CFS
COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Concept Note

Closing data gaps and promoting evidence-informed decision-making for food security and nutrition

1 July 2021 | 3pm to 6pm CET

Find the programme here.

Objectives:

The Secretariat of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is organizing a half-day public event in support of the CFS 2020-2023 Multi-year Program of Work (MYPOW), specifically its approved major work-stream on data systems related to global food security and nutrition.

This event will be convened virtually on 1 July 2021 (3:00 – 6:00 PM Rome time) and will be open to interested parties from the CFS and relevant institutions, including CFS Members, (ad hoc) Advisory Group members, Civil Society and Private Sector Mechanisms associated with the Committee.

The event will kick-start the process of policy convergence among CFS members and stakeholders, and it will assist the CFS High Level Panel of Experts (CFS HLPE) prepare their own anticipated report on this topic. It is foreseen that the outcomes of the webinar, drafted in the form of a Chair's summary, will help frame and refine the scope and objectives of the CFS HLPE report which is expected to be released in 2022.

Background:

Although it is widely recognized that sound policy and investment decisions are based upon high-quality, reliable, and accurate information and data, nearly $190 billion[1] is invested annually in food and agricultural production in low and lower-middle-income countries, often without the benefit of timely, reliable, comparable, and accurate statistics.

Despite considerable efforts, most countries still cannot cover basic food security and nutrition data needs for evidence-based policies and investments, and the majority of them do not conduct regular household and agricultural surveys, lack sustainable data systems, and have insufficient capacity to analyse and use even the limited data at their disposal. For instance, less than half of FAO member countries on average are able to officially report their basic statistics on food and agriculture to the organization. As a result, food security and nutrition data are usually outdated and thus unable to provide actionable intelligence for addressing complex sustainable development challenges in a timely manner.

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1 Source: FAO. 2017. The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges. Rome.

This basic, fundamental data, is often also the basis for monitoring key international processes such as the SDGs and the Paris Agreement of the Climate Convention.

Addressing these data gaps is essential to ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Despite the obvious needs, many countries cannot produce data to monitor their progress towards achieving SDG2, let alone the possibility of using that data for socio-economic progress.

The success, or failure, of policies and programmes to promote food security and better nutrition rests largely upon strengthening capacities of countries to collect, analyse, and use quantitative and qualitative data for planning, policy formulation, and investment.

Recognizing that much progress needs to be done to close food security and nutrition data gaps and promote evidence-informed decision-making for addressing the causes of hunger and malnutrition, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), at its 46th Plenary Session in October 2019, endorsed a Multi-Year Programme of Work 2020-2023, which includes a major work-stream on Data collection and analysis tools, which will be preceded by a report by the CFS HLPE on this topic.

The objective of a public event to be held on 1 July 2021 is starting a conversation among stakeholders - including government officials, food security and nutrition experts, academics, statistical officers, civil-society groups and business sector- that will begin examining policy-focused issues that attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the gaps and barriers in national and international data production and use with respect to food security and nutrition?

- What are the minimal set of food security and nutrition data that should be produced? At what level of granularity and disaggregation?

- How can these indicators be integrated to obtain a better understanding of food systems, and also of the drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition?

- What policies do countries need to strengthen their capacity to collect, process, analyze, use, and disseminate quality-data to achieve SDG2? What policy areas should countries prioritize to strengthen their data and information systems (education, technology, finance, participation, etc.)?

- How can new data sources (e.g.: big data, drones, satellite imaginaries, earth observation, and forecasting techniques) be used to complement more traditional census and surveys, and lower the cost of data?

- How can countries benefit from the production and use of microdata?

- How can policies ensure access to data, while preserving data privacy and ownership?

- What policies are necessary for ensuring that the data revolution does not increase inequalities and does not exclude small scale farmers, food producers and food workers? How can we improve their data literacy?

- What financial instruments do countries need to improve their information base?

- How agricultural data and rural statistics can be harnessed to contribute to advance progress of achieving the human right to adequate food?

Following this event, and the release of the CFS HLPE report in 2022, CFS will deep dive into its policy convergence process with the goal to negotiate and endorse CFS policy recommendations on data analysis and tools for food security and nutrition in October 2023. These actionable and ready-to-use policy recommendations will be designed to strengthen the capacity of countries to collect, process, analyze, and more effectively disseminate and utilize data and data systems to monitor food security and nutrition indicators and to improve critical decision-making around food security and nutrition issues.

Overall, the work-stream is expected to draw from the expertise and experiences accrued by relevant national and international agencies, and build on the long-standing food and agriculture data collection, analysis and dissemination experience at FAO via FAOSTAT, as well as on novel approaches to promote enhanced data collection at relevant scales, e.g. from farm to national, such as those arising from the 50X2030 Initiative (jointly implemented by World Bank, FAO and IFAD) and similar programmes and initiatives which aim to solve the problem of food security and nutrition data gaps to achieve SDG2.

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