenges in implementing sustainable healthy diets considering economical, public health and environmental angles. Highlighted topics in this context were: local seasonal foods; potential threats posed by fast food sector and by ultra-processed foods; trends set by tourism on local habits and businesses; and the impact of digital platforms and social media. Participants were asked to suggest ways to improve current situation, in order to promote more ambitious, effective, and accountable actions (bottom-up and top-down). abbrev. MD=Mediterranean Diet; UPF=ultraprocessed food

DISCUSSION

The discussion answered questions about the topics: political challenges in implementing sustainable healthy diets, fast food sector as a threat, economic benefits of local, seasonal foods, openness of tourists to other cultures vs their customisation requirements, seasonality of tourism & sustainability, trends set by tourism on local habits and businesses, impact of digital platforms and social media, and preserving local biodiversity through gastronomy. The answer to the first topic mainly consisted of advocating for protecting European standards in public health and the environment. Consensus suggestions focus on education and food literacy rather than imposing rules to consumers, which may limit personal freedom. The collective insights emphasise the importance of education, support for local producers, sustainable practices, and integrated policies connecting public health, tourism, and local agriculture. Regarding the threat from the fast-food sector, it was acknowledged that it is a global appeal to tourists, it is linked to neophobia and convenience, but risks cultural homogenisation and identity loss, which are vital tourism assets. The participants discussed the economic, cultural, and health benefits of promoting local, seasonal foods and the Mediterranean Diet (MD). Challenges and opportunities were inspected. Highlighting the MD's connection to rural life can involve nudging Chefs (and other hospitality organisations) to incorporate local, seasonal foods into their menus, thus promoting unique flavors and quality. Together, the perspectives emphasise the value of local, seasonal foods in fostering economic growth, preserving cultural identity, and promoting public health, while addressing the challenges of consumer choice, policy design, and market competition. The contributors explored the influence of tourism on food culture, dietary habits, and the promotion of local gastronomy, emphasising the need for balance between tradition and adaptation.

SECTION THREE: DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

- Confusing strategies and conflicting legislation impair the implementation of existing dietary guidelines (MD-based). Mounting reliable knowledge has been produced but it is not reflected in food policies. Price and convenience are the main drivers for purchase, denoting poor food literacy. Communication is poor (e.g., the numerous affordable options in the MD are not highlighted).
- Despite being on UNESCO's list, the MD's holistic nature is not acknowledged. Moreover, its safeguard and promotion are falling short. Even its nutrition angle, globally recognised as a paradigm, is poorly communicated in the country. It is also noteworthy that not every local food is healthy and sustainable. However, when tourists search for typical dishes on institutional tourism websites, they often find options that should be discouraged and are clearly not aligned with the MD, which shouldn't happen. Poor strategies and support mechanisms for effective knowledge transfer. As a result, there is no adequate or sufficient support to SME. It is mostly ignored that SME are the main holders of valuable regional crops and ancient know-how. The lack of support to such key actors often results in the erosion of biodiversity and cultural assets.
- Conversely, global food corporations can endanger natural and cultural assets, when countries fail in regulating their actions.
- Travelers' openness to new food experiences varies. Familiarity/neophobia and dietary preferences/self-restrictions influence their choices.
- It is noteworthy that the MD provides a robust framework to integrate vegetarian and vegan options while preserving the local cultural identity.
- Strategic efforts are needed to promote local gastronomy, balance global trends, and enhance food literacy among all stakeholders.

URGENT ACTIONS

- Legislation should be inspected for contradictions, e.g., avoiding companies dealing with UPF to access public subsidies/tax exemptions. Benefits and costs should be distributed in ways that do not perpetuate inequalities.
- Investing in information and promotion campaigns. to drift at least some of the attention from the unethical multi-channel marketing by large corporations towards SME with good practices.
- Communication by institutions has a lot of room for improvement. It may start by reorganising sites to ensure that tourists and the general population easily reach meaningful information (e.g., about local gastronomy, because most of our food heritage is balanced and sustainable but it is not valued).
- Investing in knowledge transfer from academia to food producers, ensuring innovation is meaningful and has a purpose. Notably, family businesses & SME are the guardians of local biodiversity, ancient recipes, know-how and histories, which are valuable natural and cultural assets that risk disappearing.
- Portuguese gastronomy connected to the MD, ought to be better promoted. However, diets evolve, including the MD. Therefore, we have to be selective on what habits and foods to import. Awareness should be raised among whoever prepares food, about the need to avoid using UPFs, while understanding the reasons behind their usage. Is it due to a lack of qualified workers, low net profits, or both?
- Improve territorial policies that encourage local food production and short value chains. Food systems have to be able to ensure the necessary food security of local people in the face of demand-side changes (e.g. too high prices and/or reduced availability of traditional foods, due to excessive tourism).
- Price-driven changes in food habits are to avoid. In Portugal an important and growing part of the ingested calories are from UPF. Bottom-up (improved food literacy) and top-down (adequate regulatory framework) measures are needed.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

No real disagreements were registered. Only different ways of regarding issues. It was found that the different viewpoints complement one another and proposed urgent actions are consensual.

Maybe the major differences were found at the level of approaching marketing. On one side, the wide variety of digital platforms make the information reachable and easy to understand by all. Digital marketing tools allow businesses, including SME, to showcase their products to a wide audience, to customise them, and to create a sense of urgency to buy, thus fostering sales. Additionally, marketing messages can be easily disseminated through interconnected networks by leveraging the contacts of individuals who belong to multiple 'bubbles,' thereby expanding their reach to increasingly larger audiences.

On the other hand, the dark side is acknowledged by all, notably with respect to influencers who range from those conveying structured information, to others conveying messages of questionable reliability. Some influencers are very well paid. Also costly and questionable is the rating system for tourism services, because of the companies devoted to delivering fake ratings and comments (by people or bots). Society is blamed for this because the concept of "friend" is nowadays diffuse, and people would rather rely on influencers than on regular word-of-mouth.

It is consensual that the consumer is overloaded with information and that does not result in improved knowledge. The notoriety of unhealthy foodstuffs in the internet is huge and information useful and beneficial to the consumer is harder to find. This is an issue. Suggestions to overcome such issue include: 1) creating a dedicated think tank to combat UPF and advocate for healthy and sustainable eating habits. 2) showcasing vivid testimonies, in the first person, conveying the contacts of SME and engaging local communities, to promote them.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Tourism impacts local food availability and habits, driving behavioural changes and influencing SME offerings. Price shifts often challenge locals' access to traditional, seasonal foods, with affordability as the main driver of dietary changes. Addressing seasonality requires balancing tourism demand across the year through marketing, diversified offerings, and regulation. Promoting local, seasonal foods strengthens sustainability while enhancing cultural identity. For example, Lisbon faces a constant tourism demand, while the Algarve struggles with seasonality, requiring region-specific strategies. Creative and sustainable tourism products can help stabilise tourism flows and mitigate environmental and social pressures. Tourism can integrate all sustainability dimensions and bridge connections with other sectors in leveraging value creation but a few key points worth noting: 1) Tourism fosters mutual influence, diversifying offerings but risks diluting local traditions; 2) Digital nomads and niche markets offer opportunities for eco-conscious growth and innovative business models; 3) Long-term strategies focusing on authentic & quality experiences are critical to maintaining cultural and culinary heritage; 4) Digital platforms enable tailored marketing and continuous feedback monitoring to maintain quality and transparency. Influencers play a pivotal role in setting trends, but businesses must balance their influence with authenticity. With regard to sustainability and ethics, while platforms can promote sustainable practices, they may also amplify misleading trends. Ethical, health-conscious campaigns have untapped potential. Collaboration between stakeholders, such as local producers and public institutions, can leverage digital tools to support regional economies and promote healthier, sustainable lifestyles. Finally, tourism can be used as a conservation tool: Gastronomy and immersive experiences can raise awareness about biodiversity, turning visitors into advocates for local ecosystems. Revamping traditional practices and integrating them into tourism offerings preserves cultural identity and biodiversity. Certification schemes and long-term indicators can ensure that biodiversity conservation aligns with sustainable tourism development. Joint efforts by municipalities, businesses, researchers, and healthcare professionals can drive biodiversity-friendly initiatives that benefit public health, local economies, and the environment.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The food dialogue principles of engagement were observed (in accordance with instructions for convenors). No funding was involved. The convenor, facilitators and curators act as European Climate Pact Ambassadors, on a pro-bono basis. The participants (members of the focus group) also volunteered their time on a pro-bono basis. Participants signed an informed consent form allowing the publication of their viewpoints (herein aggregated and summarised). They are therefore acknowledged for their time and effort. All of us aim at contributing to improve nutrition security worldwide and the way we produce and consume food. This report makes no mention of private companies or brand names. Therefore we foresee no competing interests.

METHOD AND SETTING

Diversity in gender, age, area of expertise and political viewpoints was sought for the focus group. The open question: "how and to what extent does the tourism/hospitality sector influences food habits, nutritional status and food security in the visited regions?" was addressed by subtopics during zoom meetings, in Portuguese. Recording was authorized and information was summarized in English. To reduce bias the current report was curated by a team member not participating as facilitator.

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

Create pilot projects, e.g., community-led culinary events or biodiversity-themed tourism trails, and gather feedback. Partner with universities/NGOs to develop ways to preserve biodiversity through tourism. Regularly evaluate the impact of initiatives on tourist satisfaction, ecological improvements, and economic benefits for local businesses. Memorable experiences that benefit both visitors and local ecosystems can result from aligning biodiversity preservation with tourism and gastronomy.

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The team of European Climate Pact Ambassadors is grateful to the members of the focus group for their valuable insights (in alphabetical order): Alexandra Gonçalves, Director School of Management, Hospitality and Tourism, Univ. Algarve. Cecília Delgado, founder of the NGO "alimentar cidades sustentáveis". David Martins, Economist, young frequent traveller. Isabel do Carmo, Fulo, Full Professor at Faculty of Medicine, Univ. Lisbon. Inês Barros partner of olive oil producing SME. Nuno Barros, Chef

ATTACHMENTS

- **additional information: Discussion and short bios**
https://nutritiondialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Foodtourism-nexus_annex.docx