



Evaluation of CFS Reform

Evaluation of the Committee on World Food Security

Executive Summary

**First draft (for discussion)
31 January 2017**

Executive Summary

Background and purpose

ES1. The Committee on World Food Security commissioned an independent evaluation to determine the progress the Committee was making towards its Overall Objective and main Outcomes since the 2009 reform. The evaluation covered the period October 2009 to October 2016.

ES2. The purpose of the evaluation as set out in the Concept Note in Annex A, endorsed by the Bureau is to:

- a) Produce evidence regarding whether CFS, as a multi stakeholder forum, is achieving the vision outlined in the Reform Documents and its expected outcomes;
- b) Assess the extent to which CFS is performing its roles outlined in the Reform Document, efficiently and effectively, and if so, with what impact;
- c) Review the working arrangements, including the multi-year programme of work of CFS in order to assess how the decision-making processes and planning may be impacting effectiveness;
- d) Propose forward-looking recommendations to enable CFS to respond effectively to the emerging food security and nutrition challenges, to further strengthen its comparative advantages, and to enhance its leadership role in improving global food security and nutrition; and
- e) Generate learning regarding multi-stakeholder collaboration, to which the CFS represents a possible model to be replicated.

Methodology

ES3. The evaluation mainly used qualitative data collection, namely, semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus group discussions, and observation at the CFS 43rd Plenary. The data was complemented by documentary evidence, primarily from the Committee's documents and the documents of the Rome-Based Agencies, the Civil Society Mechanism, the Private Sector Mechanism, and other stakeholders. The evaluation team consulted 361 persons in the course of this evaluation, and 156 of these were consulted in the country missions conducted to France, Jordan, Panama, the Philippines, Senegal, Uganda, and the United States. The evaluation covered all the main structures of the Committee. Time and budgetary constraints limited, among other things, the range of stakeholders that could be interviewed, and the evaluation team could not meet in person to do the detailed analysis of the data.

Summary of the main findings

ES4. *Relevance:* CFS Members and stakeholders are of the view that the Committee is addressing relevant food security and nutrition issues, but there are areas that require more focus or emphasis. Climate change, youth, and nutrition were identified most frequently. Nutrition has become more mainstreamed in the Committee's discussions and activities; however, it is primarily addressed through a separate, parallel work stream. Being relevant

also involves being responsive to urgent and controversial issues that have global implications. The existing mechanisms do not cater adequately for the Committee to be responsive to urgent global issues.

ES5. *Coordination:* The CFS Plenary serves as a platform for bringing in a range of voices to policy dialogue. There has been an increase in the number and diversity of attendees at the CFS Plenaries since 2009, but the attendance of Ministers has declined. The Committee developed the Global Strategic Framework that captures all the major decisions and policy recommendations of the Committee and is intended as a tool for guiding actions on food security and nutrition. The framework has shortcomings and is not well known. It is undergoing its first periodic review since its adoption in 2012.

ES6. *Policy convergence:* The Committee produced four main policy convergence products, policy recommendations from 10 High Level Panel of Experts reports, and policy recommendations from three work stream studies between 2009 and 2016. Interviewees from government, civil society, the private sector and the Rome-Based Agencies expressed concern about the length of time taken to negotiate and the resources required for negotiation, and governments raised most of the concerns. Most of these concerns came from governments. The VGGT has the highest profile of the Committee's policy convergence products, and there is evidence of its use and application in several countries and in the regions. There is no evidence of widespread uptake of other policy products and recommendations of the Committee.

ES7. *Support to countries and regions:* The Committee has not received requests for support and advice from countries and regions. The Rome-Based Agencies provide technical support to countries as the Committee is not structured to do so, nor is it in the Committee's mandate to provide direct support.

ES8. *Monitoring:* The Committee conducted a survey of its effectiveness as part of its monitoring role. It also convened the first monitoring event at the CFS43rd Plenary on the VGGT. It has not conducted monitoring of its policy products and policy recommendations. There are different views in the Committee about the role and scope of the Committee's monitoring role.

ES9. *Bureau and Advisory Group:* The joint Bureau -Advisory Group meets at least quarterly, and most Advisory Group members attend all the meetings. There is disagreement within the Committee about the composition of the Advisory Group and the distribution of seats, and several proposals, often conflicting were put forward to the evaluation team.

ES10. *Open-Ended Working Groups:* The Committee has three standing Open-Ended Working Groups (Multi-Year Programme of Work, Monitoring and the Global Strategic Framework), and the number of policy-related Open Ended Working Groups depends on what has been agreed to in the Multi-Year Programme of Work. Concerns were raised about the number of work streams in the Committee and the burden it places on small delegations. The Open-Ended Working Groups do not have terms of reference to guide their work.

ES11. *High Level Panel of Experts:* The Panel produced 10 reports between 2011 and 2016, and a paper on Critical and Emerging Issues (2014) to inform the selection of topics to be researched. The Panel asserts that its reports are widely used as a reference document, not only, by the Committee, but also by the UN system and the scientific community. Interviewees raised concerns about the reports, including, the scientific language rendering the reports inaccessible to lay persons, the length of time taken to produce reports, and the quality of the recommendations contained in the reports.

ES12. *Civil Society Mechanism:* The Civil Society Mechanism provides a channel through which CFS and the Rome-Based Agencies can access the diverse organisations in food

security and nutrition. It participates in all the main processes of the Committee and has contributed to the monitoring of the VGGT. The Civil Society Mechanism has raised the need for the space for civil society's participation to be strengthened to allow for greater participation in the various processes and structures of the Committee. There are organisations with the Civil Society Mechanism who feel that their voices are not being heard within the mechanism.

ES13. *Private Sector Mechanism*: The level of interest from the private sector has increased over the past few years as reflected in the increase in the number of private sector organisations attending the CFS Plenary, from 4 in 2010 to 86 in 2016. The private sector, through the Private Sector Mechanism, is engaged in all the key processes of the Committee, including the Open-Ended Working Groups and the Advisory Group. The Private Sector Mechanism is seeking parity with the Civil Society Mechanism with respect to the number of seats on the Advisory Group.

ES14. *CFS Secretariat*: The number of staff within the Secretariat fluctuates, depending on the programme of work and the resources to fund the work. Half of the staff is funded from extra-budgetary sources, creating uncertainty in the staffing of the Secretariat.

ES15. *Communication and Outreach*: The Committee has a communication strategy, but efforts to date have not translated into widespread awareness of the Committee and its products at country level. Out of 156 persons consulted at the country level, only 30 (19 percent) could identify at least one of the major CFS products. There is a low level of awareness of CFS products in among government officials, as well as officials in the United Nations system at country level.

ES16. *Strategies and tools*: The Committee has not developed tools to assist countries to apply and use its products. FAO has developed a tool for mapping national actions on food security and nutrition, and the civil society organisations at the country level have developed advocacy tools for use by civil society.

ES17. *Stakeholder platforms*: There are regional platforms in food security and nutrition, but the Committee appears not to have regular interaction with these. The Chairperson briefs the FAO Regional Conferences on the Committee and the outcomes of the CFS Plenary.

ES18. *Diversity and inclusiveness*: The Committee involves a diverse group of stakeholders in its policy dialogue processes. There are groups who feel that their voices are not being heard in the Committee. Issues of gender and Indigenous Peoples are reflected in the work of the Committee, and youth to a far lesser extent. Issues of people with disabilities are not on the Committee's agenda.

ES19. *Replicating the CFS model*: Interviewees see the CFS model as worth replicating, provided the shortcomings in the current functioning of the Committee are addressed. The need for focussing on a few things, sustainable finances, capable human resources, and effective communication were highlighted as essential for the multi-stakeholder model to function. Trust, mutual respect and commitment to collaboration were identified as necessary conditions.

Conclusions

Enhanced coordination on food security and nutrition issues

1. **Conclusion 1**: *The Committee has put in place the mechanisms and processes to enhance global coordination on food security and nutrition issues. Although the Committee is*

addressing relevant issues in food security and nutrition that fall within its mandate, it has not articulated its comparative advantage in the area of food security and nutrition.

ES20. The Committee is the only platform within the United Nations system that brings together a broad range of diverse stakeholders at the global level to develop guidelines and make policy recommendations, in the manner that it does, with non-state actors as equal partners, except for the final decision. It has the participation of civil society and the private sector in all its major processes, and is able to draw on the evidence base provided by the reports of the High Level Panel of Experts. This makes the Committee unique within the United Nations system, yet it is largely unknown outside of headquarters in Rome. The Committee is seen by those closely associated with it, to be addressing relevant food security and nutrition issues, but with the Committee largely unknown at the national level, it may not be relevant to the ‘ultimate beneficiaries’ of its work.

ES21. The CFS Plenary is a platform that has brought stakeholders together to dialogue on issues, and while the attendance levels of the Plenary have increased since the reforms of 2009, the decline in the levels of representation at the Ministerial level is worrisome. It may be an indication that the Committee’s relevance to and interest from those who make the policy decisions is declining.

ES22. The Committee’s work to date has covered a wide range of food security and nutrition issues, many of which are covered elsewhere. While the topics are relevant and important, the Committee is not always clear about what its added value is in pursuing certain issues. For example, has not sufficiently articulated its vision and strategy to contribute to global nutrition efforts.

ES23. The Committee has developed the Global Strategic Framework to improve coordination and guide synchronised action by stakeholders in food security and nutrition. The stated main added value of the Global Strategic Framework is to serve as a single reference document and as practical guidance on the recommendations of the Committee with regard to food security and nutrition issues. In its current format, the document is an information reference, and it is unclear how it can guide synchronised action.

Improved policy convergence

Conclusion 2: *The Committee has contributed to improved policy convergence on food security and nutrition issues to the extent that it has developed policy products that have potential application across many countries and regions. The Committee has achieved convergence on certain policy issues at the global level, but this has not yet translated into widespread use and application of its policy convergence products.*

ES24. The Committee’s policy products have been consulted, negotiated and adopted on the basis of consensus, lending legitimacy to them. There is strong evidence that the VGGT is being applied in several countries. The available evidence shows limited use and application of the other policy convergence products of the Committee, namely, the RAI and FFA.

ES25. The following factors may explain the slow uptake of other Committee policy products:

- a) How CFS members, participants and stakeholders define policy convergence has implications for CFS effectiveness in promoting and improving policy convergence on food security and nutrition issues. In sharing their understanding of ‘policy convergence’ interviewees emphasised negotiation processes leading to consensus or agreement on policy recommendations. What should happen once consensus was reached was left implicit in most descriptions, though it could be inferred from other responses to the interviews that countries are expected to adopt those policy recommendations that were relevant to the country context. The Committee puts a

great deal of thought, effort and resources into deciding on policy topics, obtaining the evidence to inform policy recommendations, consultation and negotiation to arrive at consensus. However, insufficient effort is put into working out the modalities for moving from policy recommendations to implementation.

- b) Committee and its policy products have a low profile or are not known at all in many countries, according to the vast majority of interviewees. This was borne out by the interviews at country level. Even in the case of the VGGTs, only CSM constituencies, and government and FAO officials who were involved in the implementation of the VGGT knew these guidelines. Committee promotes the VGGT, RAI, FFA and GSF as major policy products, and this creates the impression that the policy recommendations based on the HLPE reports are not ‘major’ and therefore not as important.
- c) The policy recommendations and policy products are broad and have to be adapted to the country context. This requires tools and support that the Committee is not in a position to provide.

Strengthened national and regional food security actions

Conclusion 3: *The Committee has contributed to national actions on food security and nutrition, through the use and application of the VGGT in several countries. However, without a detailed evaluation of the VGGT projects that have been implemented, the evaluation team cannot draw conclusions about the extent to which national and regional actions have been strengthened.*

ES26. The VGGT have received, and continues to receive substantial support from FAO for its use and application in countries, and the independent evaluation of FAO’s support is expected to assess the effectiveness of the support. The Committee’s contribution to strengthening national and regional food security actions is not direct as the Committee is not an implementing body.

Functioning of the Committee

2. **Conclusion 4:** *The Committee is functioning and has managed to generate a high level of outputs since the 2009 reform. Its performance of its six roles is uneven, and there are gaps and issues that it needs to address to be fully effective and efficient.*

ES27. As a platform for coordination at the global level, the Committee has managed to bring a wide range of stakeholders around the table to dialogue on food security and nutrition issues. However, it is too early to conclude whether this has translated into strengthening collaborative action among stakeholders at the country level. The Committee has been able to produce policy convergence products, and there is evidence of use of one of its major products. The roles that the Committee has not been effective in executing are:

- Support and advice to countries and regions
- Coordination and national and regional levels
- Promoting accountability and sharing best practice

ES28. There is a lack of clarity and agreement about how the Committee should proceed with these roles. In the case of support and advice to countries and regions, the Committee at best can only facilitate support and advice to countries and regions. The Committee is an intergovernmental policy body, and not an implementing body. The Rome-Based Agencies and others in the United Nations system are better placed to provide support and advice to

countries and regions. The Committee has had limited engagement with regional organisations, except for the briefings at the FAO regional conferences.

ES29. With regard to the Committee's role in promoting accountability and sharing best practices, the Committee has made a good start with the convening global events for sharing best practices. There are however, differing views in the Committee about its role in monitoring and what it should be monitoring. In the view of the evaluation team, it is not feasible, nor is it desirable for the Committee to attempt to monitor the implementation of the many policy recommendations, and policy products at the country level. Policy development processes at the country level are influenced by many different factors and sources of information, and it would be difficult to monitor the use of the Committee's products.

ES30. The Bureau, the Advisory Group, and the Open Ended Working Groups play a pivotal role in shaping the agenda of Committee and content of its work. The Open-Ended Working Groups are not as effective as they could be. The Advisory Group adds value to the work of the Bureau, but the contestation over the membership of the Advisory Group threatens to reduce the effectiveness of the Advisory Group. The Civil Society Mechanisms and the Private Sector Mechanisms play an important role in facilitating the contributions of non-state actors in the work of the Committee. Both mechanisms are seeking to have the requisite 'space' to ably facilitate the views of their participating organisations. The Joint Bureau-Advisory Group meetings are a platform for influencing the decisions of the Bureau and ultimately, the Plenary. It is therefore not surprising that there is contestation over the representation and the distribution of seats in the Advisory Group.

ES31. The High Level Panel of Experts has produced reports that cover a range of food security and nutrition issues. There is broad agreement amongst CFS Members and stakeholders on the importance of the Panel in bringing scientific evidence to inform the decisions of the Committee, but the potential of the Panel is not fully exploited. The panel has a number of challenges including the lack of adequate resources to promote its work.

ES32. Multi-Year Programme of Work, although it follows a rigorous process of identifying the priorities for the Committee over the biennium, has not been successful in limiting the number of priorities that are finally approved. The Committee's effectiveness and efficiency are impacted negatively by the unpredictability of its funding and the resources for the Joint CFS Secretariat.

ES33. The Committee has not been effective in its communication and outreach, as it is largely unknown at the country level. The Civil Society Mechanism and the Private Sector Mechanism promote the Committee and raise awareness of products and decisions, amongst their constituencies. The gap lies in the communication between delegations in Rome and ministries at the country level.

Diversity and inclusiveness

3. **Conclusion 5:** The reformed Committee has engaged a greater diversity of actors than was the case prior to the reform, but not all voices feel that they are heard. There are stakeholders who could potentially add value, but are not present in the CFS platform.

ES34. Committee has integrated gender equality and the empowerment of women to a great extent. It has produced policy recommendations on gender, but the extent to which these have been taken up by countries and regions is unknown. The participation of youth is receiving more attention in the Committee's agenda than has been the case in the past. The Committee's approach to youth however, is ad hoc. The Committee has integrated the interests of Indigenous Peoples into its work, but issues of Indigenous Peoples are championed primarily by the Civil Society Mechanism and not by the Committee as a whole. People with disabilities are not on the agenda of the Committee.

Conditions, assumptions, and replicating the multi-stakeholder model

Conclusion 6: *The Committee is potentially a good model for the collaboration and partnership required to achieve the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it still lacks some of the factors or conditions required to function effectively as a multi-stakeholder platform.*

ES35. Successful multi-stakeholder initiatives have clear objectives and a single issue that brings stakeholders to the table to try to resolve. The Committee covers a broad spectrum of food and security issues, and does not have a single focus that stakeholders can rally around. The Right to Adequate Food, which was one of the drivers for the reform, does not have a high profile on the agenda of the Committee.

ES36. There must be mutual respect and trust among stakeholders. This is something that is still evolving in the Committee. People don't work together because they trust one another – they develop trust through working together. Stakeholders must feel that they have an equal voice and that their different contributions have equal value in the Committee. This is an area where the Committee and its mechanisms have challenges. There are groups that feel excluded or that their contributions are not valued equally.

ES37. Multi-stakeholder platforms require predictable resources and a stable core staff to support it. These two conditions are not in place in the Committee and so the sustainability of the Committee is at risk. Effective multi-stakeholder platforms are good at communicating their vision, and demystifying the technical aspects of their work. This condition is not present in the Committee.

Recommendations

ES38. The evaluation team proposes a number of recommendations, recognising that the Committee is addressing a number of the issues raised in this evaluation.

Recommendations on strategy

ES39. The Committee should develop a strategic framework to guide its work over the medium-to-long term. Such a framework should set out a small number of strategic priority areas. The strategic framework does not replace the Reform Document. It seeks to give clarity and specificity to what the Committee should be focusing on to achieve the vision set out in the Reform Document. Within the strategic framework, the Committee is better placed to formulate clear objectives, and the theory or theories of change that underpin its work. This could also assist the Committee in clarifying how best to execute its roles in the Reform Document.

ES40. In selecting and developing policy convergence products, the Committee should from the outset consider the primary users of its products, what mechanisms will be required for these products to reach the primary users, what capacities will be required for primary users to make effective use of the products, and which partners can provide the capacity and support for the use and application of the product.

ES41. The High Level Political Forum on the 2030 Agenda represents an opportunity for the Committee to position and profile itself at the global level. The Committee utilise the

platform presented by the High Level Political Forum, to showcase its work. It should also leverage its relationship with the High Level Task Force on Food and Nutrition Security to secure the support of other United Nations entities.

Recommendations on the Bureau, Advisory Group and Open-Ended Working Groups

ES42. The Open-Ended Working Groups should all have approved terms of reference to guide their work. The work of the three core Open-Ended Working Groups, namely, MYPoW, Monitoring, and the Global Strategic Framework are interrelated. They should hold joint discussions at least twice a year to ensure that there is synergy and alignment.

ES43. The Bureau should consider taking decisions in the Joint Bureau-Advisory Group meeting, and reserve the Bureau meetings for those items that do not require the input and discussion with the Advisory Group. This will eliminate duplication of the agendas and also promote transparency in the decision taking of the Bureau.

ES44. The issue of the number of seats on the Advisory Group is not simply about the number of seats for the Civil Society Mechanism and the Private Sector Mechanism. There is also the status of WHO and WFO as ad hoc members, and the need for broader representation of philanthropic foundations. The Committee should initiate a formal process of reviewing the membership of the Advisory Group. In doing so, it should take into consideration the following:

- a) The strategic framework recommended at paragraph #
- b) The Reform Document (paragraph 7) calls for a composition that ensures that the voices of all relevant stakeholders, *particularly those most affected by food insecurity*, should be heard.
- c) The roles that selected United Nations entities, including the Bretton Woods institutions (excluding the Rome-Based Agencies) currently play on the Committee, and the roles envisaged going forward in the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 2.
- d) The status of regional organisations as observers, and their future role in the work of the Committee.
- e) The resource implications of changes to the Advisory Group memberships

ES45. The mechanisms in the Committee are self-organising, and how their internal structures and processes are their prerogative. They should review the internal structures and processes to ensure that are inclusive of the voices of all their constituencies. This recommendation is specifically directed at the Civil Society Mechanism, the Private Sector, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, but does not preclude other Participants in the Advisory Group from doing so.

Recommendations on the High Level Panel of Experts

ES46. The Committee should retain the maximum of one report per year for the High Level Panel of Experts. The Steering Committee of the Panel should discuss with the Bureau and the Advisory Group, their requirements and expectations regarding the framing of recommendations. The High Level Panel of Experts should consult the non-scientific community about ways to improve the accessibility and use of the information contained in the reports.

Recommendations on MYPoW and resourcing

ES47. The Committee should consider developing a four-year MYPoW that is reviewed and updated annually. The Strategic Framework and the Critical and Emerging Issues Papers of the High Level Panel of Experts should inform the contents of the MYPoW. There should be room for flexibility in taking on new issues not covered in the Critical and Emerging Issues Papers. The selection criteria and the process of prioritisation should be improved. Topics should not be selected unless it can be demonstrated that the Committee has a comparative advantage and can add value. Steps should be taken to ensure that all CFS Member States and stakeholders participate in the prioritisation process. This may mean a longer consultation process, but will ensure inclusiveness and buy-in in the long run.

ES48. The Committee should resolve the issue of sustainable financing and resourcing of its functions. In this regard, it is recommended that there be a formal agreement between the Committee and the Rome-Based Agencies to secure their annual financial contributions to the functioning of the Committee, and their contribution in the form of senior staff seconded to the Secretariat. All core staff (not consultants) should be funded from core funding.

ES49. The Committee should consider establish a pooled funding mechanism to which should operate along the lines of 'budget support', with funding from different sources, including the private sector and philanthropic organisations. Donors should not be permitted to select specific projects to fund. How the funding is spent should be determined by the MYPoW, and accounted for through the annual reporting of the Committee.

Recommendations on monitoring

ES50. The Committee should not seek to monitor the use of its products or the implementation of its policy recommendations directly, as it is not feasible for the Committee to monitor the large number of recommendations and actions at the country level. Nor should the Committee seek to monitor for the purpose of attributing positive changes at the national level to the influence of its policy products, as there are a large number of factors other that influence policy-making at the country level. The Committee's approach to monitoring should be to leverage the information that the Rome-Based Agencies have on the actions being taken at the country level. The Committee seek to seek to draw on multiple perspectives on its products from, for example civil society, the private sector, and the wider research community.

ES51. The Committee should commission periodic evaluations of its work. These evaluations may focus on a specific theme, or could be a comprehensive review of its performance. Where appropriate, the Committee should consider requesting the evaluation offices of the Rome-Based Agencies to conduct a joint evaluation.

ES52. The Committee should continue to implement the 'events' approach to monitoring, as a vehicle for sharing knowledge and learning. It should consider convening regional events, in partnership with the relevant regional organisations. This could strengthen the bridges between the Committee and regional organisations, and contribute to improving coordination with the regional level.

Recommendations on Communication and outreach

ES53. The Committee should review and update its communication strategy. Greater emphasis should be placed on the role of CFS Members to communicate with the countries, on matters relating to the Committee. The Secretariat can assist the CFS Members, as well as Participants by providing short briefs on the work of the Committee.

