

## Priorities for social science and humanities research on the challenges of moving beyond animal-based food systems

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sciences and humanities. The conclusions of the process draw attention to fundamental tensions at the heart of the subject matter that should be given more sustained consideration in future research, notably whether or not animals should be farmed for food, and the need to extend the exercise to engage a range of other researchers and non-academic actors including those whose livelihoods currently depend on farming animals for food.

#### Research prioritisation exercise

The Sutherland Method has come to prominence over the last decade as a participatory approach, engaging both researchers and non-academic stakeholders, to identifying and prioritising research questions in particular fields of enquiry including those which address societal grand challenges such as biodiversity loss, food supply and security (Sutherland [2009](#), [2011](#), [2012](#); Pretty et al. [2010](#); Ingram et al. [2013](#)). Named after William Sutherland, who has played a leading role in developing and reporting the method, it has subsequently been utilised successfully in fields as diverse as animal research (Davies [2016](#)), legislative science advice (Akerlof [2019](#)) and the human microbiome (Greenhough et al. [2020](#)). A number of methods exist to elicit expert views on matters of concern, e.g. the Delphi method, the James Lind Alliance (JLA) approach used in medical research (e.g. Hasson et al. [2000](#)), The James Lind Alliance [2020](#)) and systematic literature reviews that map research and gaps in a certain field of enquiry (Petticrew and Roberts [2006](#)). We chose the Sutherland Method because it is specifically designed to support the collaborative development of research agendas through a combination of survey and face-to-face interactions between relatively small groups of participants.

In designing the distinct phases of our research prioritisation exercise we were guided by earlier exercises but translated them to our needs in working with social sciences and humanities researchers. It is acknowledged that the inclusion only of researchers in this process, albeit academic leaders in the research area, is a departure from the Sutherland Method and those of the Delphi and JLA methods as originally conceived. However, this is an appropriate, initial stage of collaborative research prioritisation within the context of a dispersed area of enquiry. As explained in the section Introduction, the deliberate focus on the social sciences and humanities provided a dedicated space for these disciplines to frame research questions without feeling constrained to accommodate the concerns of other disciplines and agendas, thereby helping to create research capacity but also build coordination amongst scholars to support system-wide change. In addition, the focus is just

Stages	Tasks	Number of researchers involved
1. Online survey (May 2019)	Identification of 10 most important research questions by each participant. Commenting on the area of research interest by each participant. First grouping of research questions into research themes on the basis of the survey results.	Survey sent to 30 researchers, who were asked to circulate it to their networks as well 19 answers received
2. Deliberative workshop in UK (June 2019)	Short presentations of the research history of the participants. Prioritisation of the research questions. Collective discussion on the definition of the area of research interest.	16 researchers
3. Rewording of priority research questions and classification of research themes (July, August 2019)	Rewording and clarification of the prioritised research questions. Drafting a text on the definition of the area of research interest.	Two lead authors
4. Deliberative workshop in Finland (September 2019)	Short presentations of the research history of the 16 researchers participants. Further iteration of the priority research questions. Discussion on the draft text describing the area of research interest.	
5. Renement of research questions and themes	Further renement of the prioritised research questions and research themes.	Two lead authors
6. Collaborative writing	Two lead authors produced the first manuscript to which the other authors contributed. The revisions to the text were made by the two lead authors, and then discussed, read, and approved by the others.	30 researchers

In the fourth stage the questions and the text defining the area of research interest were subject to further deliberation in a half-day workshop held in Tampere, Finland. This workshop was held allowing for a collaborative writing process between 30 of several pre-congress workshops organised in association with the conference of the European Society for Agriculture and Food Ethics (EurSafe). The invitation to the workshop was sent to conference participants. In addition, several Finnish scholars were invited directly to secure a breadth of participation. In total 16 researchers took part in the workshop. Participants received an advance the list of priority research questions and the commentary on the nature and scope of the field of research enquiry results. developed during stage three of the process. The academic profile of participants was slightly different to the first workshop which reflected in part the ethics focus of the conference, attracting both humanities and social science scholars including from philosophy, political science, sociology, geography and ecological economics. This had a notable impact on the nature and focus of the discussion. For example, participants were much more critical of the 'de-animalising' framing in part because this has a negative meaning for some food and animal ethicists. Like that workshop, all career stages were represented, and most participants were female. Participants were invited to discuss and make suggestions for developing the draft text, developed in stage 3 on defining the research area. They were also asked to discuss each of the questions in detail, e.g. to make suggestions about rewording and other forms of editing and encouraged to identify gaps in the research questions. In the Tampere workshop, all participants discussed the questions together instead of dividing into smaller groups.

Subsequent to the workshop, the fifth stage the lead authors undertook a further renement and consolidation of the questions. For example, several questions were reworked to enhance their clarity and cogency and to change their emphasis from future situations to the study of present actions and interventions. In the sixth stage the lead authors circulated a draft text of this

Defining an emerging area of research interest  
In both the Nottingham and Tampere workshops we discussed how research that is beginning to coalesce around a move beyond animal-based food systems could be referred to and conceptualised. In the invitation to the exercise, we entitled the area of enquiry as 'de-animalising the food system' which, following discussion amongst participating researchers, led to the adoption of the more dynamic wording 'beyond animal-based food systems'. We elaborate this decision below and discuss how participants made sense of the nature and scope of research in this area, including its complexity and contention, the geographical locations of empirical research, and the role for inter- and trans-disciplinary research approaches.

From 'de-animalising the food system' to 'beyond animal-based food systems'  
The initial framing of 'de-animalising the food system' is derived from the idea of the animalising of food systems (Fourat and Lepille 2017) or meatification (Weis, 2007, 2015) of diets, i.e. the significant increase in the number of animals used in food production globally and associated with the intensification of production systems. 'Animalising the food system' means using more animals and more intensively than it is

















