

# TABLE

[www.tabledebates.org](http://www.tabledebates.org)

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# Overview of TABLE

- We're a think tank based at the University of Oxford, Wageningen University and Research, and the Swedish University of Agricultural Science
- We explore **contested issues** in food systems with a particular focus on **values, beliefs** and **context**
- We publish **explainers** on major food systems topics, **blog posts** on individual research projects, **letterbox debates** between stakeholders with different perspectives, a fortnightly **newsletter** of important food systems research, a **research library** of papers featured in the newsletter, **podcasts** featuring interviews with researchers and stakeholders, and a **jobs and events board**, and host events



# Resources for undergrads

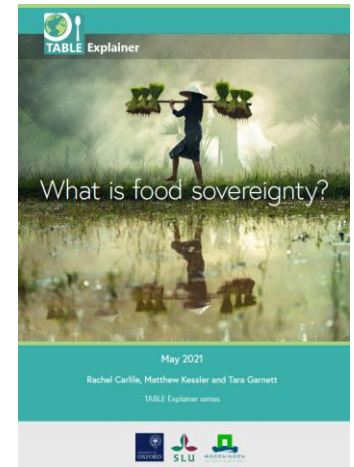
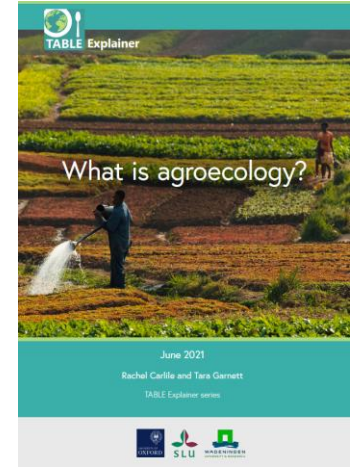
- We have a variety of resources suitable as readings or other course material for undergraduate level students
  - explainers
  - explainer summaries
  - podcasts: **Feed** and **Meat: the Four Futures**

All our resources are available on our website - [www.tabledebates.org](http://www.tabledebates.org)

# Explainers

- Cover contested concepts in agriculture and food systems
- PDFs are 20-30 pages long (including references)
- also available embedded on the website
- accessible level for undergraduates (and interested non-experts)
- peer-reviewed by domain experts

**LANDING PAGE:** <https://www.tabledebates.org/explainers>



# Explainers

- Cover the fundamentals: the **what**, the **why** and the **who** of different movements and concepts
- But also look at the contested parts:
  - what do stakeholders disagree about?
  - what kinds of evidence do different sides rely on?
  - are there different assumptions behind different claims?
  - what are the values behind different understandings?

LANDING PAGE: <https://www.tabledebates.org/explainers>



A shade-grown coffee plantation in Brazil.  
Photo by Projeto Café Gato-Mourisco via Unsplash.

#### 4. Keeping living roots in the soil

The main idea here is that plant roots 'leak' photosynthetic sugars into the soil, which feeds the soil microbial community. This is a key mechanism for increasing carbon inputs into the soil which is the key determinant in increasing levels of carbon sequestration (Jones *et al.*, 2009). There are other benefits to maintaining living root and plant systems over the full year. These include increasing nutrient availability for uptake by future plant roots, and greater aeration, drainage, and water infiltration capacity of the soil (Kaspar & Singer, 2011). Options for keeping living roots in the soil include integrating overwinter cover crops into arable rotations, and resting pasture with sufficient residual heights rather than overgrazing, particularly during the winter.

#### 5. Integration of animals and cropping systems

Livestock can be integrated into arable systems by grazing them on temporary grass-based leys, and by including forage crops such as brassicas in the rotation, as well as cover crops. Although measures that reduce crop yield (e.g. switching from autumn- to spring-sown crops to allow a forage crop) or totally eliminate crop production in a given year (e.g. a temporary grass ley) may result in compensatory cultivation elsewhere, this


could in part be mitigated by reorientating livestock production to forage grown in mixed grass-arable systems rather than feed produced from exclusively arable systems. Measures such as temporary grass-based leys increase soil carbon stocks in arable rotations and there is some evidence that grazing livestock on these may achieve modest further increases in soil organic content compared to stock-free rotations (Teague & Kreuter, 2020). However, if arable systems are stocked using 'additional' livestock rather than simply animals redistributed from other areas, then the increase in emissions from ruminant enteric fermentation would likely far exceed any arising soil carbon sequestration benefits. Nevertheless, where the risks of compensatory cultivation or increases in livestock numbers can be mitigated, better integration of livestock and cropping systems is likely to result in environmental benefits compared to current conventional production which is typically spatially segregated (Jordan *et al.*, 2022). Our piece on feed-food competition explores these debates in greater detail (Brewwood & Garnett, 2020).

The role that livestock animals, particularly ruminants like sheep and cattle, should play in the food system has been a source of major contestation (Brewwood & Garnett, 2023; Garnett *et al.*, 2017). By attempting to re-cast livestock animals as part of a diverse, sustainable, natural and traditional way of farming (Cusworth *et al.*, 2022), there are concerns that regenerative agriculture is problematically unengaged with now-mainstream concerns about the outside impact meat and dairy products have on the warming footprint of our diets (Dutkiewicz, 2023). These disagreements can be understood in the terms provided by the discussions around *less and better* meat. Whilst regenerative agriculture majors on how and why livestock can be managed in a *better* way (livestock-arable integration, mixed species grazing, rotational grazing etc.) there are concerns that without

# Explainer summaries

- 2-3 page versions of the full explainers
- good revision or reference material for students
- available only for a few of our explainers so far, but more are on the way!

LANDING PAGE: <https://www.tabledebates.org/explainers>



NOVEMBER 2022  
**WHAT IS THE NUTRITION TRANSITION?**

This piece is a brief summary of the TABLE Explainer 'What is the nutrition transition?' and aims to illuminate key debates surrounding the nutrition transition model.

**What is the nutrition transition?**

The nutrition transition is a model developed in 1992 by American academic Barry Popkin. It describes four sequential stages of diet, physical activity, and levels of disease that accompany changes in economic development, family structure, and demographic diversity in diverse places at different times:


- Stage 1: Hunter-gathering diet
- Stage 2: Early motor-intensive agriculture with periods of famine and disease
- Stage 3: Industrial farming as agriculture becomes more industrialized and disease rises
- Stage 4: "Western" style diets high in calories, sugar, animal fat, and processed foods, as well as sedentary lifestyles
- Stage 5: Healthier diets and more active lifestyles

The term nutrition transition is commonly used by researchers to refer to the shift from Stage 2 to Stage 4, as the world has experienced the nutrition transition in the 1950s and 1990s. Several factors are believed to drive the nutrition transition, including economic development, increased access to nutritious foods, and also with increases in sedentary lifestyles and industrialized manufacturing processes.

Many countries in the Global North completed the nutrition transition during the industrial revolution in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In contrast, very countries in the Global South only experienced the nutrition transition in the 1950s and 1990s. Several factors are believed to drive the nutrition transition, including economic development, increased access to nutritious foods, and also with increases in sedentary lifestyles and industrialized manufacturing processes.

**Included in this summary**

- Singular vs. multiple transitions()
- Convergent vs. divergent dietary outcomes
- Development
- Limitations of the model



SUMMARY SHEET | Table Debate | PAGE 01



NOVEMBER 2022  
**WHAT IS MALNUTRITION?**

This piece is a brief summary of the TABLE Explainer 'What is malnutrition and its role as a greenhouse gas and methane as a greenhouse gas?' and aims to illuminate key debates surrounding agricultural methane production and its role in climate change and some of the difficult trade-offs involved when it comes to mitigating agricultural methane.

**What is malnutrition?**

Defined in a range of ways by various authorities, malnutrition can be broadly characterized as malnutrition, excessive or inadequate intake of energy (in calories), macronutrients (protein, fat, carbohydrate) or micronutrients (by vitamins A, zinc, iodine or essential minerals). Malnutrition is primarily driven by three distinct conditions:

- An insufficient energy or food intake (not too food)
- An inability to absorb nutrients properly (e.g. as a result of intestinal issues or disease)
- Excess of one or more of particular nutrient (e.g. heavy metal/mineral poisoning can result in iron load)

While commonly used as a synonym for hunger, malnutrition differs in three different forms which require different interventions, have varying geographic prevalence, and pose unique challenges for public health systems.

**The three forms of malnutrition**

**Undernutrition – hunger & micronutrient deficiencies**

Undernutrition, resulting from hunger and micronutrient deficiencies, occurs when intake of adequate energy and nutrients is insufficient to meet the body's energy and early on physical activity. Hunger has serious consequences for health and human development, and is closely linked to other global development issues globally. In 2020, undernutrition is a deadly, crippling 10 percent of worldwide deaths either directly or indirectly from undernutrition, primarily in low- and middle-income countries. People who experience hunger can experience

**Included in this summary**

- Hunger & macronutrient deficiencies
- Micronutrient deficiencies
- Overnutrition
- Multiple burdens of malnutrition



SUMMARY SHEET | Table Debate | PAGE 01



NOVEMBER 2022  
**WHAT ARE ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS?**

This piece is a brief summary of the TABLE Explainer 'What is ultra-processed food and why is it a public health concern?' and aims to illuminate key debates surrounding ultra-processed foods.

**What are ultra-processed foods?**

The term is global consensus of ultra-processed food (UPF) encompasses foods that are highly processed, often containing added sugars, oils, and salt, and are made from the least natural ingredients. It has been proposed as a key driver of the rise in diet-related non-communicable diseases, overweight, and obesity. Ultra-processed foods (UPF) are a category of foods in the NOVA classification framework developed by Brazilian academics Carlos Monteiro in 2009 to categorize food based on the degree of processing. The UPF category encompasses what is broadly referred to as fast food, as well as a wide variety of other kinds of manufactured food. Individually, manufacturers which which brand food are considered by many to be incompatible with healthy diets.

According to Monteiro et al. (UPF) are characterized by their increasing energy density, high sodium and fat levels, low nutrient density of dietary fiber and micronutrients, manufacture using processes that cannot be replicated in a domestic kitchen and design for maximum shelf-life and profits rather than human health. However, as it gains in the increased consumption of UPF as a result of the rise in diet-related non-communicable diseases, such as heart, kidney and obesity, the trend should be a key objective for public health authorities.


**Debates regarding ultra-processed foods**

As the concept of UPF is a generalization in academic, policy circles, and across the media, debates surrounding the usefulness of UPF as a concept specifically regarding the ability of the NOVA classification framework generally have emerged. Some of the most recent debates regarding UPF are centered around:

- Debates regarding the health impacts of UPF have primarily centered on the rise in diet-related non-communicable diseases, such as heart, kidney and obesity, the trend should be a key objective for public health authorities.
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SUMMARY SHEET | Table Debate | PAGE 01



NOVEMBER 2022  
**WHAT IS AGRICULTURAL METHANE?**

This piece is a brief summary of the TABLE Explainer 'What is agricultural methane, its role as a greenhouse gas and methane as a greenhouse gas?' and aims to illuminate key debates surrounding agricultural methane production and its role in climate change and some of the difficult trade-offs involved when it comes to mitigating agricultural methane.

**What is agricultural methane?**


Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) is a greenhouse gas (GHG) second only to carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in terms of its overall contribution to anthropogenic climate change. For most parts the CO<sub>2</sub> methane has 28 times the warming power of the equivalent weight of CO<sub>2</sub> over a 100-year time frame.

There are both natural and anthropogenic sources of methane emissions. Agriculture is one of the largest sources of anthropogenic methane emissions, with the remainder coming from landfills and waste. The three largest sources of agricultural methane (global) are enteric fermentation (EF) of agricultural methane emissions, rice paddies and livestock manure from both ruminants and non-ruminants via the anaerobic decomposition of manure (AN).

A key difference between methane and CO<sub>2</sub> is their relative durations in the atmosphere. CO<sub>2</sub> can persist in the atmosphere for centuries or longer. This means that a constant rate of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will, for example 100 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> added will have a steady warming effect, since each pulse of CO<sub>2</sub> entered the atmosphere persists there for so long. In contrast, methane has a much shorter CO<sub>2</sub> adds more warming to that of the preceding pulse. In other words, CO<sub>2</sub> effects are cumulative, in contrast, methane has a strong atmospheric lifetime of only about 10 years. This means that if there is a constant rate of methane emissions, each new pulse of methane emitted essentially replaces a previously emitted pulse before being fully quickly dissipated over time.

**Included in this summary**

- Intensive vs. extensive ruminant production systems
- Ruminants vs. pigs and poultry
- The role of dietary change
- Ruminant production and consumption in the Global South



SUMMARY SHEET | Table Debate | PAGE 01

# Podcasts

**Feed:** our regular podcast, featuring interviews with food systems stakeholders (most often researchers, but also writers, farmers, innovators)

- typically 30-60 minutes long
- appropriate for higher-level students—those who want to hear about issues straight from the horse’s mouth!

**Meat: the four futures:** a standalone series on the different scenarios being advocated for by stakeholders for the future of meat production and consumption

- 40-60 minute long episode feature many different speakers
- appropriate for all students

**LANDING PAGES:** <https://www.tabledebates.org/podcast>,  
<https://www.tabledebates.org/meat>



# Resources for lecturers and graduate students

We have a variety of resources that may be useful for lecturers, other educators, and more advanced students:

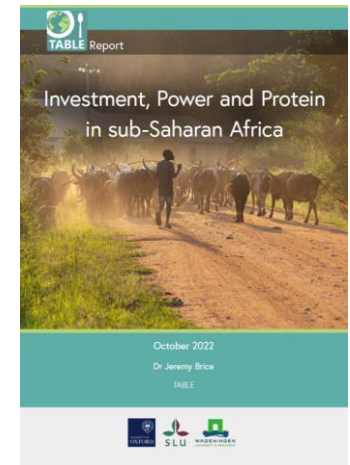
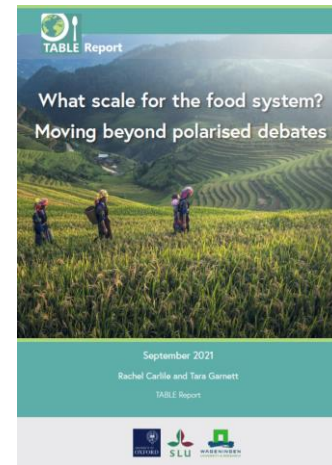
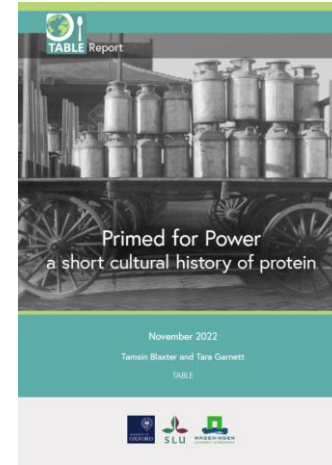
- [subject reports](#)
- [blogs+essays](#)
- interactive tools
- [Fodder](#), our newsletter
- [research library](#)
- [Ferment](#), our online discussion platform
- jobs and events listings (included in Fodder, but also available [on the website](#))
- finally, [Feed](#) podcast may be more of interest to academics than students!



# Reports

- similar to our explainers in scope and length, but dealing with a more eclectic set of topics ranging from the very abstract (like *What scale for the food system?*) to the relatively narrow (who is investing in protein production in sub-Saharan Africa?)
- some may be of interest to students, all may be of interest to educators

**LANDING PAGE:** <https://tabledebates.org/publications>



# Blogs and essays

- Presenting a specific perspective on one food and agriculture topic (blogs) or contrasting and discussing conflicting perspectives (essays)
- Written by third parties—often a researcher presenting their own recent work
- **We welcome submissions, especially from ECRs and grad students!**

Essay: Is agroforestry a solution to food insecurity in Sudan?

03 Mar 2023

Author(s) Marwa Akkila, Hatim Rijal

In this piece, Hatim Rijal and Marwa Akkila reflect on the challenges facing Sudan's food system. They explore the pressures facing different types of agriculture and forestry in Sudan, and explore the potential of agroforestry, specifically alley cropping systems, to provide food while also meeting environmental and social goals.

About the authors: Hatim Rijal (PhD in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development) is the founding officer of the Darba Center for Environmental Studies (DCES), a Forest Inspector at Forestry National Corporation, South Darfur State, and a Co-founder of Sudan Youth Organization on Climate Change (SYOCC). Marwa Akkila (PhD in Nutrition and Dietetics) is a clinical dietitian nutritionist, a lecturer in the School of Health Sciences at Al-Balqa University for Women (AUW), the head of the Research and Studies Unit in DCES, and was recently assigned as a program coordinator for the Public Health Training and Research Unit (PHTRU) in AJLW.

Keywords: [Agroforestry](#) [Sustainable Agriculture](#) [Agroforestry](#) [Introduction](#) [Sustainable food security](#)

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [in](#)



Introduction

Essay: Feeding the nation, the village, or the world

14 Feb 2023

Author(s) Felipe Rúa-Clavijo

Over the past decades, Colombia's dominant agricultural vision has been that of becoming a food powerhouse, a nation that could "feed the world". However, while Colombia's exports of some tropical produce have increased, this expansion comes at a cost: representations in the living conditions of the millions of people in rural areas who still experience poverty and food insecurity and malnutrition.

Agroecology movements have long sought to put forward alternative visions of the food system under the operation of 1) feeding the nation and 2) feeding the village. These alternative visions are based on a more localized approach to agriculture and food consumption that values aspects such as people's proximity to food production, protection of local environmental resources, urban-rural links and the importance of promoting rural and urban well-being through healthy diets.

This essay explores the tensions between these alternative visions of food provisioning. It is written by Dr. Felipe Rúa-Clavijo, Assistant Professor at the School of Government of Universidad de Los Andes.

Keywords: [Food security](#) [Food sovereignty](#) [Food loss](#) [Rural economy](#)

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [in](#)



Urban agriculture in and around Barcelona: why and how?

23 Jan 2023

Author(s) Haley Parzdzko

The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona is a microcosm of the current international movement towards increasing urban food and self-sufficiency, with an aim of promoting both equity and social justice. In this blog post, Haley Parzdzko reflects on the challenges and opportunities facing the urban agriculture movement in and around Barcelona.

Keywords: [Urban agriculture](#) [Equity](#) [Environmental](#) [Food loss](#)

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [in](#)



Haley Parzdzko has just finished a master's degree in Political Ecology, Degrowth Economics, and Environmental Justice at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She will soon start a PhD at the University of Surrey focusing on local food systems. Her research interests focus on the intersection between urban food systems, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Introduction

Essay: Is agroforestry a solution to food insecurity in Sudan?

03 Mar 2023

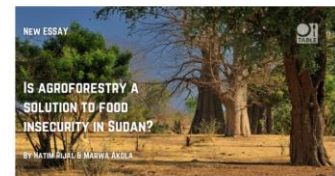
Author(s) Marwa Akkila, Hatim Rijal

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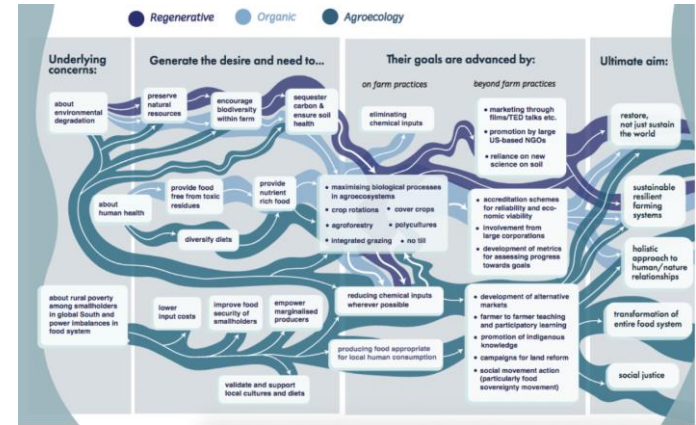


Introduction

LANDING PAGE: <https://www.tabledebates.org/blog>

# Interactives

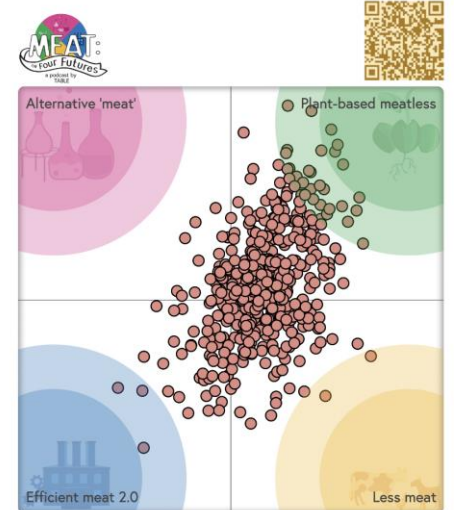
- We're starting to create interactive tools for exploring contested issue
- these can be used for running workshops and as prompts for discussion in seminars and classes
- do contact us if you're interested in using these and would like support to do so!



There should not be foods that only higher-income groups can afford.



Next (1/20)





Our newsletter, Fodder,  
rounds up the latest news on food sustainability.

Every two weeks, you will receive summaries of journal papers, reports, books and other resources.

On alternate weeks, you will receive updates on TABLE's podcast, blog series, explainers and events.

Every week, we send out listings of food systems job opportunities and events from other organisations.

Join over 4,000 subscribers:

[Subscribe to Fodder here](#)

To suggest an item for Fodder, please send details to [Jackie](#).

### Previous newsletters

12/13/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
11/24/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
11/10/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
10/28/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
10/13/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
09/08/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
07/28/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
07/15/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
06/23/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)  
06/10/2022 - [Fodder: the latest news about food sustainability](#)

# Newsletter: Fodder

Our weekly newsletter includes:

- summaries of important new papers and books on food systems and agriculture
  - job listings
  - event listings
- our own new publications!

**LANDING PAGE:** <https://www.tabledebates.org/fodder>

# Research library

- Library of research items - major papers, reports, books, etc.
- all include abstracts, links and keywords
- many also include our own accessible summaries

LANDING PAGE: <https://www.tabledebates.org/research-library>

## Research library

Search:

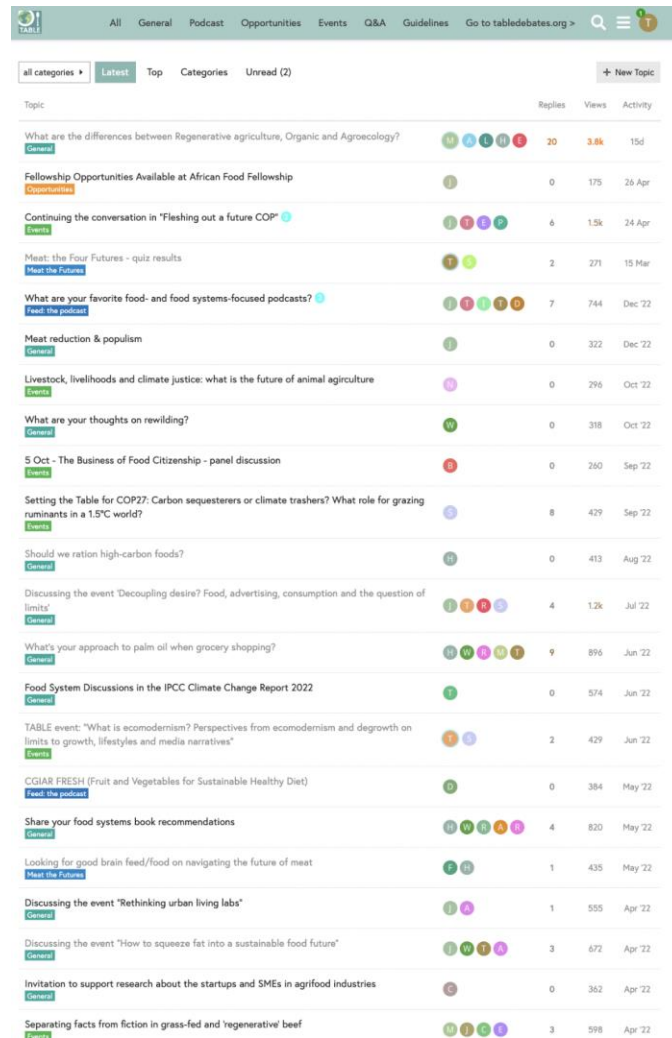
The screenshot displays a grid of 18 research items, each with a thumbnail image, a title, a short abstract, and a date. The items are arranged in a 6x3 grid. The first row includes articles on weed killer and Parkinson's, campaigners challenging the UK government, land tenure reform in Africa, and God as an octopus. The second row features Slow Food, New Nordic Nutrition Recommendations, Finding Common Ground, and circular economy principles. The third row covers soil microorganism activity, the decline of farms, cultured meat, and plant-based meat. The fourth row discusses lab-grown meat, questioning agricultural programs, fishing Europe's troubled waters, and the book 'Wilding'. The fifth row includes Slow Peace in Colombia, ultra-processed people, the Small Farmer Atlas, and land owned by indigenous peoples. The sixth row shows the environmental impacts of food production and consumption, and a partially visible article about food production and consumption.

Thumbnail	Title	Abstract	Date
	Research revealing links between weed killer and Parkinson's	deliberately suppressed and...	29 Jun 2023
	Campaigners win the right to challenge the UK government for failing to cut consumption...		29 Jun 2023
	Return in Sub-Saharan Africa	Interventions in Benin, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe	29 Jun 2023
	God is an Octopus		29 Jun 2023
	Slow Food: The Economy and Politics of a Global Movement		29 Jun 2023
	New Nordic Nutrition Recommendations		29 Jun 2023
	Finding Common Ground: Integrating data, science and innovation for better use of land ...		29 Jun 2023
	How resilience can align with circular economy principles in UK aquaculture		29 Jun 2023
	Soil microorganism activity is the most important factor in determining sequestration of...		29 Jun 2023
	The number of farms is likely to decline globally by the middle of the century		29 Jun 2023
	What is the role of law in determining the future of cultured meat and dairy in the EU?		29 Jun 2023
	Plant-based meat may be struggling but it will come back stronger - Fast Company		13 Jun 2023
	Italy may be the first country to ban lab-grown meat - TIME		13 Jun 2023
	Male and stale? Questioning the role of "opinion leaders" in agricultural programs		13 Jun 2023
	Fishing Europe's Troubled Waters: Fifty Years of Fisheries Policy		13 Jun 2023
	The Book of Wilding: A Practical Guide to Rewilding Big and Small		13 Jun 2023
	Feel the Grass Grow: Ecologies of Slow Peace in Colombia		13 Jun 2023
	Ultra-Processed People: Why Do We All Eat Stuff That Isn't Food ... and Why Can...		13 Jun 2023
	The Small Farmer Atlas - Solidaridad		13 Jun 2023
	Land owned by Indigenous Peoples limits deforestation		13 Jun 2023
	The environmental impacts of food production and consumption: Underlying drivers and policy implications		

# Ferment

- Our online discussion platform
- We're keen to partner with educators to use this as a space for students to comment, discuss, contribute—please do get in touch if this would be a useful tool for you!

LANDING PAGE: <https://community.tabledebates.org/>



The screenshot shows the Table Debates website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for All, General, Podcast, Opportunities, Events, Q&A, Guidelines, and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there are filters for 'all categories', 'Latest', 'Top', 'Categories', and 'Unread (2)'. A '+ New Topic' button is also visible. The main content area is a list of discussion topics, each with a category label, a topic title, a row of colored icons representing different categories, and statistics for replies, views, and activity date.

Topic	Replies	Views	Activity
What are the differences between Regenerative agriculture, Organic and Agroecology? <a href="#">General</a>	20	3.8k	15d
Fellowship Opportunities Available at African Food Fellowship <a href="#">Opportunities</a>	0	175	26 Apr
Continuing the conversation in 'Fleshing out a future COP' <a href="#">Events</a>	6	1.5k	24 Apr
Meet: the Four Futures - quiz results <a href="#">Meet the Futures</a>	2	271	15 Mar
What are your favorite food- and food systems-focused podcasts? <a href="#">Feed the podcast</a>	7	744	Dec '22
Meat reduction & populism <a href="#">General</a>	0	322	Dec '22
Livestock, livelihoods and climate justice: what is the future of animal agriculture <a href="#">Events</a>	0	296	Oct '22
What are your thoughts on rewilding? <a href="#">General</a>	0	318	Oct '22
5 Oct - The Business of Food Citizenship - panel discussion <a href="#">Events</a>	0	260	Sep '22
Setting the Table for COP27: Carbon sequestrerers or climate trashers? What role for grazing ruminants in a 1.5°C world? <a href="#">Events</a>	8	429	Sep '22
Should we ration high-carbon foods? <a href="#">General</a>	0	413	Aug '22
Discussing the event 'Decoupling desire? Food, advertising, consumption and the question of limits' <a href="#">General</a>	4	1.2k	Jul '22
What's your approach to palm oil when grocery shopping? <a href="#">General</a>	9	896	Jun '22
Food System Discussions in the IPCC Climate Change Report 2022 <a href="#">General</a>	0	574	Jun '22
TABLE event: "What is ecomodernism? Perspectives from ecomodernism and degrowth on limits to growth, lifestyles and media narratives" <a href="#">Events</a>	2	429	Jun '22
CGIAR FRESH (Fruit and Vegetables for Sustainable Healthy Diet) <a href="#">Feed the podcast</a>	0	384	May '22
Share your food systems book recommendations <a href="#">General</a>	4	820	May '22
Looking for good brain feed/food on navigating the future of meat <a href="#">Meet the Futures</a>	1	435	May '22
Discussing the event "Rethinking urban living labs" <a href="#">General</a>	1	555	Apr '22
Discussing the event "How to squeeze fat into a sustainable food future" <a href="#">General</a>	3	672	Apr '22
Invitation to support research about the startups and SMEs in agrifood industries <a href="#">General</a>	0	362	Apr '22
Separating facts from fiction in grass-fed and 'regenerative' beef <a href="#">Events</a>	3	598	Apr '22



[www.tabledebates.org](http://www.tabledebates.org)

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**thanks for listening!**

questions, comments, etc. welcome!