



CFS REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC ON THE PREPARATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

BANGKOK, 25-26 JULY 2019

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

There were 60 participants at the meeting representing governments¹, civil society and indigenous people organizations, private sector, international organizations² regional organizations³, and research institutions⁴.

The CFS Secretariat was represented by Dr Jessica Fanzo and Mr Emilio Colonnelli.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Liliane Ortega, Chair of the CFS Open-Ended Working Group on Food Systems and Nutrition.

The meeting was opened by Dr Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs, Assistant Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand and Dr Liliane Ortega.

The following comments and proposals were provided by participants during the discussion

Comments and proposals on Chapter 1 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

- More should be said about the persistence of hunger (paragraph 1) and its causes which principally rely in poverty and inequalities.
- The magnitude of the impact of malnutrition should be explicit. Besides, in several countries, malnutrition has also an impact on environment (disposal and waste of medical treatments) (paragraph 5)

¹.Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Palau, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam.

² FAO, WFP, IFAD, WHO, and UNICEF.

³. United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP).

⁴ The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

- The paragraphs about the causes of malnutrition should be more elaborated, including being explicit about the exclusion of different segments of the population from the decision-making related to food systems (example of pricing of nutritious food). More should also be said about how climate change and natural hazards affects the availability and affordability of nutritious food as well as on the impact on the poorest.
- More should be said on how consumption and nutrition are shaped by the food industry including the expansion of outlets selling industrial food and beverages and by trade regimes.
- The importance of food knowledge to empower the consumers to make informed decisions in relation to diets (para 9).
- Include disabled people in para 11 about most vulnerable people.
- The interdisciplinary nature of food systems has been underlined, paving the way to address policy fragmentation
- More should be said in the objective about the necessity to improve governance of food systems, from food production until access to food, including how the consumption of industrialized food is promoted.
- Genetic biodiversity, land use and regulatory frameworks are also considered as to be drivers which impact food systems.
- Reference to internet-based food systems to be made as a way to promote the development of agricultural production and access to food.
- Donor agencies should be included in the list of intended users of the Voluntary Guidelines (para 26).

Comments and proposals on Chapter 2 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

- The definition of food systems needs to capture the diversity of systems and to be “more human-centered”. Gender-sensitive food systems should be added. The definition of healthy diets to add the sustainability dimension.
- Principles should take in consideration: governments’ leading role in promoting sustainable food systems, including their prerogative to allocate resources to improve production and support smallholders in capacity building; role of market in orienting food systems; importance to increase access to technology; role of communication platform, like internet, to build a fully interconnected food market.
- Relevance of multisectorial approaches and the interdisciplinary nature of the issues at stake to be emphasized in one of the first two principles.
- Human right dimension should be more prominent in the principles.
- Explore the possibility to add one principle on rural-urban transformation and another one on multi-stakeholder partnerships.

- One principle to be dedicated to vulnerable groups, including children and people with disabilities.
- Principle to focus on responsible investments in food systems (making reference to CFS-RAI?).
- Traditional knowledge should be added in the principle on “evidence-based approach”.
- Principle on “nutrition knowledge” to include children as primary target.
- Principle on “capacity building” to make reference to youth.

Comments and proposals on Chapter 3 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

- Sustainable production systems: need to promote production of diverse foods that constitute a healthy diet, but before dealing with consumers’ level we need to ensure that choices can be made at food producers’ level (use of seeds, chemical inputs).
- Role of agricultural policies as well as of nutrition-sensitive trade policies is key. Impact of trade policies to be considered and coherence between trade and nutrition policies to be promoted.
- Agriculture policies to encourage nutrition-sensitive agriculture
- Effective, participatory and inclusive governance of food systems needs to be promoted as a key aspect towards the creation of enabling conditions for improving nutrition.
- The promotion of multisectorial actions, policy coherence and dialogue between different actors across sectors should be at the center of the development of Chapter 3.
- Climate change and adaptation measures are key to be addressed.
- Conservation policy, regeneration of natural resources, sustainable resource management could also be mentioned.
- Retail and markets are an important area also to provide support to cooperatives and small and medium agribusinesses.
- Availability and physical access are critical dimensions that need to be properly addressed. Role of urban planners to promote consumption of healthy diets.
- Economic access (affordability) need to be addressed both from a production and consumption perspective.
- The development of food policies should take into account their potential impact on local economies, also in order to get local governments involved in their enforcement.
- Actions to support the supply of nutritious foods in markets should be promoted (prices, support to farmers to reach markets, capacity building programmes, restrictions to less nutritious foods).
- Food import policies should be revised to encourage local production

- Nutrition education is key as a way to inform consumers' choices and needs to be properly addressed. Not only in school curricula but also towards other relevant actors, such as parents, grandparents (family nutrition education) and opinion makers. Also to cope with religious beliefs which prohibit the consumption of nutritious food.
- Social protection programmes: healthy school meals and food vouchers to be part of the Voluntary Guidelines.
- Food safety is another key area where harmonization of regulations should be looked at, in consideration of the impact at regional level of national interventions, which should be based on international and regional standards (such as ASEAN Guidelines on Food Safety). Effective surveillance systems should be also put in place.
- Street food: regulations and control on food quality and safety
- Food reformulation and food fortification programmes should be considered in the Voluntary Guidelines.
- Food losses and waste should be addressed to encourage governments to be more effective instead of promoting more productivity.
- Investments in technology and innovation should be enhanced. At the same time, matters related to capacity building and accessibility needs to be addressed.
- Fisheries to be mentioned as a crucial dimension to address the challenges of people living in remote coastal areas (climate change, pollution).
- Infrastructures projects which deprive rural communities to access basic food, like fish.
- Water and sanitation as a key aspect to consider.
- Access to data is another important aspect to inform policy-making and identify priorities, needs and areas of intervention.
- Different kinds of food processing should be considered: food preservation or ultra-processed food abusing the use of additives and cheap ingredients.
- Food labelling should be part of the Voluntary Guidelines.
- Responsible marketing, especially towards children
- Specific female food deprivation and nutrition harmful traditional behavior should be considered.
- Ensuring a more prominent role for women in determining food consumption at household level.
- More generally, gender equality should be prominent.
- Addressing the needs of most vulnerable segments of the population from a nutrition perspective (income, decent employment, etc).

- Economic access in case of crises: ensure that food remain affordable.
- Urban farming: foster the development of new affordable technologies.
- In terms of metrics/targets that could help guide policy makers, the following were mentioned: ecological, health, livelihoods, growth, agricultural, SDGs targets. The identification of specific targets would support the development of monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as increase accountability at national level.

Comments and proposals on Chapter 4 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

- Capacity building: efforts to be made to increase capacity of countries to implement the Voluntary Guidelines.
- Voluntary Guidelines to promote coherence and harmonization between policies. Support to countries in the identification of needs and priorities as a first step towards the operationalization of the VGs at national level.
- Accountability measures to be promoted (budgetary allocations for the implementation of the VGs).
- Key role of donors for the implementation of the VGs needs to be emphasized.
- Holistic approach to be promoted at local level towards the development of multisectoral plans and implementation frameworks.
- Need to foster ownership at governmental level from the initial stages of the process. Demand from countries is the first step for the implementation of the VGs.
- Need to promote the implementation of the VGS through existing multistakeholder platforms, such as the SUN Movement.
- Identification of CFS champions could facilitate the uptake of the VGs at country level.
- Voluntary Guidelines to be used to foster collaboration, coordination and dialogue between different actors and across countries.