



BigPicnic policy brief 3: Sustainable food production

BIGPICNIC TOPIC



SUSTAINABLE
FOOD

FOOD 2030 PRIORITIES



CIRCULARITY



NUTRITION

SDGs



6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION

United Nations Sustainable
Development Goals

Recommendations

Overall: Future funding frameworks should address more efficient food loss and waste management, small scale food production and sustainable supply chains.

- Support plant-focused sustainable urban and peri-urban agriculture from a commercial and community/household perspective to maximize the productivity of arable land and support local food.
- Support organisations involved in food security to adopt a systemic supply chain analysis and perspective to assist consumers in making healthy, sustainable and socially just food choices.
- Make food loss and waste prevention and management a pillar of food security and sovereignty activities.

Background

Food security is a complex issue and encompasses a huge diversity of topics such as food production, sustainability, health and nutrition and climate change. With such a complex picture involving many different stakeholders, priorities and considerations it can be challenging for non-experts to engage with this subject to both better understand and provide input. Botanic gardens, as centres of plant expertise and education, with strong links to scientific and academic audiences are well placed to act as hubs in their local communities, facilitating discussion and providing a place to explore food security topics.

Findings

The primary focus of the BigPicnic discussions and debates were to understand and draw out important issues and concerns that people have in relation to food security. For some of the issues highlighted there are natural solutions and these are detailed where they occur. However, for most of these issues there are no immediate, obvious solutions and thus the findings detailed below aim to showcase the common areas of concern and key issues that the project audiences feel it important to address.

Urban gardening

Urban gardens were considered to play a part in people's ability to access places to grow food, while community gardens and allotments appeared to be linked with the goals of making cities and communities safe and sustainable (SDG 11). Furthermore, having food gardens was deemed to be a good way for people to achieve self-sufficiency, sovereignty and their own food production. However, there was a perceived difference in the role of community gardens compared to allotments - community gardens were regarded as a contributing factor to social integration, whereas ideas about allotments, while providing evidence of a generational shift, were more intertwined with how people viewed ownership. Allotments demonstrate a quest for both self-sustainability and a struggle for control of space which is emblematic of the wider environmental and political issues facing many countries today. The forging of partnerships/networks was also seen as a factor contributing positively towards tackling the challenges of the urban environment and problems.

Supply chains

Sustainable food production in the form of fair trade and organic products was seen as a factor contributing positively to responsible food production and consumption (SDG 12). Many of BigPicnic's co-created activities had a strong focus on pollination, highlighting the participants concerns over conservation of pollinators and farming practices that support this. The importance of trust and distrust between producers, suppliers and consumers was also raised as a significant issue. It was emphasised that knowing the farmers, establishing local

partnerships, having a direct contact between the producer and the consumer with alternative distribution systems (as opposed to, for example, supermarkets) were all important elements.

Food waste and circularity

Audiences expressed concerns about government practices for waste prevention and sustainable habits. In some cases, food waste was seen as a political issue that could only be solved with better distribution. Food waste was highlighted as a significant problem and members of the public criticised the persistence of this phenomenon while issues of food poverty haven't been solved. Participants underlined that a greater control of the fresh food chain could better recover waste from supermarkets and this could guarantee the right to food to a larger number of citizens.

The practice of composting was seen as a way to contribute both to better food waste management and to circularity/recycling. Composting had a community bonding element while also having a politically charged context as it sometimes distinguishes grassroots approaches from the official state approach. Finally, marketing issues were mentioned as impacting on food trends and the visual appeal of specific products (for example, their availability in the supermarket and how they are presented respectively).

Conclusion

Issues that emerged covered both the supply and demand sides of the food chain and food systems. Sustainable food production was considered both within the context of nutrition and healthy diets (aligning with Priority 1 of the Food 2030 policy) and the efficiency and circularity of food systems (Priority 3 of the same policy). Both sustainable food production and sustainable food products were considered for their contribution to decent work and economic growth (SDG 8).

There should be greater support for local food production and consideration should be given to serving the increasing demand for urban gardening, community gardens and allotments. Participants noted the importance of preserving knowledge from local actors and taking the opportunity to construct and co-create knowledge, innovation and adaptation. At the same time, calling for production methods that support sustainability by protecting the land and reducing food waste. This can occur by recognizing the importance of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and of the Nagoya Protocol adopted by the 10th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Quotes

“Well, when you start doing something differently, then suddenly you find people who also do things differently, these were food cooperatives, and I still work with them and will continue, these are fantastic places, because you feel at home there.”

Participant in Warsaw, Poland

“In a garbage bin food is thrown, this food has been grown / bred and when it is thrown away all the energy is wasted. In addition, a car has to pick up the food waste.”

Participant in Oslo, Norway

“When people ferment and process their food themselves and put work and energy into it, they pay more attention to where food comes from. And buy more organic food or grow it themselves. Home-grown food can be enjoyed much more. And you consume much more consciously.”

Participant in Berlin, Germany

The logo for BigPicnic features the word "BigPicnic" in a stylized font. "Big" is in a dark purple color, and "Picnic" is in a light green color. A small green leaf icon is positioned above the letter 'i' in "Picnic".

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