



WHERE: **Warsaw, Poland**

WHAT: **Citizens' Deliberation Event**

WHEN: **18–19 May and 15–16 June 2024**

## POLAND CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON FOOD POLICY

During two weekends (**18–19 May and 15–16 June 2024**), 65 Polish citizens gathered to join in a Citizens' Assembly in Warsaw. The topic for deliberation was food policy in Poland, focussing on how to ensure high-quality, environmentally friendly food by 2030. The event was part of the EU research project [REAL DEAL](#),<sup>1</sup> and was organised by [Fundacja Pole Dialogu \(The Field of Dialogue Foundation\)](#), a Polish NGO with expertise in the concept, design, and operation of deliberative events, including the respective facilitation techniques; with input from the [Institute for Sustainable Development \(ISD\)](#), a Polish NGO with long-standing expertise in food, agriculture, environment, health and other related policies; and the [Research Institute for Sustainability \(RIFS\)](#).



In early May 2024, prior to the Assembly, ISD supported by RIFS organised a Group Delphi for topic preparation and required expertise. The ISD actors' intimate knowledge of the landscape (spanning relevant areas and disciplines as well as governmental bodies) was very helpful for assembling the 16 experts who took part in the Delphi.

This was the second nationwide Citizens' Assembly in Poland. As with the first one, it was not commissioned by the national government; However, for the first time, representatives of the responsible ministry were present at the event.

## BEFORE THE EVENT: PREPARATION

### TOPIC FRAMING

Food is one of the core elements of the European Green Deal and is often discussed in Polish media and political debates. In the run-up to the Assembly, several farmers' protests against the European Green Deal were organised in Poland. The Citizens' Assembly subsequently connected to this debate about agriculture and focused on food policy in Poland, and specifically on how to ensure high-quality and environmentally friendly food by 2030. The core question addressed was: **'How to ensure that by 2030 the food consumed in Poland is of high quality and produced in an environmentally friendly way?'**

The framing of the topic was supported by ISD's expertise in sustainable development and all areas at stake, ranging from environment, ecology, and biodiversity to relevant aspects of agriculture, food, nutrition and health, and economics in the wider sense.

### RECRUITMENT

The random selection of participants was conducted in two phases. The majority of people were contacted through randomly selected phone numbers, while only hard-to-reach groups were recruited via an online panel. The second round focused on selecting specific citizens to participate in the Assembly while ensuring the group composition was both randomised and diverse, mirroring Polish society. The final group comprised 65 citizens representative of the Polish population in terms of age, gender, educational level, and place of residence. Not all invited participants showed up, with 58 people attending the first weekend. As the organisers wanted people to join *all* sessions, those who missed the first weekend were not invited to the second one, in which 52 people participated. All participants were paid on an hourly basis for their attendance. Any specific mobility, assistance, or food requirements were catered for. Participants with childcare or assistance needs were invited to bring their families or accompanying persons to Warsaw. These family members, however, did not participate in the Assembly.

### KNOWLEDGE PREPARATION – SUPPORTED BY A GROUP DELPHI

A handbook was prepared by the organisers, with information on the topic and on the Citizens' Assembly, sent to all participants beforehand, and published on the [REAL DEAL multilingual online platform, which had a dedicated area for the Polish Assembly](#).

To support knowledge preparation and knowledge building, the Citizens' Assembly was preceded by an online Group Delphi on 7–8 May 2024. The aim of a such a Delphi panel is to provide an overview of the plurality of expert views on the topics at stake; to identify topics where consensus exists or convergence can be achieved; and those where differing assessments of facts, interpretations, and measures remain. Sixteen experts with diverse backgrounds shared their opinions on several questions related to the food system.

The entire first weekend was dedicated to 'education': Citizens were informed in various ways, and discussed – and hence built knowledge on – the discussion topics (see below).

The results of the Group Delphi were presented during the second weekend (see below). During the first weekend, some experts from the Delphi group gave presentations (see below). For the selection of experts to give input at the Assembly it was an advantage that there had been the earlier Delphi event, that explored and selected experts from a wide range of disciplines and schools of thought.

In between the two weekends, there were also opportunities for participants to become more familiar with the topic, including the use of the [REAL DEAL multilingual online platform](#).

An icebreaker exercise to learn each other's names during the first weekend.





Discussions in small groups following the expert presentation during the first weekend

## DURING THE EVENT

### KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

The first weekend was intended to be educational. It started with an introduction to the topic, followed by ten presentations of 20 minutes each. These resulting five sessions were designed in an innovative way: Two experts with different or opposing views, from different schools of thought (similar to the Group Delphi) were paired. They gave presentations on specific areas and topics (on biodiversity, environmental aspects, agricultural practice, economics, nutrition, health, etc.) and received questions from the audience as a pair. Participants were divided into small groups of around 6-8 people, engaged in discussions with one another, shared knowledge, and then decided collectively to select 1-2 questions from each group, which were then posed to the pair of experts. Discussion questions were: What seemed particularly important or necessary to you? What surprised you? What do you disagree with? What would you like to emphasize or pay special attention to during the upcoming presentations?

In between the two weekends, there were also ways for people to familiarise themselves and gain more knowledge about the topic. Optional webinars were organised, and participants were given links to documentaries to learn more about the topic.

The second weekend focused on deliberating and developing a series of recommendations. The weekend started with a short presentation on the results of the Group Delphi organised by the ISD.

The key opinions were presented on which most food experts agreed, and also topics on which they differed. Some participants of the Citizens' Assembly were surprised that the experts did not come with a uniform opinion. It was explained that experts' opinions may differ depending on their background and expertise; Topics on which there is no expert or political consensus are ideal for citizens' deliberation, opening the debate for wider society to engage in decision making and setting priorities. Such insights served to encourage participants to deliberate the issues.

There was also an open call to organisations – public institutions, NGOs, informal groups and other entities, or individuals whose activities are related to the topic of the panel or who are directly influenced by the issues raised during the Assembly – to provide the panellists with their position on the topic, in the form of a short video or written material. Four civil society organisations responded to the open call and submitted videos to be shown at the Assembly: [Polish Society for the Protection of Birds](#), [„Dobrze” Food Cooperative](#), [Compassion in World Farming Poland](#), [Green REV Institute](#).

Furthermore, the last day of the Assembly was attended by the Deputy Director of the Department of Food Safety and Veterinary Medicine, representing the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Her presence and input were of great symbolic relevance for the importance of the process and recognition of the effort and work of the participants in proposing public policy solutions.



## FACILITATION AND INTERACTION

On the second weekend, several smaller group deliberative sessions took place comprising 6 to 8 people. Each subgroup was facilitated by a professional moderator. A rotation system was used, ensuring that participants engaged with different groups of people. In addition to group deliberations, there were also occasions when participants worked individually or in pairs. Rules were introduced at the beginning of the event, including sharing one's views and being open to those of other people. This was described as one of the main strengths of Citizens' Assemblies. Moderators focused on providing space for the voices of all participants and ensuring that the discussions allowed equal time for all participants.

Initially, moderators noticed that not everybody wanted or felt free to actively contribute. Participants subsequently recognised that there was space to express their views, and so started to speak up more. As the organisers reflected, this might relate to personal capacity and feelings of safety, which underlines the usefulness of the efforts to create 'safe spaces'.

Both weekends combined knowledge sharing with collaborative decision making to address food policy in a structured and participatory manner (see agendas of the two weekends below).

Participants at the first weekend



### Agenda 1<sup>st</sup> weekend:

Day 1	
45 minutes	<b>Introduction</b>
15 minutes	<i>Break</i>
75 minutes	<b>Expert inputs on climate change and food policy</b>
50 minutes	<i>Lunch break</i>
70 minutes	<b>Expert inputs on food production in Poland</b>
20 minutes	<i>Break</i>
55 minutes	<b>Breakout group discussions</b>
30 minutes	<b>Wrap-up</b>

Day 2	
10 minutes	<b>Introduction</b>
95 minutes	<b>Expert inputs on food production</b>
20 minutes	<i>Break</i>
70 minutes	<b>Expert inputs on food processing</b>
45 minutes	<i>Break</i>
75 minutes	<b>Expert inputs on food labelling and marketing</b>
45 minutes	<i>Lunch</i>
65 minutes	<b>Knowledge mapping and reflections</b>
25 minutes	<b>Wrap-up</b>

## Agenda 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend:

### Day 1

70 minutes	<b>Introduction: Recap of 1<sup>st</sup> weekend and input on principles of “good” recommendations</b>
15 minutes	<i>Break</i>
70 minutes	<b>Review of expert recommendations and creating new ones</b>
50 minutes	<i>Lunch break</i>
85 minutes	<b>Verification of recommendations</b>
20 minutes	<i>Break</i>
40 minutes	<b>Verification of recommendations</b>
10 minutes	<b>Wrap-up</b>

### Day 2

70 minutes	<b>Refining recommendations</b>
20 minutes	<i>Break</i>
70 minutes	<b>Review of revised recommendations and trial voting</b>
15 minutes	<i>Break</i>
50 minutes	<b>Panel discussion and prioritisation of recommendations</b>
45 minutes	<b>Final voting</b>
50 minutes	<i>Lunch</i>
70 minutes	<b>Feedback from public authorities</b>
30 minutes	<b>Wrap-up</b>



Small groups at the second weekend – developing recommendations

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations were formulated and voted upon. Those with more than 80% support were incorporated in the final set of recommendations. Overall, there was a high level of agreement. The least popular proposal still received 44% support. In total, 32 recommendations reached the 80% support threshold (see Annex).

**“Before participating in the panel, my knowledge in this area was quite limited, and the topic didn’t engage me. Now that has changed. Even after the May meeting, I started shopping differently.”**



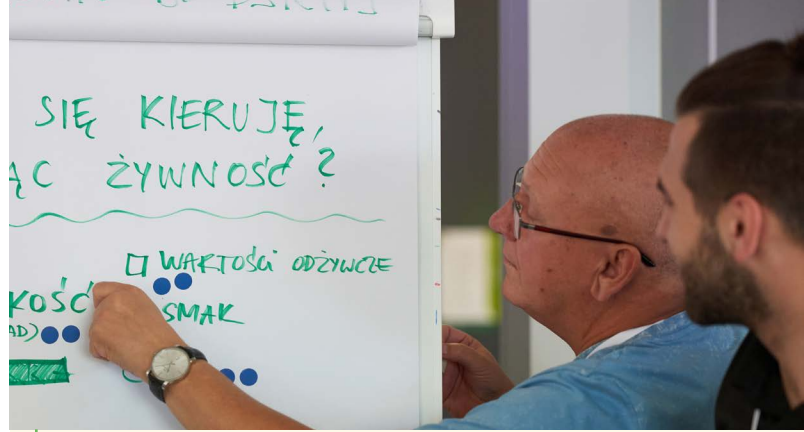
## AFTER THE EVENT

### DOCUMENTATION AND FEEDBACK

The organisers provided a summary report with the recommendations for publication and dissemination as well as an internal methodological report, including a summary of the evaluation feedback from the meetings for the research side.

Participants were asked to complete a survey after the event. All respondents stated that everybody was treated equally and fairly during the Citizens' Assembly. Of the 49 completed surveys, 23 were extremely satisfied with the outcome of the Assembly, 21 were satisfied, and the remaining 5 were slightly to moderately satisfied.

The organisers regarded the connection with the Delphi panel as being successful. They also saw that the Assembly encouraged stronger belief in local democratic processes.



Selecting the most interesting solutions from expert presentations

### FOLLOW-UP

The summary report with the recommendations was sent to the participants and the Ministry, and was published on the [REAL DEAL multilingual online platform](#).

The organisers of the Citizens' Assembly invited relevant ministries to be close to the process. A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development leadership took part in the final day, expressing appreciation for the participants' engagement and commenting on the recommendations. The Ministry indicated support for a follow-up meeting.



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In the REAL DEAL project, researchers and civil society organisations worked together on green transition and democracy. They conducted research on deliberative methods to find out what works best for involving citizens on the European Green Deal.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON FOOD POLICY IN POLAND

(May and June 2024)

RECOMMENDATION	SUPPORT
11. I recommend that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education expand general education on food and promote high-quality/organic food.	96.2%
90. I urgently recommend that public authorities (ministries according to their competence) tighten standards and regulations concerning the quality of conventional food. In particular, concerning pesticide residues (not only individual substances, but also cumulative content), as well as fertilisers, antibiotics, and other substances harmful to humans according to current scientific indications.	96.2%
88. I recommend increasing the frequency and scope of food inspections to ensure compliance with applicable standards, and mandatory publication of the results of these inspections.	94.2%
124. I recommend that more checks on the labelling of food commodities be carried out and that stricter penalties be imposed for misleading consumers.	92.3%
125. I recommend the introduction of legislation to abolish taxes on food donated free of charge to those in need.	92.3%
63. I recommend introducing classes in kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools on healthy eating habits and food production and processing, taking into account the principles of environmental protection, e.g., by cultivating a school garden, harvesting crops, and processing and selling products during school festivals.	92.3%
127. I recommend the creation of a unified certification system for food.	90.4%
16. I recommend building consumer trust through government promotional and information campaigns on organic food and labelling of high-quality foods, and providing marketing support for Polish producers of high-quality food.	86.5%
3. The authorities should take strategic decisions as a matter of urgency to create a coherent, effective, and tight market surveillance system managed by a single authority (e.g., the Food Safety Inspectorate) and a network of inspections and laboratories in the agri-food sector, with appropriate legal basis and sufficient funding, in order to ensure the high quality of food products placed on the market.	86.5%
138. I recommend increased control over the prescribing of antibiotics by veterinarians.	86.5%
134. I recommend introducing effective financial incentives for the implementation of pro-environmental technologies in agriculture.	86.5%
140. We recommend that public authorities promote reusable, biodegradable, and alternative packaging (e.g., hemp, cardboard) in order to reduce and ultimately eliminate aluminium and plastic packaging as soon as possible.	86.5%

29. I recommend simplifying administrative regulations in order to incentivise farmers to engage in agricultural and organic production and to promote short supply chains.	<b>86.5%</b>
30. I recommend legislative changes in order to support and facilitate processing directly on farms.	<b>84.6%</b>
34. I recommend that the Ministry of Agriculture harmonise regulations on plant protection products and fertilisers with those of the European Union countries by the end of 2025.	<b>84.6%</b>
64. I recommend involving consumer organisations in legislative processes related to agricultural and food policy.	<b>84.6%</b>
22. I recommend the introduction of a system of “green public procurement” supported from the state budget, in order to improve the supply of organic food to kindergartens, schools, and other places of mass catering, giving priority to organic produce and to producers from the nearest region.	<b>84.6%</b>
128. I recommend the introduction of legal restrictions on the advertising of highly processed products.	<b>82.7%</b>
18. Public awareness of food waste should be increased by providing technological support in the form of mobile applications. Create and promote applications to help consumers plan their purchases, monitor the expiration dates of products and their shelf life, eco-friendliness, composition, and country of origin. Such applications should make it easier for consumers to familiarise themselves with these product parameters, and should be available free of charge to every consumer. Manufacturers should also be obliged to adapt products to work with such applications.	<b>82.7%</b>
133. I recommend increasing funds for scientific research aimed at developing effective and efficient technologies for healthy and environmentally friendly agriculture, so that the results of this research serve to solve the problems faced by farmers and other producers (including organic producers) in Poland.	<b>82.7%</b>
73. I recommend that the Ministry of Agriculture create a subsidy programme for farmers to purchase/ implement new, environmentally friendly technology and R&D services.	<b>82.7%</b>
49. I recommend supporting farmers and businesses to invest in processing technologies that allow for longer storage, better use of raw materials, and upcycling of by-products.	<b>82.7%</b>
74. Improve communication between institutions such as CDR, ODR, research institutes (e.g., NRI, PAN, Łukasiewicz Institute), increasing access to information, and simplifying the advisory system for farmers in order to promote innovations in agriculture.	<b>82.7%</b>
50. I recommend the introduction of financial instruments to support voluntary actions by farmers in the transition to organic production techniques, such as subsidies for farmers who have switched to the use of biological agents and other protection techniques without the use of chemicals.	<b>82.7%</b>
4. I recommend that the authorities strive to develop organic production and the market for organic products in Poland, taking into account the objectives of the European Union “Farm to Fork” strategy.	<b>82.7%</b>
141. I recommend the creation of a label-reading system that will enable consumers to read food information in a standardised and transparent manner, e.g., a smartphone app.	<b>82.7%</b>
15. I recommend promoting a planet-friendly diet in school canteens – and to introduce pilot programmes for public schools.	<b>82.7%</b>
82. I recommend financial and promotional support for small-scale family farms involved in organic production, including support for on-farm processing, and development of local markets and bazaars, as well as municipal market halls, in order to shorten supply chains.	<b>80.8%</b>
28. I recommend that authorities implement a social campaign aimed at educating consumers and sellers on the sale of food that does not meet visual and aesthetic criteria but which is safe for consumption, e.g., “imperfect vegetables and fruits”.	<b>80.8%</b>
43. I recommend increasing the quality control of conventional food at all stages of food production and distribution. Control at the production stage should include respect for animal welfare (e.g., compulsory grazing; ban on the use of GMO feed).	<b>80.8%</b>
1. I recommend that the authorities introduce a comprehensive programme of financial support for agriculture. This should include payments for the provision of public goods, ecosystems, and high-quality food – not only for production.	<b>80.8%</b>
135. I recommend the creation of legal regulations and financial incentives for the development of food quality systems.	<b>80.8%</b>