



EDUCATIONAL MODULE

Newspapers to stimulate critical food systems thinking

In a nutshell

This exercise aims to increase (high school) students' awareness about

- 1) the complexity of food systems and food system transformation,
- 2) the existence of different frames with regard to food systems transformation and how these different frames are present in their daily lives and
- 3) their own assumptions, values and interests with regard to the topic(s).

Food 2030 focus



What for?

To explore and understand the food system



For whom?

Educators; Facilitators



How long?

#2 hours

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Something to share?

Leave us a comment about this tool on the [FIT4FOOD2030 Knowledge Hub](#).

This tool was developed as part of the FIT4FOOD2030 project; find this tool and many more on the [FIT4FOOD2030 Knowledge Hub](#).

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What will you gain from this?

This exercise can be used by educators at high schools or higher education institutes to stimulate students to think about food systems in a more holistic or systemic way. It is a playful method to increase awareness and understanding about the different elements of food systems and their potential interlinkages, as well as how these elements or topics are presented in their daily lives.

Objectives of this exercise are to increase (high school) students' understanding of the concept of 'food systems' and awareness about:

- the complexity of food systems and food system transformation
- the existence of different frames with regard food system transformation and how these different frames are present in their daily lives (in the media).
- their own assumptions, interests and values with regard to the topic(s)



NEWSPAPERS TO STIMULATE CRITICAL FOOD SYSTEMS THINKING

The food system is a broad concept and could be described as *"incorporating all elements and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, as well as its disposal. This includes the environment, people, processes, infrastructure, institutions and the effects of their activities on our society, economy, landscape and climate"*¹. It is important to increase one's understanding about this concept without stimulating a feeling of paralysis.

This exercise helps to increase (high school) students' understanding of the term 'food systems' and their awareness of the complexity around food systems and food system transformation. Secondly, it aims to increase awareness about the different frames (structures of belief, perception, and appreciation) that are present in the media every single day. Thirdly, this workshop invites participants to critically think about their own background, expertise, interests and values and how this relates to their own interpretation of food system related newspaper articles.

In this exercise systems thinking refers to 'holistic thinking' or the development of a 'systemic perspective'. Developing such a perspective and developing a critical attitude with regard to one's own and others' assumptions, interests and values are considered crucial competences for (future) professionals aiming to contribute to sustainability transformations such as food system transformation.



¹ EC 2030 Expert Group (2018). A recipe for Change. An agenda for a climate-smart and sustainable food system for a healthy Europe. European Commission, Brussels, Belgium, p. 6

Thematic area

Food systems: all theme's related to it

Target audience

Students

Age of participants

13 – 25 years old

Number of participants

Max 20

Number of facilitators

1 or 2

Prior knowledge required for participation

It is beneficial if you have some knowledge with regard to major food system related problems as well as challenges related to food system transformation. It would be good to have some understanding about the importance of systems thinking for addressing complex issues such as food system transformation.

GETTING PREPARED

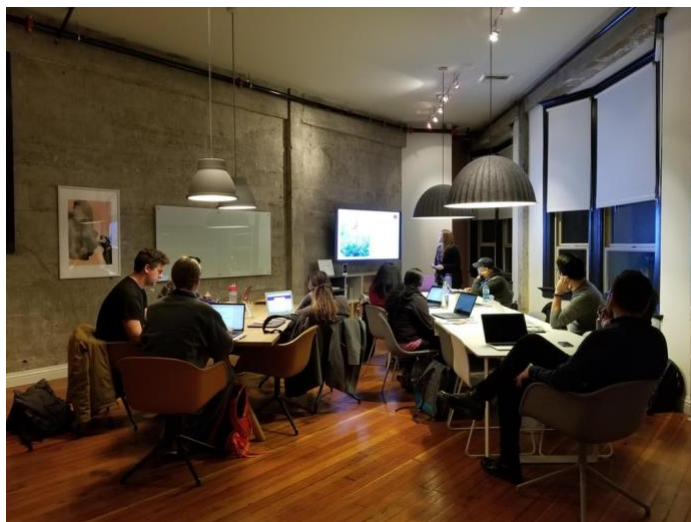
Scenario

This workshop could be integrated within a relevant course at secondary schools or universities.

If this workshop will be organized within a secondary school setting and needs to be linked to the existing curriculum, the workshop could be linked to, for example, 'civic education' or 'media studies' and could be framed as part of the development of 'critical thinking skills' in relation to the press.

If this workshop will be organized within a university setting, the workshop could be integrated within a variety of (working groups of) courses, such as courses related to (public) health, environment, economy, or sustainability more generally.

It is best to use a closed space that allows to work in groups.



Materials

- PowerPoint slide or A4 with the questions that participants are supposed to answer on post-its
- Post-its; five different colours
- Markers
- Flipchart or whiteboard
- If no preparation for participants is needed: newspaper articles (at least 2 articles for each participant)
- Food system visual(s)
- List with relevant resources in case participants or facilitators themselves would like to learn more about food systems, food system transformation, and/or framing with regard to food system transformation

Flow

Preparation: Ask participants to collect at least two different food system related articles before the workshop. Ask them to collect articles from at least two different newspapers, for example articles from a 'left-wing' and a 'right-wing' newspaper, or from a national and a regional/local newspaper. Asking participants to bring articles from different types of newspapers might help to collect and discuss a set of articles that present different problem framings and/or different pathways for transformation. If this way it might help to stimulate a lively discussion.

Alternatively (extra 20 minutes): Provide each participant with two food-system related newspaper articles from different newspapers. Those articles can be recent articles but also older ones. Ask participants to read the two articles on the spot (20 minutes).

For each of the above options:

STEP 1: Reading articles

STEP 2: Working on questions

STEP 3: Comparison

STEP 4: Presentations

STEP 5: Discussion

STEP 6: Reflection

Facilitator tips

During dialogues you as a facilitator have an important role to play to ensure the active participation of all the participants in the given time frame while also reaching the session goals. As a facilitator you need several skills and competences, such as verbal and non-verbal skills, negotiating skills, flexibility, and leadership. You will need to create an environment in which all participants feel secure, are able to speak up and give their perspective on issues being discussed. This means that you may have to stimulate some participants to speak more often, while you may have to prevent other participants to speak too often or too long. It also means that you will need to avoid discussions on issues that are not directly relevant. A brief guide with facilitation tips is provided [here](#).

In addition, resources that might be helpful for you to prepare yourself with regard to the topic of food systems, include:

- Parsons, K. and Hawkes, C. (2018). Policy Brief 31. Connecting food systems for co-benefits: How can food systems combine diet-related health with environmental and economic policy goals? WHO Regional Office for Europe, Denmark.
- EC FOOD 2030 Expert Group (2018). A Recipe for Change: An Agenda for a climate-smart and sustainable food system for a healthy Europe. EC Brussels.
- Parsons, K., Hawkes, C., Wells, R. (2019). Brief 2: Understanding the food system: Why it matters for food policy. London: Centre for Food Policy.



STEP 1

20 min

Ask participants to pair up and swap their two articles to read. So, after this step participants have read four different articles in total.

STEP 2

30 min

As soon as everyone has finished reading, ask participants to answer the following questions for all four articles individually on post-its (every question different colour). Ask participants to write the title of the newspaper article on top of each post-it.

Introduce each question briefly (2 min).

1. *Which food system related problem(s) is/are being addressed in the article?*

Note: Give some examples of food system related problems that they can think of: *environmental challenges* such as loss of biodiversity, resource scarcity and greenhouse gas emissions associated with food production and distribution, *health-related challenges*, such as obesity, *economic-related challenges* such as increasing health care costs, and *social challenges* such as increasing inequalities, urbanization and migration.

2. *Which part(s) or element(s) of the food chain are being addressed in the article (e.g. production, processing, distribution, consumption, disposal of waste)? Or a combination?* Ask participants to use post-its.

Note: Provide participants with some visuals that show the different food system components. An example of a food system visuals that could be introduced and used can be found in the appendix. This question is meant to investigate to what extent the problems addressed in the newspaper articles are linked to different parts of the food chain.

3. *What types of actors are being mentioned in the article?*

Note: Give some examples of actors or stakeholder categories, such as: citizens, consumers, policy makers, actors from industry, researchers, activists, etc. Ask participants to specify the actors or stakeholder categories, for example what kind of policy makers or researchers are being mentioned in the article?

4. *To what extent do you think there is a particular framing present within these articles? If so, what kind of framing?*

Note: For this question, you can provide participants with the following definition of framing²: "*Framing is a process whereby communicators, consciously or unconsciously, act to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner. Frames operate in four key ways: they define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. Frames are often found within a narrative account of an issue or event, and are generally the central organizing idea.*" If you would like to introduce the concept of framing during your workshop, or if you would like to learn more about framing as facilitator, you can use the following additional resources: Schon and Rein (1994): *Policy controversies as frame conflicts*, in Schon and Rein *Frame reflection. Towards the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies*, New York: Basic Books, 247 pp.

5. *Are there any other interesting or surprising aspects in the articles that you would like to share with the group?*

Note: For example, you can stimulate participants to think about funding issues in case particular studies are being mentioned in a newspaper article.

² Kuypers, J.A. (2006). *Bush's War: Media Bias and Justifications for War in a Terrorist Age*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (p. 8).

STEP 3

10 min

Ask pairs to compare their results. Do they have different answers? If so, what differences? Could they explain why they came up with different answers? Ask participants to make notes of their conversation.

STEP 4

30 min

Ask each pair to briefly present in plenary which articles they read, what they wrote down on their post-its and to what extent their answers differed. After this ask the pairs to stick their coloured post-its on a flipchart/whiteboard. Start with the post-its related to question 1 and cluster similar post-its together with the participants. For example, all post-its about production are clustered together, same for consumption, etc. Go on until all pairs have presented and all post-its have been clustered and named. In this way it becomes visible to what extent the articles discussed focus on specific problems and parts of the food system and to what extent they take a more holistic viewpoint.

STEP 5

20 min

Engage in a final plenary discussion about the results on the flipchart/white-board. Address the following questions:

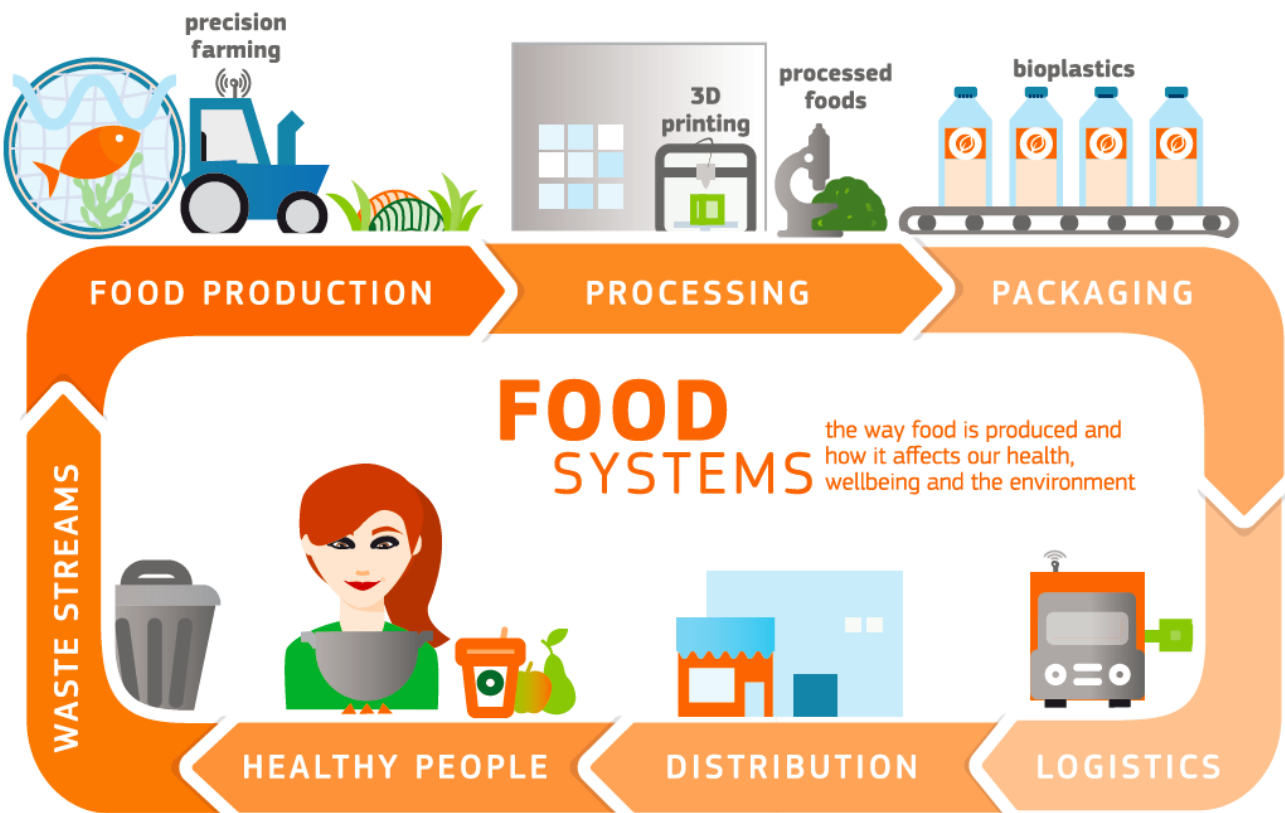
- What kind of food system related challenges or problems are mentioned in the articles?
- To what extent do the articles differ with regard to the different elements of the food system that are being addressed? E.g., do most articles address the production side of the food system or do the articles address different food system elements? Are there any articles that address different parts of the food system in the same article?
- Is there any part of the food system that was not addressed? If so, which part of the food system?
- Is there any dominant framing present? If so, what kind of frame? Do participants think this is coincidence or do they think this is representative?
- In what potential way(s) do the participants think their interpretation of a particular framing relates to their own background, interests, values or perspectives? They can think of their own study programme and study background, their experiences with doing research, etc.

STEP 6

10 min

Ask participants for their general feedback on the workshop. For example, ask participants to provide feedback on the specific activities of the workshop, the overall flow of the workshop, what they learned, whether they have any recommendations, etc. Also, provide them with some interesting materials in case they are interested to learn more about food systems, food system transformation and/or framing with regard to food system transformation.

APPENDIX. EXAMPLES OF A FOOD SYSTEM VISUAL TO BRING TO THE WORKSHOP



Source: European Commission, FOOD 2030 policy framework



Source: Parsons, K., Hawkes, C. and Wells R. Brief 2. What is the food system? A Food policy perspective. In: Rethinking Food Policy: A Fresh Approach to Policy and Practice. London: Centre for Food Policy; 2019.



Coordinated by:



Partners



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