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Conscious Food Systems Alliance

Emerging Insights from the CoFSA mini-workshop series
(March-July 2021)

Context

On March 3rd 2021, a group of over thirty partners dedicated to exploring the role of consciousness to support the transformation of food and agriculture systems gathered for the Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA) First Partners Workshop. In this session, a number of key questions arose, leading to the launch of a series of mini-workshops to discuss and develop the initial vision of the Alliance (see appendix). This document serves as an initial summary of insights which emerged during these sessions. These materials are complementary to the Concept Note.

The CoFSA Vision and Strategic Approach

o Purpose & Vision

The purpose and vision of CoFSA has been articulated in a number of ways throughout the co-creation process. The central components of this emerging CoFSA vision include: creating a **Centre of Excellence** for the application of consciousness in food and agriculture systems, creating a **movement** of dedicated practitioners, and **building legitimacy** for this work. These ideas will be consolidated by a group of core partners into a synthetic CoFSA Statement of Intent or manifesto before the end of the year.

- The CoFSA vision is to **build a movement** of individuals and organizations dedicated to leveraging the power of inner development for systemic change in food systems.
- The purpose of CoFSA is to offer food and agriculture practitioners, as well as systems change and consciousness experts, a **safe space where they can experiment new ways of being and doing**, and explore the role of consciousness in food systems transformation.
- Through working with leaders in this field and tapping into the collective intelligence of a community of practitioners, CoFSA can be a **Centre of Excellence for piloting and demonstrating the role of consciousness in transforming food systems**.
- The CoFSA can **demystify consciousness** by developing practical ways to bring this perspective into the work of its members, through capacity-building activities, reflective spaces, and conscious work practices.
- It also aims to **build legitimacy** of conscious sustainability and its application in food systems. As a UN agency with a mandate on human development and COFSA convener, UNDP can bring legitimacy to this emerging agenda on conscious sustainability, even more broadly than for food systems. Opening a space for this conversation, elevating, and listening to marginalized voices can catalyze changes in the sector.

- The CoFSA must develop a **bold vision** around which a diverse set of stakeholders can join together and apply the vision to their countries, projects, teams and institutions. It must also be **flexible** enough to allow for stakeholders to adapt the application to their **specific context**.
- o 5-year success indicators
 - Some partners believe we should set up ambitious quantitative targets despite the emergent nature of CoFSA, while others think we should favor quality over quantity and start with small actions.
 - Possible indicators of success in 5-years could include:
 - Number of partners
 - Number of beneficiaries
 - Evidence of impact on individual mindsets, values and skills
 - Number of the community of practice members
 - Evidence of influence of key public and private strategies and policies for food systems transformation
- o Strategic Approach: Inclusive, Emergent, Context-specific

The strategic approach of the CoFSA was discussed throughout all the workshops. The central themes discussed include: what balance between **global and local action**; how to **integrate inner and outer change**; how to ensure the **inclusion of grassroots actors** and marginalised voices; the need for interventions to be **emergent and context-specific**; and the scope of CoFSA interventions on **conscious food systems**, rather than on specific sustainable farming practices. These discussion points, which are expanded on below, are ongoing and will be continued in the Breathing Room from October onwards.

- **Inclusive:**
 - Great care should be provided to ensure a **diversity of partners** and the representation of the whole food system, that from grassroot initiatives and indigenous communities. There is also the need to strengthen engagement of governments, women representatives and to a lesser extent companies. The inclusion of **marginalized voices** in this movement, in particular **grassroot and indigenous organizations** at both design and implementation stages, is crucial.
- **Emergent:**

- The CoFSA offer should be in response to the needs and wants of change agents on the ground, e.g. offering co-creational project planning on consciousness. The role of the CoFSA is to **create the space within which these needs and priorities around consciousness can emerge.**
- **Context-specific:**
 - The implementation of CoFSA interventions, whether at global, national or local levels, must be **tailored to specific challenges** at hand and context-specific in terms of language, techniques, frameworks, religions, philosophies, etc.
 - At the local level CoFSA, must ensure interventions are **culturally relevant** and delivery of activities should **harness local resources** and initiatives, as well as traditional wisdom
 - CoFSA interventions need to respect everyone's own path of evolution, and not turn them into objects to be changed. It needs to offer the **tools people need for greater awareness and flourishing**, trusting, based on the emerging science, that these interventions will ultimately support systemic transformation toward sustainability.
- **Global and Local Action:**
 - There is a tension or dance between (i) tapping into the muscularity of UNDP and other large partners, working at the global and national levels with recognized approaches such as mindfulness, compassion or somatics and (ii) the need to be humble, come from a place of emergence and take into account the diversity of contexts and local resources.
 - The integration with **grassroots regenerative movement, social justice and rights-based agenda** is seen as key by participants from the Global South and their supporters to ensure CoFSA's relevance, groundedness and legitimacy. This needs to be reflected in CoFSA membership. It is also in tension with the need to ensure CoFSA distinct identity with regards to other development initiatives.
 - The development of a **network of local hubs in developing countries** that CoFSA could mobilize, strengthen and interconnect is an important strategic approach for CoFSA. They could be associated and complement **global capacity-building activities** and ensure that they are grounded in local communities, immersive learning experience and farming practices.
- **Integrating inner and outer change:**
 - The integration of inner and outer change is a key focus area which will be developed through the workstream on the CoFSA theory of change and evidence base.

- An action-oriented approach based on prototyping will help the CoFSA learn and specify how best to integrate inner and outer change.
- **The difference between a *conscious and sustainable food system*:** In principle, CoFSA does not aim at promoting specific farming practices, but can help **envision and promote what a conscious food system** looks like local systems adapted to their bio-cultural environments, based on (agro-)ecological and food sovereignty principles, in which producers, value chain actors and consumers are closely connected to each other to optimize the well-being of all.

Structure and Actions

○ Structure

It is suggested to evolve CoFSA's initially intended structure by separating the breathing room where core partners meet to lead the work of the Alliance from the practice room where different CoFSA interventions are being implemented.

○ Breathing Room

The Breathing & Practice Room workshop gathered inputs for how we can set up a space that is more **intentional, connected and transformative** for core partners to achieve COFSA's mission. A summary of the inputs is below. The Room should create a **safe space** where a core group of committed partners come together to **co-create, share experiences, learn and experiment**.

- **Fostering human connection, building personal relationships and trust** is paramount to supporting open exchange. People come as their **'whole self'** and can be vulnerable.
- The group should be more diverse to reflect the broader food systems perspective, including grassroots actors and marginalized voices.
- UNDP's role in this space is as a **convener** of partners.
- The Room needs a **skilled facilitator** to host the partner group.
- We should set clear cultural principles so that what we do in the Breathing & Practice Room models what we want to see outside in the world.
- Among the initial priorities of the Breathing room will be to:
 - Consolidate and refine the CoFSA vision into an agreed CoFSA Manifesto / Statement of Intent.
 - Agree on ways of working together within the alliance.

- Develop a portfolio of prototypes and pilot interventions.
- Co-fundraise.

These inputs are being compiled into a Terms of Reference for the Breathing Room, which will be shared and discussed with partners in September, in order to launch the Breathing Room in October.

○ Practice Room

The practice room is where CoFSA interventions are prototyped, piloted and implemented. It should be organized around prototyping teams for each intervention.

Progress and lessons learnt should be shared with core partners in the Breathing room and with practitioners in the community space.

○ Learning Room

The Learning Room is envisaged to be a space for cohorts of food and agriculture change agents to connect with experts in consciousness approaches and receive CoFSA trainings.

The training offer encompasses a wide range of consciousness approaches including Mindfulness, Compassion, Well-being, Somatics, Emotional awareness, Cognition, Deep ecology, Indigenous wisdom, Feminine leadership, Conscious facilitation, deep dialogues & reflective spaces.

A first draft curriculum on mindfulness and compassion for food systems transformation has been developed. It is structured around 6 training sessions of two hours and a self-organized learning circle.

This can be the basis for developing a more integral CoFSA core curriculum, which would present a menu of options to partners, as a way to engage them in CoFSA and help them start identifying and developing interventions.

A first pilot training of the UNDP Paraguay office by the Compassion Institute is scheduled to start in September.

○ Community Space

The Community Space workshop gathered inputs on **what unmet needs a CoFSA community could meet** for partners and what partners would like to receive and offer in such a community. It also explored requirements for setting up and maintaining a successful community of practice with an active membership.

The CoFSA Community Space should enable partners to **meet like-minded people** and **foster a sense of connectedness** between them.



The Community can be a place to **cross-pollinate and bring in perspectives of diverse actors** in the food and agriculture systems.

The Community can be a place to **share experiences and practices** relating to the application of consciousness in food and agriculture.

It is important for the community to develop **language** and ways of talking about our work which is **accessible** to those who do not work in the field.

There is a need for a **dedicated space** which enables **communication and collaboration between partners in the Alliance**, such as a digital platform.

Moderators, animators and facilitators are essential to keep the community “bubbling”.

The Community should be a **place of learning** and knowledge exchange guided by vulnerability and heart.

The Community should enable partners to **convene in smaller groups** as well as larger meetings, and to **self-organise around shared interests** and goals.

Partners are viewed as individuals rather than as representing their organisations.

If we want to include marginalised communities, we should consider paying them for their contribution.

The CoFSA Community Space could build on existing communities of practice. It could be hosted on the UNDP Green Commodities Community digital platform and ready to launch in September 2021. This would serve as an interim solution until the CoFSA has resources to set-up its own dedicated space or find a more suitable community space already run by a COFSA partner.

Key Workstreams

The work within the Alliance is starting to organize itself around key workstreams supporting CoFSA’s emergence. These are concrete areas of work in which partners collaborate to develop specific aspects of CoFSA, in coordination with CoFSA secretariat. In some cases, they may evolve into specific working groups.

- Partners outreach

Some work is underway to ensure more representation of a diversity of partners, in particular that from grassroots initiatives and indigenous communities, governments and to a lesser extent companies.

CoFSA partners are welcome to suggest relevant contacts.

- Research & Evidence Basis



Academic works and political initiatives, framing the narrative around conscious sustainability are quickly emerging. The CoFSA aims to build on the work of some of its core partners such as the **Ekskäret Foundation (Inner Development Goals), Mind and Life Europe, Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS) / Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program, the Mindfulness Initiative**, and the [Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience](#), who are coming together to lead a workstream around the evidence basis for CoFSA.

The CoFSA Secretariat are collating **initiatives and examples that showcase the integration of consciousness and sustainable food and/or agriculture systems**. This mapping will help demonstrate how a conscious food system can materialise and help to build proof of concept for CoFSA.

The development of an **evaluation framework** to measure the impact of CoFSA interventions will be essential in demonstrating the impact of consciousness approaches in the sector. This can build on some existing work of our partners and combine a standard framework with flexible approaches allowing us to capture a diversity of emergent and context-specific impact pathways through more qualitative data.

o Prototyping

Ideas and opportunities for prototyping CoFSA interventions are emerging within UNDP portfolio of project and that of CoFSA partners such as WWF. The CoFSA Secretariat will continue exploring and pursuing these opportunities with partners to build a **portfolio of prototypes and pilots** demonstrating the application of consciousness interventions in food and agricultural systems.

UNDP is already exploring opportunities with its Paraguay Country Office, the Good Growth Partnership. Contacts have also been made with UNDP Liberia and Mongolia country offices, which have shown early interest and we expect to engage other UNDP country offices in the future (e.g. Egypt, India, Bhutan, Indonesia, etc.).

o Communication

Communication activities around the information gathered through this series of mini-workshops are underway.

Specific collaborations with partners are being developed such as with One Resilient Earth and its TERO magazine or the IDG -Follow up conference - on September 14th, 2021.

o Fundraising

Resource mobilisation to support the continuation and expansion of CoFSA activities is a central priority. The CoFSA Secretariat is exploring opportunities with CoFSA partners (e.g. Ekskäret Foundation, Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS), Awaris, etc.) to **co-fundraise** for specific collaborations.

CoFSA partners are welcome to engage with the secretariat to discuss opportunities for joint proposals, relevant donor contacts, etc.

Next steps

Following the workshop series, there will be a reflective break in CoFSA activities over the summer. We will **reconvene in September 2021** with a partners workshop, updated materials and the launch of the **Breathing & Practice Room**. We will also move forward with the **key workstreams** specified in section IV.

- **CoFSA Reconvening Workshop:** the next CoFSA workshop will be **on 28th September (3:30-5:30pm CEST)**. We invite all partners to join us for this session where we will reconnect, share an update on CoFSA progress, and present the proposed CoFSA workplan for the rest of the year, in particular the terms of reference for the Breathing room.
- **Breathing Room:** in September 2021 the Alliance will be entering into a new phase of co-creation with a group of 10 - 15 core partners. The Terms of Reference for joining the Breathing Room will be shared in September 2021 and those who want to participate and become core partners will have to formally commit to this process before the launch of the Breathing Room in October. This will be an intentional space for the core partners of the Alliance to connect deeply with one another and collaborate. Among the priorities will be to agree on a common Statement of Intent or Manifesto and on ways of working together within the alliance and developing a portfolio of prototypes and pilot projects.
- We will also move forward with specific **key workstreams** including: partners outreach, research & evidence basis, prototyping, communication and resource mobilisation (see section IV).

Appendix

- Series of Workshops

Workshop	Date & Time
First Partners Workshop	3rd March
Strategy (1)	28th April
Catalyst2030: What is your Vision of a Conscious Food System?	4th May
Breathing & Practice Room	20th May
Grassroots Perspective	14th June
Strategic Vision and Approach	18th June
Theory of Change and Evidence Base	23rd June
Community Space	5th July

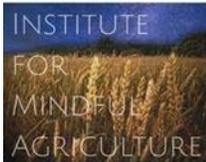
- Resources
 - Conscious Food Systems Alliance: [Concept Note](#)
 - First Partners Workshop:
 - [Slide deck](#)
 - Strategy (1) mini-workshop:
 - [Slide deck](#)
 - [Recording](#)
 - Catalyst2030: What is your Vision of a Conscious Food System?
 - [Recording](#)
 - Breathing & Practice Room mini-workshop:
 - [Slide deck](#)
 - [Recording](#)
 - Grassroots Perspective mini-workshop:
 - [Recording](#)
 - Strategic Vision and Approach:
 - [Slide deck](#)
 - [Recording](#)
 - Theory of Change and Evidence Base:
 - [Slide deck\(s\)](#)
 - [Recording](#)
 - Community Space:
 - [Slide deck](#)

- [Recording](#)
- Partners engaged in CoFSA co-creation process

Organisation	Name (s)	Link
	Rachel Lilley	https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/dges/supporting-you/useful-links/phd/ral17/
	Nadine Syarief	https://accountability-framework.org/
	Jeroen Janss	https://awaris.com/inner-green-deal-initiative/
	Joshua Konkankoh	https://betterworld-cameroon.com/
	Deepa Mirchandani, Julia Hovenier, Nick Graham	https://catalyst2030.net/
	Jane Chun	https://www.compassioninstitute.com/

 <p>Coventry University</p> <hr/> <p>Research Centre Agroecology, Water and Resilience</p>	<p>Julia Wright</p>	<p>https://pureportal.coventry.ac.uk/en/persons/julia-wright</p>
	<p>Mindahi Bastida</p>	<p>https://www.centerforsacredstudies.org/</p>
 <p>Center for Earth Ethics</p>	<p>Gopal Patel</p>	<p>https://centerforearthethics.org/</p>
<p>Dartington Trust</p>	<p>Pavel Cenkl</p>	<p>https://www.dartington.org/</p>
	<p>Luz Gonzalez</p>	<p>https://eqrefined.com/</p>
	<p>Nina Kantcheva, Anna Medri, Martin Sommerschuh</p>	<p>https://www.equatorinitiative.org/</p>
 <p>EURASIA LEARNING INSTITUTE FOR HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING SOCIAL INNOVATION & GLOBAL CARE</p>	<p>Ursula Versteegen</p>	<p>https://elihw.org/</p>

 <p>FOREST TRENDS</p>	<p>Beto Borges</p>	<p>https://www.forest-trends.org/</p>
 <p>SCHOOL OF SYSTEM CHANGE</p>	<p>Laura Winn</p>	<p>https://www.forumforthefuture.org/school-of-system-change</p>
<p>GELONG THUBTEN</p>	<p>Gelong Thubten</p>	<p>https://www.gelongthubten.com/</p>
 <p>Global Knowledge Initiative</p>	<p>Seema Patel & Jessi Bellama</p>	<p>http://globalknowledgeinitiative.org/</p>
 <p>INNER DEVELOPMENT GOALS Transformational Skills for Sustainable Development</p> <p>EKSKÄRET</p>	<p>Tomas Bjorkman & Jan Henriksson</p>	<p>https://www.innerdevelopmentgoals.org/ http://ekskaret.se/</p>
 <p>IASS POTSDAM</p>	<p>Thomas Bruhn</p>	<p>https://www.iass-potsdam.de/en</p>

	<p>Steffen Schneider</p>	<p>https://www.instituteformindfulagriculture.org/</p>
	<p>Teresa Corcao</p>	<p>https://www.institutomaniva.org/</p>
	<p>Janene Yazzie</p>	<p>https://www.iitc.org/</p>
	<p>Jill Satterfield</p>	<p>https://jillsatterfield.org/</p>
	<p>Helen Crowley</p>	<p>https://www.cfse.cam.ac.uk/directory/helen_crowley</p>
	<p>Idy Wong</p>	<p>https://www.kfbg.org/en/</p>
	<p>Jo Confino</p>	<p>https://leadersquest.org/who-we-are/people/jo-confino</p>

  <p>THE ROLE OF INNER DIMENSIONS AND TRANSFORMATION IN SUSTAINABILITY</p> <p>Contemplative Sustainable Futures</p>	<p>Christine Wamsler</p>	<p>https://www.lucus.lu.se/christine-wamsler</p> <p>https://www.contemplative-sustainable-futures.com/</p>
 <p>MIND & LIFE EUROPE</p>	<p>Gabor Karsai</p>	<p>https://www.mindandlife-europe.org/</p>
 <p>The Mindfulness Initiative</p>	<p>Jamie Bristow</p>	<p>https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/</p>
 <p>Mondelēz International</p>	<p>Susanne Mathis</p>	<p>https://www.mondelezinternational.com/Snacking-Made-Right/Mindful-Snacking</p>
 <p>ONE RESILIENT EARTH</p>	<p>Laureline Simon</p>	<p>https://oneresilientearth.org/</p>
 <p>OpEPA</p>	<p>Luis Camargo</p>	<p>https://opepa.org/</p>
 <p>Plum Village</p>	<p>Phap Lai</p>	<p>https://plumvillage.org/</p>

	Sara Farley	https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/profile/sara-farley/
	Satish Kumar	
	Helmy Abouleish, Justus Harm	https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/
	Katie Weintraub, Thais Corral	https://www.sekem.com/en/index/
	Ben Schick	https://www.sinaldovale.org/
	Rachel Sinha	https://strozziinstitute.com/
	Johannes Narbeshuber	http://systemsanctuary.com/

 <p>GOOD GROWTH PARTNERSHIP</p>	<p>Pascale Bonzom</p>	<p>https://www.trigon.at</p>
 <p>CLIMATE PROMISE A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE THROUGH BOLD CLIMATE ACTION</p>	<p>Alana Craigen</p>	<p>https://www.undp.org/climate-promise</p>
	<p>Andrew Bovarnick, Simon Cooper, Nicolas Petit, Thomas Legrand, Alice Jervoise</p>	<p>https://www.undp.org/</p>
 <p>Paraguay</p>	<p>Alfonso Fernandez</p>	<p>https://www.py.undp.org/</p>
 <p>Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government</p>	<p>Diana Reynolds</p>	<p>https://academiwales.gov.wales/pages/quick-tips-awgrymiadau-cyflym</p>
	<p>Alfred Tolle</p>	<p>https://www.wisdomtogether.com/</p>
	<p>Marina Ruta</p>	<p>https://www.weforum.org/</p>
	<p>Katrina Johansson</p>	<p>https://www.wwf.se/english/wwf-in-sweden/</p>



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