

CFS Food Systems and Nutrition OEWG Meeting
28 May 2020, 9.30-12.30 and 14.00-17.00 (by Zoom)

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

1. Introductory remarks

The meeting was opened by the recently appointed CFS Food Systems and Nutrition OEWG Chair, Ambassador Hans Hoogeveen of the Netherlands, who thanked CFS stakeholders for their support. Ambassador Hoogeveen highlighted the importance of reaching agreement this year on a final version of the Voluntary Guidelines that will make a real difference in promoting sustainable food systems that deliver healthy diets. In doing so, he pointed out, CFS could give a crucial and important input to the upcoming UN Food System Summit.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss specific text proposals that were submitted by CFS stakeholders and included in a matrix prepared by the CFS Secretariat, to get a clearer idea of different positions concerning the various parts of the draft negotiation document, to identify the most contentious paragraphs and sections and to start thinking about possible compromise solutions.

2. Part 1 of the VGFSyN – The Introduction

CFS stakeholders shared views and discussed the different proposals presented on Part 1 of the VGFSyN.

Discussions took place on the title of the Voluntary Guidelines, with discussion over whether the VGFSyN are fundamentally about food systems “*for*” nutrition, or food systems “*and*” nutrition. The distinction is important, as is the question of whether to include the word “*sustainable*” before “*food systems*.” Further consultations will be needed on this in order to ensure that the title is aligned with the objectives and purpose of the Voluntary Guidelines that are outlined in Part 2 of the document.

There was convergence of views on the need to include text on pandemics in the introductory part. Dr Jessica Fanzo will work in close collaboration with the CFS Secretariat on draft text proposals drawing from the language of the upcoming HLPE Report on Global Narrative toward 2030, and consulting with the HLPE, as appropriate. It was clarified that, while no amendments will be made to the current version of the VGFSyN prior to the start of negotiations, the proposed text on pandemics will be shared with CFS stakeholders and discussed during the negotiations.

A number of text proposals were presented by participants. Several members highlighted the need to acknowledge the positive role of trade, while different positions were expressed on the text referring to the “*transformation*” of food systems. Specific attention was paid to paragraph 12 on food systems, on which several text proposals were presented.

Part of the debate focused on Section 1.2 in the “*Key Concepts*” section. While one request was made to delete the entire section, others requested its further expansion by re-including definitions on food systems and sustainable food systems that had appeared in earlier drafts. More specifically,

further discussions are needed to address divergent positions on paragraph 21 on the proposed term “sustainable and healthy diets.”

3. Part 2 of the VGFSyN – Objectives and Guiding Principles

Several proposals were presented to improve Part 2 of the VGFSyN, but no specific controversial points were highlighted. Inputs were submitted to strengthen the text of the section on objectives, while requests were provided to either add or delete references to specific internationally agreed policy instruments in paragraph 28. Several proposals focused on section 2.3 on guiding principles that will need to be discussed during the negotiation phase.

4. Part 3 of the VGFSyN – The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition

Discussion took place on a number of matters on which more in-depth debate will be needed in order to reach consensus among OEWG members. Divergent views were presented on paragraphs making reference to trade, subsidies, and fiscal policies with a number of members highlighting their relevance to food systems and nutrition, while a handful argued that these matters do not fall under CFS's mandate.

Different proposals were made on the paragraphs dealing with fortification, marketing of food, front-of-pack labeling, antimicrobial resistance, biofortified crops, as well as on the various paragraphs that reference existing international agreements.

The discussion showed the need for further consultations among members on a range of issues in order to facilitate future consensus, as well as the proactive and constructive spirit of OEWG members that are ready to negotiate the current version of the VGFSyN.

5. Part 4 of the VGFSyN – Implementation and Monitoring of the VGFSyN

The revised version of Part 4 was well-received by CFS stakeholders who provided a number of suggestions to improve its content. Positive feedback was provided on the decision to restructure it around actions to promote the implementation of the VGFSyN at country level, to strengthen capacity building, and to promote monitoring of its use and application.

Attention was paid to the importance of identifying from the outset respective outreach and communication roles related to the VGFSyN, including organizers of the Food Systems Summit, the Nutrition for Growth Summit, and with other audiences to ensure awareness and to promote their eventual uptake and utilization, once adopted.

6. Update on anticipated next steps of the process

The CFS Secretary informed the participants that CFS Bureau and Advisory Group members will discuss options regarding negotiation modalities on 2 June. Following relevant decisions expected to be taken by the Bureau on 5 June, a revised version of the workplan with dates of next steps will be shared.

The OEWG Chair informed members that a revised version of the matrix will be prepared by the CFS Secretariat in order to incorporate additional inputs received during the informal consultation and those received in written form which were not included in the first version. In this regard, OEWG

members were requested to send their statements and any additional text proposals to the CFS Secretariat which will be used to revise the matrix.

A request was made to the OEWG Chair to reach out to the Regional Group Chairs to update on the status of the process and encourage a balanced and active participation during negotiations.