



Meeting Summary | Global Alliance for the Future of Food Animal Agriculture Convening

March 23-24, 2016

Washington, D.C.

On March 23-24, 2016, the Global Alliance for the Future of Food convened a group of 18 foundation representatives and 12 experts (see Appendix A for participant list) to conduct a meeting on issues related to global animal agriculture. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Develop a shared understanding of the landscape of issues related to livestock production and meat consumption
- Collectively determine who is funding and investing what, where, and why
- Foster a shared understanding of the gaps, opportunities, and possibilities for action
- Use the above to explore the potential of collaborative strategies with associated details and next steps

To support the understanding of key issues and identify potential opportunities for strategic intervention, Meridian Institute, in consultation with an advisory committee including Global Alliance members and other foundation representatives, selected and interviewed a range of experts in animal agriculture. Meridian synthesized the expert interviews into a summary report (Appendix B). Meridian also produced a confidential Donor Profile Report based upon funder responses to an online survey (see Appendix C). In addition, in order to provide funders with a curated set of shared resources, both funders and experts were asked to share recommended literature on animal agriculture issues, which were compiled, summarized, tagged by keyword, and made available on a dedicated [Animal Ag Literature Website](#).

Expert Panels

Following a funders-only meeting to present the Expert Interview and Donor Profile Reports and findings, donors were joined by a diverse cross-section of experts. Experts participated on three panels: 1) Externalities of Meat Production and Consumption, 2) Forging a Collective Path on Environmental Issues, and 3) Changing Consumption. Panel discussants briefly shared their perspective on priority opportunities, followed by questions, and small group discussions. Each panel was designed to build collective understanding of how various efforts can contribute to systems approaches; identify the key actors and opportunities for impact; understand the current or anticipated barriers; and explore the most effective strategies/approaches for fostering change. The following summarizes panel composition, objectives, and key remarks made by the panel and/or participants.

Panel Discussion 1—Externalities of Meat Production and Consumption

This session focused on how work on externalities can be leveraged to inform and change consumer behavior and producer practices. The discussion revolved around the notion that animal agriculture (livestock in particular) can be associated with both positive and negative externalities and that socioeconomic externalities need to be considered in addition to environmental externalities. Externalities can be leveraged to inform the public, drive political pressure on the private sector, and/or be incorporated into risk management strategies to drive change within businesses. However, participants acknowledged that valuation of externalities and its pathway for integration into the market and/or policies vary largely depending on the political, social, and ecological context. Additionally, there is a lack of complete and coordinated data on externalities and clear communication to stakeholders. More work is needed to build out the research on externalities, make that information openly available, and utilize it to ‘make the case’ to policymakers, companies, and consumers to address external costs (and benefits) associated with animal agriculture.

Panel Discussion 2—Forging a Collective Path on Environmental Issues

This session aimed to explore and unpack environmental issues, both positive and negative, associated with animal agriculture. Participants recognized that while major systems of production can contribute to negative environmental impacts, other systems of animal production can be part of a climate solution by restoring soil carbon and revitalizing degraded lands that are otherwise abandoned, leading to greater rates of deforestation. They identified that effective agroecological solutions exist and are applicable to many scales and types of existing systems. The barrier lies in the lack of resources and support needed to overcome dominant modes of production for these systems to be implemented at scale. The panel also identified a need for credit, information, tools, and market reform to be available to farmers to drive the transition to sustainable farming systems. Overall, panelists and participants called for more nuanced, integrated approaches in order to effectively address and communicate the complex relationships between animal agriculture and the environment.

Panel Discussion 3—Changing Consumption

This session focused on: the potential to change consumer behavior; how strategies should differ depending on location (e.g. US vs. EU vs. China vs. India); and the most effective means for making an impact. The conversation highlighted ethical dilemmas around influencing consumption, particularly pointing to the inequality in access to nutrition between wealthy and less wealthy nations and the economic and sociocultural value of animal agriculture. Within the developed world, some panelists pointed to existing research on proven strategies for changing consumer behavior and the need for more widespread understanding of those opportunities among funders, policymakers, and influencers. Many participants and panelists cited that conflicting education and messaging around animal

product consumption—including one-dimensional solutions (“meat is unsustainable”)—confuse consumers and undermine systemic solutions.

Cross-cutting Discussion Themes

The following themes recurred throughout the three panels and subsequent discussions:

- Communicating the complexity and nuance of the issues is crucial to driving change across the board: there is confusion among consumers and policymakers due to conflicting messages and information. A message that is nuanced and inclusive of diverse parties is needed to gain widespread support for change.
- The global power and influence of large industrial agriculture corporations often promotes and replicates models of unsustainable consumption and production around the world.
- It is important to work both globally on a systems scale but also target contextualized, local efforts, as well as to link bottom-up and top-down approaches.
- Context-specific understanding of the issues is needed to determine what sustainability looks like, how to value externalities, how to leverage policy, and in general, which strategies of intervention can be effective in which geographies.
- In each of the areas under discussion, highlighting and producing successful case studies (whether it is adopting corporate methods of influencing behavior, demonstrating to farmers how sustainable transitions can be effective, or integrating externalities into financial risk) can be a powerful tool to drive change.

Donor Debrief

Following the conclusion of the donor and expert meeting, donors re-convened to discuss opportunities that emerged from their discussions, and to identify strategic priorities/opportunities for impact.

Developing meta-narratives

Funders were presented with a set of sixteen meta-narratives (Appendix D) reflecting major themes and messages from the group (with a correlating list of counter-narratives to compare the opposing message), and were asked to rate each statement in real time on a scale of a) This resonates, I'd support this; b) Needs some wordsmithing but is in the right direction; c) Doesn't resonate; d) I oppose this view, take a different position. The purpose of this exercise was to identify areas of convergence among donors that can be used to help guide future animal agriculture collaboration and activities under the Global Alliance and with allied foundations. The following statements emerged at the top tier of consensus:

- The current system of industrial meat production is not sustainable. (87% chose A, 7% B)

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- Animal production is a core issue at the nexus of sustainable food systems, climate change, health, environment, and well-being. (63% chose A, 38% B)
 - Transitioning to sustainable animal production is urgent and needs to be global in scale. (63% chose A, 31% B)

Recognizing that a number of the Global Alliance foundation members were not represented at the meeting, donors identified two main considerations for the Global Alliance related to the potential future strategic direction of collective work on animal agriculture. Firstly, they expressed the potential for a set of narrative messages to not only guide the collaborative work of the Alliance on animal agriculture, but also to inspire the collective efforts of other groups that wish to make an impact in this area. Secondly, the participants identified research as an imminent need in order for the Global Alliance to proceed in the development of convincing and impactful guiding principles and to determine the most effective and implementable pathways to pursue under those principles. The key research areas that participants identified were: financial risk, global policy opportunities (e.g. future climate change conferences), how to create behavioral change, and other knowledge gaps related to the areas where the Global Alliance hopes to make an impact.

Closing comments

At the conclusion of the meeting, funders offered closing reflections on how they think the Global Alliance could be a catalyst and leader in addressing issues in animal agriculture and food systems. Their comments converged on:

- The need to regard animal agriculture with a systems view (keeping in mind the power/political dynamics, other commodities beyond livestock, and the varying significance of animal products to different socioeconomic and cultural demographics), and the need to better understand how individual or focused activities contribute to this broader systems approach;
- The valuable role of the Global Alliance as a diverse coalition of funders with focused efforts across animal agriculture and food systems, coupled with the Alliance's ability to act as a convener on key issues among diverse stakeholders;
- The need to communicate issues and a shared vision using meta-narratives that reflect the complexity and nuances of the system in a way that engages rather than alienates different actors and stakeholders; and
- The need to identify information gaps and conduct further research in those areas in order to inform future pathways to intervention. These included, for example: food transition; consumer behavior patterns; the relationship between animal protein and nutrition; leveraging externalities work to inform corporate financial risk assessments; and analyzing political dynamics and policy intervention points.

To pursue these ideas, donors discussed the idea of developing a set of principles, similar to the set that the Global Alliance created for food and agriculture systems as a whole, targeted specifically towards animal agriculture; and the opportunity for the “Beacons of Hope” initiative to highlight potential pathways where animal agriculture systems are working well to help build a shared narrative.