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# Democratising and Decolonising Food and Nutrition From Science to Society

In 2024, the NNEdPro Global Institute for Food, Nutrition and Health and the International Academy of Nutrition Educators, in partnership with *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention and Health*, will be organising the 10th edition of the International Summit on Food, Nutrition and Health. Following nine successive summits that have sought to strengthen the evidence base in key gap areas within the field, the 10th Summit aims to elucidate the topic of *'Democratising and Decolonising Food and Nutrition: From Science to Society'*. This year marks a significant milestone in fostering inclusivity, equity and collaboration within food and nutrition research, education, practice and policy. Each year, summit proceedings are published in peer-reviewed journals, and the 10th Summit will go a step further to enhance global cooperation through a series of calls to action and advocacy papers on democratising and decolonising the discourse surrounding food and nutrition ahead of 2025, the final year of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition.

The concept of 'democratising' involves broadening the conversation to encompass a diverse array of perspectives, bridging the gap between traditional knowledge systems and contemporary scientific research, while 'decolonising' entails examining the historical influences of specific world regions and institutions on research directions, educational content, policy development and clinical guidelines, fostering inclusivity and acknowledging the contributions of all stakeholders, especially those from historically underrepresented regions and communities. By highlighting the significance of integrating traditional, indigenous and local food practices with global nutrition science, particularly in lesser-resourced settings and focusing on underserved populations, the Summit seeks to enrich understanding and address disparities within the field.

This notion aligns with the growing discourse on food democracy, which has gained prominence over the past three decades, mainly within nutrition and global health, as introduced by: [www.nnedpro.org.uk/summit](http://www.nnedpro.org.uk/summit). However, it is essential to acknowledge the interconnectedness of related concepts prevalent in alternative food systems literature, such as 'food justice' and 'food sovereignty,' all aimed at addressing food and nutritional inequity issues. Fundamentally, food democracy entails redistributing power, enabling citizens to reclaim influence over food systems through active participation. Nevertheless, despite the centrality of individual autonomy in food democracy, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the mechanisms that facilitate the empowerment of individual community members.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

The need for a transformative approach, such as democratisation, is underscored by the work of scholars such as Pimbert,<sup>4</sup> who advocates for achieving food sovereignty, agroecology and biocultural diversity as means of expanding democracy and freedom in food systems. However, challenges persist, as the lack of conceptual clarity surrounding food sovereignty often hinders its practical implementation and weakens its potential as an alternative paradigm to food governance.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, community involvement in nutrition education design is frequently overlooked despite its importance in shaping policies and outcomes. Tim Lang<sup>6</sup> introduced the concept of food democracy, emphasising citizens' rights to influence decision-making processes in food systems. While the idea gains traction as a social movement, its application to vertical programmes, like nutrition education, remains limited.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, adopting a deliberative food democracy perspective can provide insights into designing more democratic interventions.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, the Summit endeavours to clarify definitions, identify gaps and opportunities and highlight critical areas for growth and collaboration across research, education, practice and policy pillars. By examining existing studies and successful models, the Summit aims to uncover strategies that promote inclusivity and equity in food and nutrition. Ultimately, the vision is to facilitate a future where interdisciplinary communities linked through food and nutrition collaborate inclusively, leveraging diverse knowledge and perspectives to effectively bridge the gap between science and society.



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In line with the nine Summits preceding this event, all proceedings of our 10th Summit, including submitted and successful abstracts, will continue to be published in peer-reviewed journals. The pre-summit workshop and roundtable proceedings from Belfast, Northern Ireland (July 2024 – free to attend and open to all delegates – but with limited places) are designed to provide a structured platform for collaboration and idea exchange, setting the stage for impactful discussions during the upcoming Summit. A plenary session will feature key theme leaders for Summit 2024, who will share insights and perspectives from existing case studies. The agenda also includes commentaries and panels, where updates from each of the 10 NNEdPro-IANE Regional Networks spanning over 65 countries will be presented, followed by a synthesis of key themes and an outline of the next steps. These proceedings aim to foster collaboration, facilitate idea generation, and lay a solid foundation for meaningful dialogue and action during the main summit events in Kolkata, India (December 2024).

The Summit proceedings in Kolkata, India, will offer a meticulously crafted programme to facilitate meaningful expert and stakeholder dialogues on emergent themes clustered from Belfast, UK. Commencing with the Inaugural Day on Tuesday, 17th December, the Summit will begin with a press conference followed by a grand Opening Ceremony and Keynote Sessions and concluding with a Gala Dinner featuring culinary delights produced by the multi-award-winning NNEdPro Mobile Teaching Kitchen International Initiative ([www.mtki.org](http://www.mtki.org)). Moving on to Day 2, 18th December, the focus shifts to ‘community nutrition’. Plenary Sessions unfold across multiple parallel theme clusters. Simultaneously, an extensive exhibition is expected to commence alongside the scientific sessions. Day 3, 19th December, continues the discourse on ‘clinical nutrition’. Plenary sessions mirror the format of the previous day,

with parallel sessions across five theme clusters, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the subject matter aimed at identifying opportunities to strengthen the evidence base across nutrition science to reflect global and underserved populations better and identifying areas where extrapolation of evidence from wealthier countries presents key weaknesses in the ability of science to serve society equitably. The exhibition will remain a focal point, providing attendees additional insights and networking opportunities. Finally, Day 4 (20th December) will see the synthesis of findings from the preceding sessions in a plenary session, leading to a draft white paper as a call to action and further advocacy. The Summit will conclude with a closing ceremony, marking the end of formal proceedings and inspiring the implementation of knowledge exchanged and connections forged throughout the event.

**Through its two-tiered approach – comprising pre-summit proceedings in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and the main Summit in Kolkata, India – the event is poised to facilitate conscious dialogue on critical issues. By expanding the conversation to include diverse perspectives and integrating traditional knowledge systems with contemporary scientific research, the Summit aims to bridge gaps and address disparities within the field. With a focus on enhancing global collaboration and leveraging diverse expertise, the Summit seeks to identify strategies that promote inclusivity and equity across research, education, practice and policy. Furthermore, with a research thesis on the same topic set to provide further insights, the Summit's significance in addressing the critical need for such discussions becomes even more pronounced. In conclusion, the Summit represents a pivotal opportunity to bring home equity and inclusivity into food and nutrition to strengthen our scientific approaches as we seek to better serve society across the globe and without borders.**

**1st July 2024:** Pre-Summit Workshop & Roundtable Discussion at Ulster University Belfast Campus or online. This hybrid event offers the flexibility to attend either in person or virtually. However, please be aware that due to limited capacity, spaces for in-person attendance are limited and will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

**17th to 20th December 2024:** Main Summit Event: Democratising and Decolonising Food and Nutrition: from Science to Society at the Science City Convention Centre in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. This hybrid event offers the flexibility to attend either in person or virtually.

To learn more about the Summit, please visit [www.nnedpro.org.uk/summit](http://www.nnedpro.org.uk/summit)

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