



DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND TALENT OF YOUTH TO FURTHER FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

The following case study was received as a result of a call issued by the Committee on World Food Security for case studies highlighting examples of initiatives aimed at 'Developing the knowledge, skills and talent of youth to further food security and nutrition'. The cases received provide the background for a discussion of lessons learned and potential policy implications at a special event on October 15th, 2015 during CFS 42. Find out more at www.fao.org/cfs/youth.

Background

Three senior experts joined by twelve younger researcher worked together to draft the definitive document of the Milan Protocol. Their daily contribution helped to establish detailed principles of a concrete action aimed at making the global food system truly sustainable. The Call for Action had constituted the basis of the Milan Protocol, an international agreement on Food, Nutrition and Sustainability that the BCFN Foundation aimed to promote to, and have signed by all participant countries at the World EXPO 2015. Each signatory will outline voluntary commitments and suggestions for implementing actions against specific targets and timelines. The Milan Protocol will connect citizens and policy makers to address the issue of food sustainability with a triple objective: a) to promote healthy lifestyles and fight obesity, b) to promote sustainable agriculture, c) to reduce food waste by 50% by 2020. The initiative, launched at the 2013 edition of the BCFN International Forum, called on the civil society to take an active role in drafting the document.

Challenges

The idea was to select young researchers (three for each team) from the short list of finalists in the previous two editions of the BCFN YES! Young Earth Solutions competition¹ for the role of Junior Call to Action Manager (JCAM). This strategy was successful as it allowed the team to identify students from different disciplines (not just from the Food Studies field) interested in the topics of food and sustainability, and thus create multi-disciplinary working teams. In addition, the choice to recruit students from the finalists of BCFNYES! also provided the possibility to train young ambassadors, able to communicate and explain to other people, the importance of the Milan Protocol. Strong motivated young researchers were the major drivers and "the soul" of the entire project. Thanks to their work on communication, dissemination and to their social networking initiatives, it was possible to spread the news and the goals of the initiative of Milan Protocol in a short time. JCAMs were able to use simple language, suitable and adapted to diverse audiences. They were also the main testers of the Milan Protocol initiative. First, they proposed ideas and helped the team to figure out how to improve the initiative, how to structure the promotion, when and where to intensify communication strategies, and above all, how to get to an audience of other young people. They were in direct contact with the experts, and were able to discuss (via email) with them on key issues mentioned in the Milan Protocol. For the JCAMs, it has been a labor of 360 degrees, which made them the protagonists of the creation of an active movement, even before scientific research. They were in charge of contacting experts, opinion leaders and heads of institutions, to explain to them the Milan Protocol goals with the goal of involving them by becoming a Milan Protocol (MP) supporter.

Approach Used

An array of ICT tools has been employed in Milan Protocol Call to Action, such as online discussion forums, e-mail, online surveys, online chat, and group support systems. The Milan Protocol Call to Action is a

¹ BCFN YES! Competition is aimed at young students and researchers worldwide engaged in proposing original ideas on food and sustainability.



good example to show how online initiatives can serve to encourage two-way communication between Industry, Government and Citizens, educate citizens about the rationale and complexity of food and sustainability policy-making, legitimize government decisions, and provide opportunities for mutual learning. Furthermore, the online initiatives enhanced accessibility by overcoming the offline physical constraints of time and space. The internet's capabilities of mass transmission and reception of information allow citizens to participate anytime and anywhere that is convenient to them. The Milan Protocol website can be used as a best practice that can serve varied objectives such as informing citizens, generating support among citizens, utilizing citizens' input in decision making, and probing for citizens' needs. Further, other initiatives, directly or not directly connected with the Milan Protocol, have offered a number of advantages over offline channels of participation such as public hearings or newspaper forums.

Outcome and Impact Achieved

After nine months of work, it was possible to estimate the topics that have been selected as the most interesting and debated in common opinion and scientific research. They are presented below as titles, as they represent the discussion forums started by the JCAMs in the dedicated online platform. In addition, it was possible to map and define some guidelines for study and research from news and information were gathered on what are the best and worst practices in the field of sustainable agriculture, through the contributions of experts and MP Supporters, and the notes from the general public, through the front page of the site and social networks. These guidelines will not only be used to finalize the text of the Milan Protocol (as defined in the initial objectives of the Call to Action), but could also become material for reflection and analysis for urban planners, managers and industries, governmental structures and non. The discussion forums on the online platform opened and monitored by JCAMs, range from issues fairly common within the scenario of investigation related to sustainable agriculture, such as limiting commodity trading, water and agriculture, relation between hunger and malnutrition and sustainable agriculture, biofuels issues, livestock's role in agriculture, ethics of animal welfare, agriculture and climate change, agriculture in developing development sustainable nations, etc ... Furthermore, the research done by the JCAMs themselves produced new visions and proposals for further study, such as the issue of how to entice a new generation of farmers, or how to develop new forms of urban agriculture and intensify those presently successful.

Lessons Learned/Opportunities for Scaling-Up

The Milan Protocol Call to Action mission was not to grow the field of investment opportunities; it was instead to leverage investments as a critical tool towards the reform of the current, industrialized food system, and lead the way to sustainable, regional and global food systems that provide healthier food, air, water, land, people, and communities.

The research that took place during the Call to Action has highlighted how diverse best practices in Healthy Lifestyle, Sustainable Agriculture and Reduction of Food Waste are developed all around the World: in some places, they are well implemented, in others, they are not monitored. The aim of all the working groups composed of young researchers, was to communicate these best practices through the use of a well developed protocol, as the Milan Protocol should be.

Policy Implications

WASHINGTON, Jan. 22, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- The Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (BCFN) Foundation today introduced for the first time the Milan Charter – an Italian global food deal proposal that will be presented at the Universal Expo in Milan later this year – at the 1st Annual Food Tank Summit in Washington D.C. The summit, held in partnership with The George Washington University, brought together more than 75 international thought leaders from the food and agriculture field, where key individuals convened to discuss an important push for international sustainable agriculture agreements like the Milan Charter.

With contributions from institutions, academia, civil society, and the private sector, the Milan Charter is the policy document the Italian government will use to promote a more sustainable global food system at Expo 2015, taking place in Milan from May to October. The final version will be handed over to the Secretary General of United Nation during World Food Day on Oct. 16, as the legacy of Expo 2015, featuring the theme "Feeding the



Planet, Energy for Life." The Milan Charter originates from various initiatives and studies taking into account the different perspectives of a broken food system – including the Milan Protocol, the proposal first launched by the BCFN Foundation at the end of 2013 offering solutions to the major global paradoxes on food and nutrition.