

Extraordinary CFS Bureau and Advisory Group meeting

Date: 31 March 2020 (11:00 – 13:00)

Venue: virtual meeting (via ZOOM)

Extraordinary Bureau and Advisory Group Meeting Outcomes

Agenda

1. Dialogue with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit (FSS), Agnes Kalibata
2. Discussion on CFS 2020 business continuity

1. Dialogue with the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit (FSS)

CFS Chairperson, Mr Thanawat Tiensin, opened the 31 March virtual meeting and welcomed the UN Secretary General's FSS Special Envoy, Ms Agnes Kalibata, and other participants. CFS Chair explained that the primary objective of the meeting was to help Ms Kalibata better understand the CFS and its various constituencies, and discuss with her the role of CFS in the preparation of the Summit. CFS Chair also informed that the meeting was an opportunity to follow up on the first meeting between the CFS Chair, the HLPE Chair, and the Special Envoy, which took place in Rome on 10 February 2020. Since then, the CFS Secretariat has been in contact with the Special Envoy's team, including facilitating the participation of the Special Envoy in a special CFS meeting to consider the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impacts on global food security and nutrition, which took place on 19 March.

The Special Envoy informed that preparation for the FSS has started, and that the COVID-19 pandemic has only reinforced the critical importance of the Summit. She noted that, although we are not in a food crisis yet, already we are seeing the pressure that COVID is having on food value chains, even in sophisticated food systems.

The Special Envoy remarked that, at the start of the Decade of Action on SDGs, the FSS will be an opportunity to change the trajectory of our progress toward achieving the SDGs through the transformation of food systems all over the world. The Summit will be an opportunity to engage with new actors.

The Special Envoy informed that a small independent Summit Secretariat had been established, while other support structures (i.e.; Advisory Group, Scientific Group, and Champions Group) are yet to be formed, but that she hoped to have them in place by the end of April. These will be multi-stakeholder groups that will draw upon expertise and perspectives of constituencies from around the world. CFS members asked about the composition of these support structures and how members of these support structures will be selected.

The Special Envoy was interested in hearing ideas for shaping the Summit's vision and action tracks. She mentioned a few key areas that need to be considered systematically and holistically: 1. Food for all; 2. Agricultural transformation for Zero Hunger; 3. Reducing Food Loss and Waste; 4. Nature-Positive Production; 5. Increasing healthy and sustainable food; and, 6. Advancing equitable and resilient livelihoods.

The Special Envoy highlighted that much evidence, knowledge, ideas, innovations, and actions are already available, including the work of the CFS and the HLPE reports, and that we need to build upon these to drive the transformation of food systems at the scale and speed required. In this respect, she highlighted the CFS' ongoing work to finalize Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems For Nutrition, which she is carefully following.

She underlined that the process of preparation of the FSS will be transparent and inclusive, as she aims at engaging holistically with all countries and regions of the world. She wants to develop mechanisms for an open global dialogue, to ensure all actors are involved. In this regard, the Special Envoy underscored that this meeting was just the start of her work with CFS, and she committed to continue to engage deeply with the Committee to ensure we advance a common shared agenda. More specifically, she noted that: 1. CFS will be part of the formal support structures for the preparation of the Summit, with the CFS Chair included as part of the Champions' Group; 2. the work of the HLPE and the CFS secretariat will be drawn upon for the and policy evidence and workstreams; 3. she would like to continue the dialogue with CFS on at least a quarterly basis (similar commitment that the Summit Secretariat is making to the Rome permanent representatives); 4. CFS will be consulted in the formulation and implementation of action tracks; and, 5. she will engage in multistakeholder dialogues and consultations at multiple levels going forward (virtual calls, national dialogues, regional dialogues, etc...) to align priorities and actions.

In response to CFS members' questions about the expected outcomes of the FSS, the Special Envoy underscored that the Summit is expected to lead to concrete actions to change our food systems, for which those who make commitments will be held accountable to deliver.

After the Special Envoy's remarks, ad hoc Advisory Group members (CGIAR, CSM, PSM, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNSCN, World Bank, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and WHO) each informed the Special Envoy about their respective roles in the CFS, how they support CFS activities and workstreams, and, most importantly, how they believe the CFS should engage in the preparations for the Summit. In their presentations, some key points they highlighted included:

- Science makes clear that the world's current food systems are failing – for people, for the environment, and for our shared future. Scientists have identified food systems and nutrition as key entry points to accelerate the worldwide transition to a more sustainable trajectory. Science should have a prominent role in the FSS.
- The great concern for the rising numbers of people living in hunger and for the COVID-19 crisis, which may worsen this situation. Concerted actions from the food, nutrition, and agriculture community through the CFS can help turn the tide and advance progress on achieving the SDGs.
- The dissemination of CFS policy products as tools for the successful implementation of the SDGs, and which can be used to contribute to a successful Summit.
- Two principal on-going CFS policy processes are especially pertinent to the FSS: the policy convergence process on Agro-ecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable food systems, and the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition. These draw on many earlier CFS policy guidelines and re-enforce several relevant UN decades.
- FSS should focus collective energy and efforts on promoting resilient, sustainable food systems, as underscored in the CFS Chair's statement on the COVID-19 pandemic. If we fail to do so, the most fragile countries and most vulnerable people will pay the highest price.
- The uniqueness of the CFS as the most inclusive multi-stakeholder platform within the UN system for global coordination on food security and nutrition policies. CFS, as a multi-stakeholder platform, is a unique place that brings together diverse set of actors. CFS after more than a decade remains a model of global governance.

- The Food Systems Summit offers the chance to go beyond agricultural productivity to address other fundamental aspects of food security such as incomes, healthy food and nutrition, and environmental sustainability of agricultural practices all along the value chain.
- The FSS and the work of the Special Envoy should help reduce the institutional fragmentation of the agricultural development and nutrition communities, and build better accountability mechanisms. FSS should involve actors beyond agriculture and health sectors, such as energy, trade, and transport.
- CFS should not only be a forum to track and take action toward a common goal, SDG2, but also respond to new and emerging crises such as COVID-19 and even greater challenges such as climate change.
- The FSS should bring attention to the challenges farmers face, small holders in particular, as they are the single biggest investors in the sector, and encourage the kind of investments and improvements in policy they need.
- The FSS should be critical in drawing global attention to agriculture and nutrition and coalescing the global community around specific actions.
- The FSS should produce concrete, actionable outcomes and time-bound recommendations, including specific financing and policy commitments.
- The COVID-19 pandemic, some worry, has the potential to trigger a global food crisis, which would require a coordinated and effective global response, like the food price crisis in 2007/2008, which led to the 2009 CFS Reform.
- CFS' core mandate is to promote policy coordination, convergence, and coherence toward the progressive realization of the right to food.
- The centrality of local food systems in ensuring food security and resilience to external shocks.
- Any debate around food systems needs to be grounded on a human rights approach, the policy frameworks established by previous Food Summits, and policy guidance approved by CFS. The inclusive and democratic nature of CFS normative processes constitutes the reason why debates around food systems need to take place within the CFS.
- CFS policy deliberations should contribute to informing the FSS and its preparations. The Summit should reflect, share and amplify CFS policy guidance. The FSS emphasis should be on generating high-level political commitments to transforming commitments into actions.
- The FSS should be built on the positive legacy of past summits that have lent support to food sovereignty, local food systems, which are the most resilient food systems in times of uncertainty and emergency, the conservation of entire ecosystems, and the protection of biodiversity.
- The FSS should support the right to adequate food, and sustainable production methods like agroecology that sustain small-scale local farmers and biodiversity.
- Need to align resources, ensure adequate coordination and proper division of labor in the preparation of the Summit.
- There will be key preparatory conferences leading to the FSS, including the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Japan.

2. CFS business continuity

CFS Chairperson started a conversation with CFS stakeholders on the CFS programme of work 2020-2021, given the current circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. This preliminary discussion will lead to a more detailed conversation at the next Bureau and Advisory Group meetings of 17 April 2020. The Chair underscored that CFS cannot stop now, when there are 821 million people in the world suffering from hunger, and amid a crisis like this pandemic which is likely to propel more people to become hungry. It would simply be immoral not to do everything we can to fulfil our mandate and goals.

CFS Chair informed that he has asked the Secretariat to consider how to continue operating in the coming months, and present a discussion paper for the 17 April Bureau and Advisory Group meetings. He also informed that FAO, our host agency, has cancelled all in-person meetings throughout April and May. WFP and IFAD are doing the same, although meetings at the Rome agencies will be done virtually via Zoom. In this regard, he also informed that FAO Conference Services is working on new software to permit enhanced video conferencing, including interpretation in six FAO languages, but has not yet adopted a corporate policy on governing body meetings.

The broad message from speakers was that CFS work is more important than ever and the Committee should continue to pursue the goal of food security and nutrition, however best it can carry out its approved program of work.

Some of participants expressed the view that it would be important to complete the agreed MYPoW, and especially finish the ongoing policy convergence processes (i.e: VGFSyN and Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches) before the 2021 Food Systems Summit. One constituency suggested revisiting the MYPoW to focus the Committee's attention on the pandemic in lieu of its two major workstreams.

Some of participants also commended the CFS Chair's initiative to call for a special meeting on the COVID-19 pandemic (including an Interim Issue Paper drafted by the HLPE Steering Committee) and expressed the view that CFS should play a role to help prevent the pandemic from becoming a food crisis. However, CFS's role still needs to be defined. Any role should ensure adequate coordination and proper division of labor with the RBAs to avoid duplication and inefficiencies.

CFS Chairperson concluded the discussion informing that next (virtual) meetings of OEWG on Food Systems and Nutrition, and OEWG on Agroecological and other innovative approaches will be held virtually back-to-back on 14 April in the afternoon using the Zoom platform.

CFS Chairperson informed that the call for experiences and good practices in the use and application of the CFS Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crisis (CFS-FFA) is extended until 30 April 2020, calling on members to contribute to those calls.