

Funder Dialogue Meeting Summary

Opportunities at the Intersection of
Climate, Oceans, and Food Systems

JUNE 20-21, 2024



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On June 20–21, 2024, Meridian Institute and the Stanford Center for Ocean Solutions, with support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation, convened a group of eight philanthropic representatives in Stanford, California.

The objectives of the convening were to:



Co-define and clarify the motivation for, scope of, and goals that drive philanthropic investments in blue food systems from the perspective of foundations currently engaged in global fisheries and aquaculture.




Build alignment and understanding among a group of funders about the areas of intersection across food systems, climate resilience, and ocean conservation and the opportunities to position blue foods within these priorities.



Identify a targeted set of near- to medium-term opportunities for engagement with a broader set of foundations to increase focus on blue foods as part of climate-resilient food systems.

In advance of the meeting, Meridian conducted 23 interviews with potential participants to learn more about their current perspectives on blue foods and reflections on funding in the space. Through these conversations, and in consultation with the planning team, it became apparent that those philanthropies already engaging with blue foods needed to more clearly articulate the problem and what the value proposition might be for making blue foods more central to the “future of food” agenda. From there, the group would be able to propose a more meaningful path forward for engaging additional foundations focused, for example, on land-based food production or health and nutrition or food security. As a result, the meeting was attended exclusively by representatives of philanthropies that are actively funding work on fisheries and aquaculture.

During the two-day convening, participants explored their common interest in increasing focus on blue foods and the role of blue foods in climate-resilient food systems more broadly. They discussed key challenges and opportunities in the blue foods space and considered the most compelling intersections for engagement with other philanthropic work in climate, food systems, and oceans. This report describes the major takeaways from the convening and the group’s vision for a path forward for engagement, including targeted outreach to specific funders and funder groups, elevating blue foods at specific events such as NYC Climate Week, and developing materials and collateral to support this engagement.

A photograph showing a person in a red jacket and blue gloves harvesting seaweed from a boat on the ocean. The seaweed is yellow and brown, and the water is blue with white foam. The person is in the foreground, and the seaweed is in the middle ground, extending into the water. The background is a bright blue sky and ocean.

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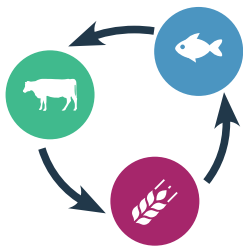
Motivation and Goal for Expanding Blue Foods Engagement

Participants began the meeting by exploring together their motivation and goals for increasing attention on blue foods. The Center for Ocean Solutions and Meridian shared presentations on the key role of blue foods in meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the themes and concerns raised by other philanthropies in interviews. Participants co-defined the goal of increasing focus on blue foods, determined approaches for engaging additional philanthropies, and discussed potential paths to address concerns.

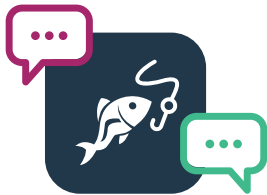
Problem Statement	Despite acknowledgment by the FAO and numerous research and UN bodies that responsible blue foods have a crucial role to play in building a healthy, low carbon and climate-resilient sustainable food system to feed a hot and hungry planet, blue foods remain chronically underinvested in and underrecognized by investors and decision-makers.
Goal	The group aims to capitalize on the power of blue foods to help reshape food systems to be sustainable, inclusive, and healthy.
Philanthropy's Role	Philanthropy can integrate and normalize the inclusion of responsibly produced blue foods in food systems transformation efforts through communications, targeted outreach, and co-funding opportunities.

The Approach

One of the central focuses of the conversation was the group's "ask" or goal for engaging other funders in the space. Participants explored a variety of levers to mobilize action and elevate blue foods on the agendas of decision-makers that matter, as well as how to articulate the importance of doing so. The group agreed on the following two points:



Food systems transformation, more generally, is the most viable entry point for engaging others on blue foods based on the scale of the need. In other words, the "ask" is not for other donors to alter their strategies and focus, but to open their food transformation tent to include foods produced by wild capture fisheries and aquaculture. The collective goal is to integrate blue foods into visions for transforming the existing food systems and ensure sustainability across all production systems.



This requires **elevating blue food within broader conversations** and highlighting areas of intersection with existing work to demonstrate that inclusion need not be difficult or require a drastic re-think of a donor's investment strategies. Private philanthropy and public donors can have a catalytic effect on public policy-makers, private finance flows, and decision-makers for additional interest, participation, and action towards holistic food system transformation.



A few key narratives emerged to frame blue foods, such as the following:

- » Blue foods funders are in common cause with land food funders. Our goals are fundamentally the same. Blue foods need to be part of the conversation from the start to ensure that all food systems shift responsibly and sustainably.
- » Achieving biodiversity goals will require addressing food, as food systems are one of the largest threats to biodiversity. In the water, this will require action to ensure the sustainability of blue food production.

Having identified food systems transformation as the key target, participants discussed specific ways to make the case for ensuring that blue food is an active and equal part of that transformation. Two potential means of engagement include:

<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Opportunities to integrate blue foods into ongoing and emerging topics around food systems, especially in defining key terms to ensure integration of land and aquatic foods, including "regenerative," "nature-based solutions," and "equity."</p>
<p>Compelling Areas</p>	<p>Compelling areas for blue foods to advance the food systems conversation given work already underway, where alignment or exchange across blue and land foods could catalyze progress. Topics in this category include nutrition and food security; traceability and transparency; shifting diets; subsidies and incentives; jobs and livelihoods; corporate and public procurement; smallholders and Indigenous peoples and local communities; habitat restoration; and equity.</p>



Path Forward

The group collectively shared excitement and dedication to work together towards the shared vision of a transformed food system. Building on this momentum, participants discussed the potential to continue collaborating under the umbrella of an existing, like-minded entity with shared goals, as opposed to creating a new or separate coalition – in large part because the near-term intent is not to single out blue foods, but to integrate it into ongoing food systems forums.

Some key opportunities to continue to build momentum include:

OPPORTUNITY	SPECIFICS
<p>Participation at key events to build momentum and ensure that high profile panels, public policy dialogues, private sector solutions, etc., addressing food systems transformation include blue foods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NYC Climate Week in September 2024 • United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 30th Conference of the Parties in November 2025
<p>Development of materials that elevate blue foods' profile and clearly state the value of its inclusion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking points • One-pagers for use by philanthropic funders • Communications collateral • Landscape mapping of food, climate, and oceans funders
<p>Targeted outreach to key funders and funder groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals and groups to be identified and determined by the group

