



Statement by CFS Chairperson to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

3 June 2020

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson, for giving me this opportunity to report to the UN Economic and Social Council. I am delighted to be here today and share with you some highlights of the work of the Committee on World Food Security, CFS. My name is Thanawat Tiensin, the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the UN Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome, and the Chairperson of CFS.

We are now living in extraordinary times. A mere few months earlier, none of us would have imagined that we would be where we are today. COVID-19 pandemic has changed our life.

Apart from the health challenges posed by the pandemic, it is also doing great harm to the global hunger situation. Even before COVID-19, the 2019 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report showed that **over 820 million people were hungry**. All indications are that this number will rise. This is extremely concerning.

COVID-19 has also added to other pre-existing challenges like climate change, desert locust invasions in East Africa and the Middle East, and conflicts.

Unfortunately, it is the poor, those already struggling with diet-related illnesses, and the most economically vulnerable who are the most affected.

That said, there is some good news. The world has enough stock of key staple foods - rice, wheat, maize and soya - and FAO does not expect supply shortages this year.

However, the more concerning challenge is of localized food access. This has been impaired in many countries due to supply chain disruptions, logistic restrictions and, mostly, income losses as consequences of the pandemic and lockdowns.

In addition, as demand for food is expected to decrease over the next months, food prices will go down in 2020 and negatively impact incomes and livelihoods of farmers and others in the agricultural sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, **where do we go next?**

CFS is concerned that these new trends might further impair the achievement of SDG 2 and other targets of the 2030 Agenda related to food security and nutrition.

We must take urgent action to transform our food systems. The world needs sustainable food systems to deliver healthy food, for healthy diets, for a healthy planet. We need clean and healthy soil, air, and water.

In view of the immense challenge at hand of achieving Zero Hunger by 2030, the Committee endorsed the **CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) for 2020-2023**. This is a strategic programme of work, which includes thematic work streams on:

- a. Food systems and nutrition;
- b. Agroecological and other innovative approaches;
- c. Gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition;
- d. Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems;
- e. Data collection and analysis tools; and
- f. Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition.

CFS is already mobilizing for the **UN Decade of Action on SDGs (2020-2030)** and has been examining the impacts of COVID-19 on all the issues we work on. The CFS MYPoW 2020-2023 provides a comprehensive framework for accelerating progress towards meeting SDG 2 targets by 2030.

This June, we will be launching the CFS **High Level Panel of Expert (HLPE) newest report titled "Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030"**. Presented as a synthesis of all the HLPE's work since 2009, the report will offer a fresh look at what can be done to support the achievement of the 2030 targets on zero hunger.

The Committee is also working on a policy convergence process to produce "**Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition**". These Guidelines, to be endorsed at CFS 47, will provide science- and evidence-based guidance on effective policies, investment and institutional arrangements that will address all forms of malnutrition from a food systems perspective.

On behalf of the Committee on World Food Security, I call on all UN Members to think now how they will utilize and implement these voluntary guidelines once they are endorsed.

They will serve as a critical building block for, and input to, upcoming global events such as the Nutrition for Growth Summit, and the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021.

The Voluntary Guidelines are also intended to support our governments in the implementation of the **Plan of Action of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025)**, **the Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)**, and **the UN Decade of Family Farming**.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown how vulnerable we all are, and how important it is to restore the right balance between human activity and nature.

In this respect, the Committee has also started a process of policy convergence on **agroecological and other innovative approaches**. This aims to bring about food system transformation through the use of a variety of innovations, to feed the world in a healthy and more sustainable way.

As mentioned by previous the speaker on the right of land tenure, "**Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest**" is one of the CFS products which have been implemented with significant impacts at the country level.

Chair, distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

As I conclude, I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), to thank all its Members, and especially the European Commission, Germany, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, France, and others for additional, generous voluntary contributions that have made our work possible.

I would also like to renew the Committee's call to governments and other actors to apply CFS's integrated policy frameworks, foster policy coherence and make use of all relevant CFS policy guidance to achieve the SDGs.

I would like to appeal to all of you – Members of the UN - to support the CFS to implement its ambitious programme of work.

Only by working together, exerting true moral and political courage, to which we committed when agreeing to the Agenda2030, we will be able to win the fight against hunger and malnutrition, and the fight towards a more just and equitable society.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.