IAFoST Scientific Roundtable Discussion on

*Consumer Behaviour and Healthy Diets*

**Professor Sir Charles Godfray - Livestock*, Environment and People -***

**Presentation and Q&A**

**Professor Sir Charles Godfray**

Director of Oxford Martin School, Oxford University, United Kingdom since 2018.

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Description automatically generated with low confidence**Was knighted for services to scientific research and for scientific advice to government in 2017. Sir Charles is a renowned population biologist with broad interests in the environmental sciences. He is interested in how the global food system will need to change and adapt to the challenges facing humanity in the 21st century…and in particular the concept of sustainable intensification, and the relationship between food production, ecosystem services and biodiversity. Professor Godfray has published in fundamental and applied areas of ecology, evolution and epidemiology. Professor Sir Charles Godfray was IUFoST Distinguished Lecturer 2020 and is a Fellow of the Academy.

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Description automatically generated](http://www.iufost.org/sites/default/files/videos/professor-sir-charles-godfray.mp4)**

**Professor Charles Aworh, Academy Council, introduces speaker Professor Sir Charles Godfray, whose presentation is titled *Livestock, Environment and People*. Click on the box to the right for video presentation.**

***Q.1****. (Charles Aworh*) **We cannot talk about healthy diets without first considering the food supply. You will agree with me that food production and security, nutrition and health, ecosystem and climate change are among the leading global challenges of the 21st Century. Given your interest in the global food system, what are the prospects, challenges, and opportunities for attaining SDG 2 Zero Hunger by 2030, especially against the backdrop of increasing food demand in developing countries with high population growth rates (exceeding 2% per annum) but the least food supply?**

***A.1*** *(Charles Godfray) I am an optimist about what we may be able to do in the future. You very clearly outlined the challenge and yes global populations are going up, but they are going up at a deacceleration rate and yes people are getting wealthier, which is a good thing as we are bringing people out of poverty. Food demand will increase substantially by mid-century, but it is now feasible to think of a time when the global demand for food will begin to plateau and may even eventually go down and so there is a challenge, but it is a finite challenge. We need to have action on all fronts. We must think about how we are going to produce more food and produce it sustainability and we must look at that challenge, the production side challenge -produce more food and do it sustainably - and do it in a way that will not destroy nature and will enable us to keep climate change below 1.5. We must bear down on food waste. We waste a lot of food, but we must not convince ourselves to think of it as a silver bullet and that is all we need to do. We need to think about global governance and how we can better govern the global food system. And Charles you being in Nigeria, you know the enormous cities like Lagos and the importance of making certain they having continuing food supply. We need to have hard questions about diet choice and diet change and especially in the developed world. if we do have actions on all fronts, I am optimistic that we can maintain food security. But I would say one other thing. You mention the SDG of Hunger. We have made important progress on hunger over the last 20 years, but the downward trend has stopped in the last 5 or 6 years and the reason for that has been outside the food system. It has been due to conflict – i.e., Northern Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria and other areas so if we want to meet the SDG on hunger, we must do lots of things within the food systems, but we also have to confront these difficult political and geo-political conflict issues.*

*Q.2.(Charles Aworh)* **There are differences in food consumption patterns in different parts of the world. Do we have information on differences in consumer preferences with respect to meat in developed and developing economies? What are the factors that may be driving such differences?**

*A.2 (Charles Godfray) As far as I am aware, if one looks at meat consumption in Europe and North America, then depending on exactly which data you look at, it is either constant or beginning to go down. In Europe and certainly in the UK there is evidence that meat consumption is going down. The part of the world where it is increasing most is China and East Asia but then again there is some indication that the increase is beginning to tail off and very interestingly the latest China guidelines recommend limits on meat consumption. The data in India is a little less clear and meat consumption in India is affected by religious issues as well but I think there is evidence of meat consumption going up there. You will know the data for Africa better than me, but It is going up among the new African middle classes but of course very many people are still too poor to have meat. So yes, there is a global increase in meat consumption. I would say though that the vast majority of meat is eaten in the rich world and high-income countries and if there is to be a reduction in meat consumption that is where the action needs to happen.*

***Q.3*** *(Charles Aworh)* **What are your perspectives on the growing interests among millennials, ecologists and other groups on meat footprint and sustainable diets and how it could influence consumer preference in the near future?**

***A.3*** *(Charles Godfray) This is a really important question. We need to have better data on environmental footprinting, and we need to have much more granular data as well. We know that red meat is worse than white meat and that beef tends to be the type of animal source food that has the greatest environmental footprint but even within that category there is a huge variation and in order to incentivize specific behaviour and in order to allow consumers to push some of that behaviour we need much better data and better methodologies, and we need it to be quite granular. Certainly, one of the projects we have at Oxford is trying to address that issue and other groups around the world are trying to do the same.*

*That to me is one of the challenges going ahead thinking about the Food Systems and how to make it better and I think once we have that data, then all people - I am really encouraged by how enthusiastic millennials are about making a difference- I think all people can make a difference – However, I would go back and say that it is unfair to expect the consumer to do all the heavy lifting and we are also looking for governments to bring in incentives and regulations to help us eat a healthier and more environmentally friendly and sustainable diet.*

***Q.4*** *(Charles Aworh)* **Other than the more conventional sources of meat like cattle, sheep, goat, pig, poultry etc., game (wild animals and birds that are hunted for food) are often considered delicacies in Africa and other cultures. What do you consider as the implications for the ecosystem, biodiversity and sustainable, healthy diets?**

***A.4 (Charles Godfray)***

*Charles, in some ways as a Nigerian you are better placed than me to answer this. I know the cultural importance of bush meat throughout West Africa. I know that if bush meat hunting is done in a completely unrestricted way, then it can destroy ecosystems, it can be very harmful, but where it is done in a sustainable way then it can both maintain biodiversity and meet some of the some of the cultural needs of local people. I know that there are some great examples of where this is done in Nigeria and also Ghana, but these are relatively small projects compared with what is needed.*