



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Forty-seventh Session
"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"

8-11 February 2021¹

CFS HIGH-LEVEL SPECIAL EVENT – CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Structured to reflect the Committee on World Food Security's core principle of inclusiveness, CFS organized a three-day [High-Level Special Event on Strengthening Global Governance of Food Security and Nutrition](#) from 13-15 October 2020. Overall, more than 5,000 people registered for the three-day event, including twelve *Partners' Events*, bringing together representatives from Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society and non-governmental organizations, private sector associations, philanthropic foundations, international agricultural research centres, and international and regional financial institutions. Discussions during the three plenary sessions, summarised below², centred around: a) the global food security situation and the way forward towards 2030; b) the impacts of COVID-19 and efforts needed to "build back better", and; c) the relevance of the draft *CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition* (VGFSyN) and the draft *CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches* (PR-AEAOIA) to the objectives of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS).

DAY 1: OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION (FSN) SITUATION AND WAY FORWARD TOWARDS 2030

¹ Rescheduled from 12-16 October 2020

² Written statements received and other HLSE documents and presentations are found at the CFS Events' page at: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/home/events/cfs-high-level-special-event-on-food-security-and-nutrition/en/>

The day's session explored implications and recommendations of the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the world (SOFI) 2020* Report and the CFS High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) 15th Report on "*Food Security and Nutrition: Building a Global Narrative Towards 2030*", both of which recognize the need to transform food systems to achieve the SDGs³.

The speakers underscored the urgency to reverse the very concerning trends in Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) and the negative impacts of COVID-19, while encouraging "building back better," and welcoming transformative science and evidenced-based approaches towards sustainable, resilient, equitable, inclusive food systems and affordable healthy diets for all. The CFS HLPE (2020) "Global Narrative" report's recommendation to include *agency* and *sustainability* alongside the four established dimensions of food security's definition (availability, access, utilization and stability) as well as the SOFI 2020 report were generally welcomed, as was a "One Health" approach to addressing systemic problems. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the UN WFP was acknowledged as a reminder that FSN and peace go hand-in-hand, and that working together towards the achievement of the SDGs is essential. Speakers underscored the importance of doubling investments in FSN during the *Decade for Action* for the SDGs, derived from a mix of external aid and domestic resources at national level with a specific reference to the importance of enabling private sector investment.

The speakers advocated having CFS products⁴ used and adapted to regional and national contexts as per the relevant recommendation in the HLPE Global Narrative report. The Director General of the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** highlighted that CFS was invited to each of the 2020 FAO Regional Conferences to showcase its products and encourage their uptake and utilization at regional, country, and local levels. The DG called upon all FAO field staff to assist in this process, thereby helping translate words to actions in the field. The **President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** unveiled a new, user-friendly database of all CFS products⁵ designed to broaden awareness and improve ease-of-access to the recommendations and guidance provided in these documents. The **Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP)** extolled participants to continue the fight against hunger and malnutrition. The **State Minister for the Environment of the UK**, host of the 2021 UNFCCC COP26 event, urged a redirection of agricultural subsidies toward more sustainable land use and food production policies to feed a growing global population while preserving biodiversity and halting climate change. "*More than anything else, it is the way we procure and consume food that is driving this devastation and, in a vicious cycle, this environmental destruction is risking a food security crisis*". The **Minister of Agriculture of Indonesia** stated that at this unprecedented time, the CFS "*has become increasingly critical to discuss shared priorities for political coherence among countries*". The uptake and utilization of CFS products was promoted by the **Deputy Secretary General of the Association of South-Asian Nations (ASEAN)**, who presented how CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI⁶) were adapted to serve as an investment framework for all its member states. The **World Bank's Martien van Nieuwkoop** proposed working closely with CFS to take its RAI Principles forward by focusing on benchmarking their usage at country level.

CFS's inclusive approach and unique mandate to convene all FSN stakeholders to foster collaboration, coordination, convergence and coherence, allowing for flexibility and adaptation, as well as the importance of strong multi-stakeholder partnerships to deliver on SDG 2 and the progressive

³ SOFI 2020 at: <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2020/> and HLPE 2020 report at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf>

⁴ For a full list of CFS products see the CFS website at <http://www.fao.org/cfs/home/products/en/> ;

⁵ This recently launched IFAD online database of CFS products is available at <https://cfs-products.ifad.org/>

⁶ CFS-RAI Principles are available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-au866e.pdf>

realization of the right to adequate food were acknowledged. The inclusive membership and consensus modalities of the CFS inter-governmental multi-stakeholder platform confirmed CFS as the most participatory, and highly relevant, body for FSN policy convergence, particularly in the context of the planned 2021 UNFSS⁷.

DAY 2: COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACTS ON GLOBAL FSN

The day's session explored the impacts of COVID-19 on FSN and food systems, and provided an opportunity to discuss what stakeholders can do to respond to, rebuild, and strengthen resilience of food systems to integrate sustainability in all three of its dimensions (economic, social, and environmental).

Participants heard from the **Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)**, who stated that ensuring access to nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets must be a cornerstone of the response to COVID-19. Likewise, the **Director-General of the International Labor Organization (ILO)** highlighted the interrelated nature of the challenges we face, including public health, labour and food security issues. He highlighted what he saw as a rare opportunity to rethink traditional approaches and build back better - a message also shared in a recent joint statement by FAO, IFAD, WHO, and ILO⁸. The CFS **HLPE Steering Committee Chair, Martin Cole**, presented the HLPE Issue Paper "Impacts of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition: developing effective policy responses to address the hunger and malnutrition pandemic"⁹ and highlighted several of its policy recommendations, including reinforcing a CFS coordination role for global policy players dealing with the FSN aspects of the pandemic. Other speakers acknowledged both the timeliness and relevance of the CFS and HLPE actions in response to COVID-19. They agreed that the pandemic exacerbated inequalities and demonstrated the interconnectedness of agricultural, health, nutrition, economic and social sectors, and the need for resilient and diverse food systems as well as transversal actions - such as the 'One Health' approach, and the scaling-up of (health, nutrition and educational) targeted social protection and safety-net programmes. Speakers highlighted the importance of ensuring space for an inclusive dialogue, as well as policy convergence and coherence to include environmental issues, public health, human and labour rights, economic viability, with food security, as presented by the **Ministers of Agriculture of Argentina and India**. The updated HLPE Issues Paper on the impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition was appreciated, as well as ongoing CFS policy convergence processes, which aim to move us toward more resilient and sustainable food systems.

In conclusion, with COVID-19 exacerbating the levels of global food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty, there is a need to:

- continue **monitoring** how food systems are responding to the needs of the most vulnerable;
- introduce or scale up **social protection programmes**, in particular for those in the food and agriculture sectors who are often excluded and particularly affected;
- promote **sustainable and local agriculture** that -enhances resilient, local-regional markets and innovative approaches (including agroecology), as well as strengthened public policies for rural territories that have family farming and women's empowerment at their core;

⁷ UNFSS website at <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

⁸ See at https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_757974/lang-en/index.htm

⁹ The HLPE Issues paper is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/cb1000en/cb1000en.pdf>

- embrace a **systemic, transversal approach to FSN** for a coordinated policy approach across health, labour, nutrition, and food systems;
- acknowledge **food systems` leverage effect** in the achievement of many of the SDGs;
- **break down silos** everywhere - in governments, universities, UN systems, organizations, and institutions -, and strengthen interlinkages based on the ‘One Health’ approach from producers to consumers in order to promote more resilient and sustainable food systems, including more equitable distribution and sustainable production practices, such as agroecology.

DAY 3: FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

Coinciding with the anniversary of the International Day of Rural Women (IDRW), the day’s session explored how the upcoming *CFS VGFSyN* and *CFS PR-AEAOIA* (and other CFS work) are relevant to the objectives of the UNFSS.

Representing rural, indigenous people and youth, **Ms Dali Nolasco Cruz**, from Mexico, told attendees that in commemorating the IDRW, it is important to take note of “*what we still need to achieve especially when it comes to the right to fair salaries, health and land*”. In her keynote address, the **UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed** applauded the CFS for hosting the Special Event, for its work on Voluntary Guidelines for Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN), and for its decision to develop guidelines on gender equality and women’s empowerment. She assured participants that the UNFSS organizers will work closely with CFS to ensure it builds upon the products and inclusive model the Committee has to offer. The **European Union Commissioner** for International Partnerships highlighted the importance of investing in people with special attention to rural women, called on the use of early information systems such as the Global Report on Food Crisis, and encouraged an ambitious UNFSS. The **African Union Commissioner** for Agriculture and Rural Economy detailed Africa’s commitments to FSN, biodiversity, and climate resilience measures and called upon CFS to continue its global role to promote policy convergence. Other **speakers** underscored the structural barriers to women’s full participation in society, even while they bear the bulk of the pandemic’s negative impacts. There is a need to step up, streamline and finance efforts to reduce inequalities, with special attention to gender equality, women’s and girls’ rights and women’s empowerment, within any food system transformation work. The 2021 UNFSS is an opportunity to engage and catalyze leaders and the public in an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach around responsible actions toward the realization of the right to food, building on science and data. All agreed that the CFS - as the UN’s foremost inclusive platform for FSN - has a key role to play both in its preparation¹⁰, and in supporting the implementation of its outcomes and follow-up. Alignment (to goals) and sharing (of experience and knowledge) were recognized as crucial to the way forward, and CFS is well placed to contribute to both. Speakers also discussed the convergence of development, humanitarian and peace work, a nexus that requires establishing new, collaborative ways of working. Again, the ability of the CFS to bring a wide spectrum of stakeholders around the same table to work together and build consensus was heralded by various speakers. The **German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture** illustrated how the COVID-19 pandemic makes us particularly aware of how important the work undertaken by the CFS is: “we need healthy food and resilient and sustainable food systems. And to achieve this, we need a proactive CFS in which all stakeholders participate.” The

¹⁰ On-going VGFSyN will be a powerful contribution to the Summit, as well as past products such as the VGGTs, the CFS-RAI Principles and the CFS Framework for Action in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA).

United Arab Emirates Minister of Food Security highlighted her country's commitment to a national strategy for addressing hunger and sustainability, and committed to using the CFS VGFSyN, when adopted, as a further tool to shape their approach to zero hunger.

There was also agreement that there is no “one-size fits all” solution, hence the necessity of having a diversity of voices in any process to ensure that policies, measures, decisions or transformation is adapted to local contexts and realities. The **UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food** called upon the CFS to take up an even greater responsibility as the foremost platform for global food security policy, calling on national leaders to make full use of the CFS as it was reformed to do, especially in view of the UNFSS. The **UN Special Envoy for the UNFSS** appealed to all stakeholders to participate in the UNFSS process, and not miss the opportunity to make their voices heard.

Several speakers presented national experiences with food systems transformation. These confirmed that political will is crucial for any truly transformative action, and underlined the importance of starting with a vision, and an institutional anchorage to establish an operational but comprehensive strategy and roadmap, as well as accountability measures. Interventions also stressed the importance of nutrition education and addressing consumers' behavioural changes (toward healthy dietary choices) as well as making innovations accessible, supporting commercialisation of healthy food and leveraging social protection initiatives. It was also highlighted that food systems need to be profitable, but also regulated with the key objectives to enable income growth in the rural areas, as well as availability and accessibility of nutritious foods by all.

Spain announced a financial contribution of \$310,000 to the CFS, stating that any paradigm shift towards sustainable and resilient food systems required systemic and bold changes that ensure due diligence with respect to the environment, social protection programmes, public policies for rural territories, family farmers and gender equality and women's empowerment.

The **CFS Chair** closed the Special Event thanking all and noting it had been an extraordinary event, rich in thoughts, ideas, proposals, and innovations. Food systems are linked to environment and human health degradation – it is clear we need to transform food systems into sustainable and resilient ones to achieve the goals of Agenda 2030, which needs commitment and long-term strategies. With everyone's support, the CFS policy products can be widely used and adapted to regional and national realities, to contribute to the achievement of all SDGs. CFS was confirmed as a unique policy convergence space for FSN actors and it will continue to play its inclusive role and give voice to a wide range of stakeholders on crucial FSN issues. On-going CFS processes will provide strategic inputs to the UNFSS preparation in terms of policy convergence and guidance on crucial issues linked to Nutrition, Agroecology and other innovations, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and its future workstreams on data, inequalities and youth, including in support to the aftermath of the UNFSS and its outcomes' implementation.