

Defining Food Systems Diplomacy

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Masters of Public Health

University of Washington

2020

Committee:

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Nutritional Science

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**Abstract**

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A narrative and evaluative framework that covers multi-sector negotiations that influence the functioning of the food system can be conceptualized as Food Systems Diplomacy. Historically, multi-sector negotiations related to food have been connected with the production and movement of raw food goods, general food production, and food trade. These negotiations and agreements have prioritized economic outcomes for the most part. The movement of commodities and foods through global trade networks has contributed to improved GDP and wealth creation, for most countries. However, it is a matter of some concern that parallel issues of public health, health equity, environmental impact, climate change, and social and cultural welfare have not received equal emphasis. In today's world, these issues need to be considered.

The Food Systems Diplomacy framework provides a language and process with which to evaluate the consequences and trade-offs in a more holistic way. In particular, it allows us to recognize that economic outcomes have been the singular priority to date. We explore the consequences of this and provide a framework that includes additional priorities that are relevant to health, society and the environment. Diplomacy has evolved and in today's world, the influence of transnational food companies, multinational agricultural, food, and beverage companies is undebatable.

We present an evaluative framework for food systems diplomacy that includes four problem domains of food systems analysis: health and food security, social concerns, climate change/environment, and the economy. Four US free trade agreements are evaluated against this framework. We find that although several free trade agreements include language around protecting the environment and labor force, they are often included to augment and support

economic goals. Nutrition, food, food systems, the connection between the agriculture food products and the environment, and the influence and importance of food in social cultural settings are not mentioned. We then examine the case of the *EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems* and evaluate its suggestions against the Food Diplomacy Framework. The social and economic domains are not considered in their analysis.

Key words: Food systems diplomacy, globalization, food trade,

## Introduction

The global food system<sup>1</sup> as a result of globalization has created a dichotomy of sorts: it has improved access to food in parts of the world where growing seasons are short<sup>2</sup>, transformed the way we think about, purchase, cook, and discard food, and is also responsible for numerous negative social and environmental consequences. Globalization has been a catalyst for international food trade which is an incredibly complex topic. Nearly every country in the world relies on the global import of food to fulfil some aspect of their food needs. A popular example is coffee. Nearly 100% of the world's coffee comes from just five countries<sup>3</sup>. The US alone exports \$131 billion worth of food and beverage goods annually<sup>2</sup>.

Food trade involves numerous and interdependent actors. The global food system has been shaped by nations and institutions through negotiations and decision making, and policy and political changes at the world scale. Actors involved in negotiating the deals for the global trade of food, generally within free trade agreements, include national governments that, typically, negotiate in favour of the country and its polity and can be influenced by transnational corporations. Transnational corporations—multinational agricultural, food, and beverage companies— participate by offering goods (i.e., the food item to be traded) and often representatives of these corporations provide information and opinions that may pressure the system for policies that economically advantage their business.

The global food system is, in very large measure, an industrial system and may not always embody the values required to prioritize the common good<sup>4</sup>. The system often prioritizes economics and efficiency, sometimes at the expense of social, environmental and health-based values. In the last couple of decades, a deeper understanding of the environmental, social, and population health issues interconnected with our global food system are emerging. Environmental challenges on the production side include loss of biodiversity, healthy ecosystems polluted by chemical runoff and fertilizers, and a multitude of impacts related to climate changes. Social issues include the poor working conditions and rights of farmworkers, reduced potential of producer livelihoods, and high rates of food insecurity and malnutrition despite food abundance.

The food system also churns out easily accessible, calorie-dense food that is cheaper than more nutrient-dense food, contributing to the growing burden of diet-related chronic disease. These challenges will continue to mount, and populations, economies, and individuals will not be equally affected. Essentially, the food system is multi-sectoral by

nature, yet the dominant influence appears to be economic. Importantly, economic goals – economic growth, employment, economic freedom - do not always align with public health concerns and imperatives such as population health, access to healthy food, farmworker conditions, and the well-being of citizens.

We lack a cohesive narrative with which to understand how the economic, environmental, social, and health domains intersect to influence food systems. This gap prevents us from having productive conversations. In particular, about how to shift diplomatic negotiations from being solely focused on economics to negotiations that also incorporate the environmental, social, and population health potentials of the food system and that mitigate unintended negative consequences.

The need to resolve this gap is becoming more urgent. The effects of climate change will continue to worsen, the role of traditional decision makers is rapidly changing, and food democracy, which argues for the right of all humans to have access to safe, nutritious and justly produced food<sup>6</sup>, is emerging as a powerful construct. There is a need to develop a common language to discuss and evaluate decisions that influence the food system.

This paper is divided in four parts. Part One reminds us what traditional diplomacy is, how it has evolved, and the growing space for Food Systems in the field of diplomacy. Part Two defines what Food Systems Diplomacy is and how it can be utilized. Part Three Introduces the Food Systems Diplomacy evaluative framework that can be used to assess Food Systems Diplomacy processes. Part Four elaborates on a case study, examining how promoting Sustainable Healthy Diets can be analyzed within a frame of Food Systems Diplomacy.

## ***PART ONE –***

### **What is Diplomacy**

#### ***What is Diplomacy***

Classically, the study and development of diplomacy is housed in International Relations and is defined as the art and practice of conducting dialogue and negotiations between representatives of different states<sup>7,8,9</sup>. There are set goals and strategies that guide state relations with the outside world and are generally aimed at avoiding overt conflict,

including armed conflict. Often, traditional diplomacy is about swaying a decision without coercion and force.

There is a diplomacy toolbox which often includes rules on negotiations for treaties, agreements, and alliances<sup>7,8,9</sup>. A more traditional way of approaching diplomacy includes the use of diplomats<sup>7</sup>. The roles of these positions in the United States typically fall under the Department of State and specifically are led by the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Under the State Department the Foreign Service deploys diplomats, including agricultural attaches that are a part of the Foreign Agricultural Service<sup>10</sup>. The agricultural attaché focuses on global food, agricultural trade, and food security<sup>10</sup>. Diplomacy has expanded further to include more than traditional methods of conducting negotiations, as we explore below.

### ***How has diplomacy evolved***

Space for a new form of Diplomacy:

*“Diplomacy has its own unique culture, ways of doing things, puzzles and contradictions. Indeed it is this mix of rich tradition and capacity and/or necessity for innovation that makes the analysis of diplomacy so exciting and salient.” –Andrew F. Cooper, The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*

Diplomacy has been innovated on and transformed over time. Traditional state-to-state diplomacy has evolved dramatically. Innovation and progress have led to new forms of diplomacy such as preventive diplomacy, public diplomacy, economic diplomacy, trade diplomacy, and health diplomacy. See Box 1 for definitions of these.

Within the realm of food, culinary diplomacy and gastro diplomacy provide diplomats and country representatives tools for soft-power-influence. Culinary Diplomacy and gastro diplomacy are quite different than the food systems diplomacy being introduced in this paper. Culinary diplomacy is a subset of public diplomacy that uses the power of cultural food and shared meals to influence decisions. For example, in 2012 the US state department in collaboration with the James Beard Foundation launched the Diplomatic Culinary Partnership and appointed chef ambassadors to promote U.S. culinary techniques and U.S. agricultural products in different countries,<sup>11,12</sup>.

A famous historical example of culinary diplomacy and a public relations stunt took place during WWII. At that time, the US congress resisted Franklin D. Roosevelt’s desire to

financially support England during the war against Germany. FDR invited King George and Queen Elizabeth to visit the US and invited them over for hot dogs at his private estate. The day after, newspapers ran the story portraying the King and Queen as laid-back leaders, changing their persona in the eyes of the American people and softening their image. Soon after, Congress agreed to help fund England's war efforts.<sup>13</sup>

A more contemporary example of culinary diplomacy is the "food waste" menu created by Sam Kass, former White House Chef under the Obama administration, and celebrity chef Dan Barber, which was offered to world leaders at the United Nations in 2015. On the menu was a landfill salad, made up of vegetable scraps, apples rejected from regular retail, and chickpea water – the liquid drained from cans of chickpeas, burgers and fries where the burger bun was made with the corn product of biofuels<sup>14</sup>. The meeting was to build momentum before the Paris talks on climate change and the meal reflected the importance of agriculture and food waste in the climate change discussion<sup>14</sup>.

These are examples of gastro and culinary diplomacy and the soft power that food wields. Soft power is the ability of a nation, actor, or institution to influence without coercion<sup>15</sup>. Food systems and in particular the global food system have tremendous soft power. Furthermore, the power that food exerts is fungible which means that it is not necessarily issue specific. Citizens everywhere must eat and, for the most part, heads of nations are willing to take appropriate measures to feed their people. This means negotiating outside of the realm of food to achieve food related goals.

#### *Growing Body of Influential Actors:*

What has changed and how are experts considering diplomacy differently now? Notably, diplomacy now includes transnational companies. That is, large corporate entities have the ability to engage in diplomacy independently and influence the conversations taking place between states. Modern diplomacy no longer exists solely between representatives of states.

Large transnational companies, such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo., Nestle, Kellogg's, and Kraft Heinz, amongst others, operate across borders and on a global scale. As a result, these companies often interact with governments and institutions, such as regional development banks. Because of these interactions, transnationals partake in diplomacy similar to governments and civil societies<sup>16</sup>. For example, they do so by employing people to be "corporate ambassadors" such as public relations representatives, engaging in negotiations

and partaking in summit meetings with government officials<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, corporations have been coordinating their trade measures with The Codex Alimentarius, a document of internationally adopted food standards monitored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN<sup>17</sup> for some time.

Corporations “*cannot escape politics nor pretend to be politically neutral*”<sup>16</sup> and learning how to participate in diplomacy is a requirement for their existence and corporate survival. ‘Corporate diplomacy’ is considered to be a form of public diplomacy.

#### **Box 1. Definitions of Types of Diplomacy**

##### **Preventive Diplomacy**

Preventive diplomacy is action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.<sup>18</sup>

##### **Public Diplomacy**

Traditionally, a form of diplomacy where governments target the public of a foreign state.<sup>19</sup> However, in recent years, the definition of public diplomacy has evolved and has not entirely been agreed upon. It is generally looked at as the “*public and interactive dimension of diplomacy which is not only global in nature, but also involves a multitude of actors and networks*”<sup>19</sup>. Corporate diplomacy is a type of public diplomacy.

##### **Economic Diplomacy**

Economic diplomacy is the use of the full spectrum economic tools of a state to achieve its national interests.<sup>20</sup>

##### **Trade diplomacy**

Trade or commercial diplomacy uses influence to develop economic trade relationships.<sup>21</sup>

##### **Global Health diplomacy**

Global health diplomacy brings together the disciplines of public health, international affairs, management, law and economics and focuses on negotiations that shape and manage the global policy environment for health. <sup>22,23</sup>

Coca-Cola Corporation has faced serious backlash against its water usage<sup>24</sup>. Its ongoing response to the backlash can be considered within the realm of public diplomacy and an effort to improve its public relations. For example, in 2007, Coca-Cola’s Chairman and CEO pledged to the public to work with the World Wildlife Fund to replace the water they use in production<sup>25</sup>.

Several food corporations engage in community focused philanthropic activities. In 2007, Dole Food Company was lauded for its commitment to better communities in Thailand<sup>25,26</sup>. These activities are considered to be part of a company’s *corporate social responsibility* mandate. The effectiveness and actual intent of these mandates is frequently

criticized as being a band-aid solution or a public relations stunt without any real impact. However, many corporations are well aware of these criticisms and understand that their approach to public diplomacy efforts must result in real outcomes. This means balancing self-interest with community interest if they want to be perceived as fair and appropriate by the public and their stakeholders<sup>27,16</sup>.

In an effort to have more effective social mandates, transnational companies actively form *partnerships* with civil society organizations to enhance their social agendas. For example, Nestle no longer touts a Corporate Social Responsibility agenda and instead focuses on ‘creating shared value’<sup>28</sup>. The focus is on benefits for shareholders and society. Nestle’s partnerships with the United Nations to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is one way they state that they are creating shared value<sup>28</sup>. Transnational corporations also directly influence national politics and foreign policy. This influence comes through the use of monetary donations to political organizations, campaigns, and in lobbying efforts<sup>29,30,31,32</sup>.

## ***PART TWO –***

Diplomacy’s utility has evolved, and new forms of diplomacy have been created in the realm of global health and the culinary sciences. What is missing is defining a form of diplomacy for food systems.

### **Food Systems Diplomacy**

#### ***What is it?***

Food Systems Diplomacy (FSD) is the process to create and influence negotiations through which nations, intergovernmental organizations, and non-state actors, in particular transnational companies, address and respond to decisions or agreements influencing food systems and its domains directly or indirectly to achieve other political, economic, or social objectives. Food Systems Diplomacy should be used when states, inter-governmental organizations, and non-state actors pre-empt and respond to food systems related decisions, negotiations, and challenges.

Scholars of health diplomacy identify specific contexts in which health diplomacy can be utilized indirectly<sup>33</sup>. Similarly, actors also engage in Food Systems Diplomacy indirectly, every time they use food systems concepts and mechanisms to achieve objectives that are non-food related, such as integrating food systems topics into diplomatic negotiations of a different non-food related topic. For example, in 2018, the re-negotiation of the North

American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) began in an effort to return manufacturing jobs back to the United States, to jumpstart wage growth, and was part of the Trump Administration's aggressive tariff strategy. Although this was the focus, re-negotiating NAFTA gave an opening for American soft-drink and food corporations to place pressure on the US government to add a clause to prevent warning labels on high sugar and high fat foods in Mexico and Canada. Although the negotiations began for non-food reasons, the terms had effects on population health.<sup>34,35</sup>

International organizations devoted to food security and health have considered food and food systems issues in their diplomatic negotiations in some form for quite some time. The mere existence of The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations is evidence of this. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also participated in negotiations associated with food in several ways. First, it provides space for member country delegates to negotiate with each other.

Second, the WHO has an arguably progressive point of view on health and related issues and influences governments because of this view. For example, the WHO has published guidelines on how to market food to children which includes stringent guidelines<sup>36</sup>. Although these are, at best, suggestions because the WHO does not have governing authority over any country these guidelines are utilized as tools for negotiations in other contexts.

Historically, WHO was instrumental in tobacco control and provided negotiating leverage against tobacco companies<sup>37,38,39</sup>. A more contemporary example of the WHO engaging in diplomatic influence is during the 2020 COVID pandemic by supporting messaging from China on downplaying the risk of coronavirus early on<sup>40,41,42,43,44</sup>. Although these are non-food related examples, they exemplify the power the WHO has in peripheral issues.

Finally, multiple organizations can participate in food systems diplomacy. These include but are not limited to government agencies of states, international bodies like the World Health Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and transnational corporations. Often, the agenda of these bodies are different from each other and can be at odds with one another by prioritizing different values and outcomes. For example, transnational companies are typically driven to prioritize quarterly profits, while democratic governments typically prioritize some form of public good, economic stability, or long-term economic growth.

Diplomacy is utilized to bring agreement to these parties and Food Systems Diplomacy can help bring these parties to agreement while considering food systems related issues. Furthermore, as food systems related issues such as climate change, food waste, animal production, and labor become more clear and transparent, transnational corporations that fail to address these issues are at risk for public criticism and vulnerable to de-legitimization of their political role in society<sup>27</sup>.

### ***Why do we need it?***

We need it to characterize and identify food systems related diplomacy that is already taking place and provide a narrative and framework for its future. By naming it and defining it, we give this form of diplomacy a language and a process with which to consider the consequences, trade-offs, and a new way more holistic way to think about food systems. In particular, it allows us to recognize how economics have been the focal point and allow diplomatic actors to harness the potential of food systems in a manner that improves more than just economics.

This type of diplomacy will help explain the consequences and trade-offs involved in trade deals, defining nutritious and sustainable diets, and the processes of food production to post-consumer waste. Importantly, it gives space to critically examine the food system beyond merely a government role and also critically examines the role and influence of corporations and other influential bodies.

This is *not* about prioritizing food systems and making it the central aim for negotiations and decision making. We are arguing for the inclusion of understanding the far-reaching implications of food systems and, as a result, the trade-offs and consequences that take place with respect to decisions that affect the food system.

### ***Is Food Systems Diplomacy New?***

Diplomacy involving food issues either at the forefront or periphery has existed since the dawn of diplomatic activities. Food related negotiations will continue to happen and increasingly take the forefront of important governance decisions. What we are noticing is a trend in these historical and current examples of food related diplomacy that either pushes to the side or do not take as seriously the dynamics of food systems. Food Systems Diplomacy *does* take those dynamics into account. We are offering a framework to think through these issues and urging that not only do we need current leaders to think about these issues but also suggesting we need a new set of professionals that make it their livelihood.

**PART THREE –**

**Evaluative Framework**

How do we evaluate the issues areas that fall under Food Systems Diplomacy? The evaluative framework identifies four problem domains: health and food security, social, the environment, and the economy. To give FSD theoretical grounding, we have created a “theoretical taxonomy”<sup>45</sup> to explain how it works. To create this evaluative framework and identify the problem domains, we have used the National Academy of Medicine’s and National Research Council’s Framework for Assessing the Effects of the Food System<sup>1</sup> to test the robustness of our principles. In using their framework, we have made sure that we have considered all domains to account for system dynamics and complexities. The problem domains include health and food security, social, climate change and the environment, and economics. Within each domain we evaluate four dimensions of effects: quantity, quality, distribution, and resilience.

<b>Table 1. Food Systems Diplomacy Evaluative Framework</b>		
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Health and Food Security</b>	There is a relationship between food, nutrition, diet and noncommunicable diseases. The levels of evidence are variable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Decisions are informed about the relationship between food and health</li> <li>(2) Decisions prioritize the health of all population groups</li> <li>(3) Decisions prioritize that there is <i>enough</i> high quality and nutritious food for all populations and that people can access and use these foods</li> <li>(4) Decisions that address and prioritize health, nutrition, and good food are designed in such a way to last and be resilient. For instance, promotion of infrastructure and policies that support nutritious diets for future generations</li> <li>(5) Decisions take into account occupational health, such as the health of farmworkers and laborers</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<p>Cultural practices often include food and celebrate the role of food.</p> <p>Governance decisions must understand the important relationship between food and culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Promote culturally appropriate sustainable diets</li> <li>(2) Decisions related to food and the global food supply change minimize harm to cultural practices related to food for all populations</li> <li>(3) Decisions that prioritize food systems and culture are designed in such a way to last and be resilient</li> <li>(4) Decisions understand the impact on the livelihood of farmworkers and laborers</li> </ul>

<b>Climate Change and The Environment</b>	Governance decisions must take into account that several aspects of food system influence climate change and the environment. Including and not limited to: agricultural practices, global transportation of food and food productions, and all negative externalities associated with food production, transport, and waste.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Promote environmentally sustainable diets</li> <li>(2) Food Systems decisions are designed to protect and restore the environment and its natural resources. Including and not limited to: soil, water, air, forest, wildlife, and energy</li> <li>(3) Decisions are designed to limit and reverse climate change</li> <li>(4) Decisions are designed to help and protect low income populations that are and will be overwhelming impacted by climate change</li> <li>(5) Decisions that prioritize food systems and environment are designed in such a way to last and be resilient</li> </ol>
<b>Economy</b>	Decision makers understand the role of the food system and the economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Food and the global movement of food ideally build wealth for all nations</li> <li>(2) Food system related decisions improve economic ties between actors</li> <li>(3) Food system related decisions identify areas for economic development and long-term economic growth</li> </ol>

**PART FOUR –**

**Case Studies: Free Trade Agreements and Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems**

We assess the utility of Food Systems Diplomacy by examining two case studies. The first example assesses free trade. Free trade in the United States is an excellent case to reflect on how governance decisions can impact all aspects of a food system. Second, the desire for healthy diets from sustainable food systems<sup>46</sup> on the part of some governments, academics, and other actors is also an interesting issue area to analyze. As such, the second example examines recent literature published to promote healthy diets from sustainable food systems.

**Trade Case Study: Definitions and Assumptions**

Trade, which relies on diplomatic relations between two countries and high-level negotiations, is the focal topic of several food governance publications, public health papers, and grey literature in the last several years<sup>2,47,48,49,50,51,52,53,54,55,56,57,58</sup>. Trade uniquely allows us to understand direct action being taken by governments that influences the food supply and allows us to compare it to literature on nutrition. More recently, Sharon Friel et al<sup>59</sup> examined

in great detail the intersection between international trade and food systems and reflected on its complexity in creating sustainable food systems: *“Trade agreements can, and do, interact with actions across the food system aimed at improving malnutrition and climate change in various ways. Achieving a trade policy that promotes healthy and sustainable food systems is not a straightforward technical matter.”*<sup>59</sup>

For the purposes of this paper we evaluate four US free trade agreements to understand how the evaluative framework can be applied to past agreements. Trade agreements are uniquely positioned for us to examine food systems diplomacy because they allow us to examine what two or more nations prioritize in a negotiation.

We recognize that diplomatic negotiations take place behind closed doors and the outcome is a snapshot of the lengthy negotiation that took place. We understand that a country with less power could have been prioritizing more than one domain of the food system, but with less power were unable to negotiate in its interest. As outside evaluators, the nuances of such scenarios are missed and as such we can only evaluate the terms of the agreement reached.

### **Analysis of US Free Trade Agreements and the Domains**

We examine four US Free Trade Agreements as a way to assess how the domains of Food Systems Diplomacy have been considered in the past. Each trade agreement was reviewed in detail for several key words and then assessed to see if the domain was mentioned and in what context. The following scale is used to assign a rating to each domain in the agreements:

- **Poor:** No mention. 0 mentions or the term is mentioned out of context of food systems.
- **Fair:** Mentioned in passing. >1 mention.
- **Good:** Mentioned in detail. >1 mention. There is detail and explanation associated with the mention of the word.
- **Very Good:** Mentioned with a plan. >1 mention. The mention is followed by a detailed plan.

The following keywords were assessed for each domain: *Health*, “health”, “nutrition”, “food”, “labor”, “labour”; *Social*, “culture”, “social”, “practise”; *Climate Change and the Environment*, “environment”, “climate change”, “animals”, “labor”, “labour”; *Economic*,

“economic”, “economy”, “wealth”, “investment”, “development”. Each agreement was also evaluated as a whole and contextualized within its historical context.

<b>Table 2. Food Systems Diplomacy Assessment of US Free Trade Agreements</b>					
<b>Food Systems Domains</b>		<b>Health and Food security</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Climate Change and the Environment</b>	<b>Economic</b>
<b>US FTAs</b>	<b>US-Panama TPA</b> <sup>60</sup>	Poor	Poor	Fair	Very Good
	<b>NAFTA (1994)</b> <sup>61</sup>	Poor	Poor	Fair	Very Good
	<b>Singapore FTA</b> <sup>62</sup>	Fair	Poor	Fair	Very Good
	<b>Jordan FTA</b> <sup>63</sup>	Poor	Poor	Fair	Very Good

Although several free trade agreements now include environmental and labor implications, they are often included to augment and support economic goals rather than to protect or improve resiliency. Furthermore, by including sections on environment and labor, the free trade agreements are more palatable and as a result are more agreeable by both parties.

In general, the balance is skewed mostly towards economy. Other domains are prioritized less. The agreements have no mention of food systems, and specifically the influence and changes in agriculture that will take place because of climate change. No formal food systems assessments took place before these trade agreements were signed and/or before they engaged in food related trade. Interestingly, the free trade agreement with Singapore included more language on health, environment and labor and we observe that this agreement was between two relatively wealthy countries with power in negotiating.

### **Case Study: Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems**

The study of healthy diets from sustainable food systems has become a popular topic. The Eat Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets and Sustainable Food Systems is an example

of a well-funded and research academic paper on the study of sustainable diets<sup>46</sup>. We review the Eat Lancet commission on sustainable diets with the Food Systems Diplomacy evaluative framework and categorize it as directly addressing a Food Systems issue. However, we cannot ignore the soft power influence of larger transnationals involved in the writing and funding of this paper.

The goal of the commission was to find scientific consensus and define targets for healthy diets and sustainable food production. In defining these targets, the commission prioritized health and environment. However, by its own admission, it failed to account for economic or social costs: “*The EAT-Lancet Commission has not calculated the economic or social costs of the recommendations*”<sup>46</sup>. Yet, the commissioners stated that economic and social domains would ultimately see value. Failing to account for these costs was a major oversight. Since its initial publication, an analysis has been conducted and found that although populations in high income countries could afford this diet, populations in lower-income countries cannot<sup>64</sup>.

Moreover, the WHO withdrew its support for the report due to its omission of social domain impacts<sup>65</sup>. Furthermore, The Eat Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems has come under severe scrutiny for possible influence of corporate sponsorship, failing to define and characterize sustainable food systems, and grossly overlooking the impact of their suggestions on farmworker and food system labor.

Going forward, Food Systems Diplomacy principles should be considered as a central part of the commissions’ strategy. By checking each recommendation against the evaluative framework, these types of reports would be more robust and equitable.

## **Conclusion**

Food Systems Diplomacy fills a growing gap in the field of diplomacy and provides a framework to understand food systems issues at the level of global governance. This creates space for more cross-sector and cohesive conversations to take place and provides greater clarity to comprehend the trade-offs involved in food systems decision making. At its best, it will ensure that global political agreements can no longer be only about economics. Food Systems Diplomacy will illuminate parts of the food system that have been overlooked, it will allow influential actors and policy makers to reassess a nation’s stance towards its food system. This lens also pushes us as citizens and academics to ask critical questions of nations and corporations.

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