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## **The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE)**

### **Key Elements**

**(November 2011)**

### **Why the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) ?**

Food insecurity is a global and persistent issue, recurrently highlighted by crises. It manifests itself in various ways in the different regions of the world and it has a vast variety of complex and interdependent underlying causes. It has many facets and is interlinked with many other problems and factors from local to international levels, from social security related issues to development issues. To address food insecurity requires an integrated approach. It requires interventions and strong policies from local to global levels.

The reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is a fundamental change in the international governance of food security and nutrition. The CFS is the central international and intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition, where policies can be designed, interventions can be coordinated, options can be shared and decisions at different levels can be prepared.

Decisions in the reformed CFS are taken by Member States in co-construction with various stakeholders, in particular CSOs, NGOs and the private sector, to ensure that these decisions gain resonance and efficiency on the ground.

Decisions need often to be taken in spite of a vast field of uncertainties regarding both the knowledge base, and potential effects of policies on the ground. There is also a need to overcome the fact that at the negotiation table, competing interest often confront different streams of information leading to acute controversies, and that the fragmentation of expert debates by academic disciplines and by knowledge sources is often detrimental to strong and effective policy decisions.

Therefore Member States have decided that decisions in the reformed CFS shall be informed by shared, independent and comprehensive advice.

This is why, in October 2009, the High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was created as an essential element of the reform of CFS, and as the scientific and knowledge-based pillar of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

Indeed, the provision of shared and independent advice is generally a condition to reaching political consensus, and in turn, political decisions are more robust, and keener to be pursued in continuity, from the short term to the long term, if they are founded on comprehensive assessments. The HLPE therefore aims to improve the robustness of the policy making, which is essential for actions needing to be pursued in continuity on the ground.

*Key functions of the HLPE as stated in the CFS reform document are*

As directed by the CFS Plenary and Bureau, the HLPE will:

- i. Assess and analyze the current state of food security and nutrition and its underlying causes.
- ii. Provide scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues, utilizing existing high quality research, data and technical studies.
- iii. Identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas.

**What are the specificities of the HLPE with respect to other expert processes?**

First, the HLPE is directly linked to the foremost international policy platform for food security and nutrition, the CFS. The design of the HLPE process, its rules and procedures, the composition of the Steering Committee and the commissioning of studies is decided by the CFS. The HLPE is therefore created and entrusted by the CFS, and reports to it. This ensures the legitimacy and relevance of the studies undertaken, and their insertion in a concrete political agenda at international level.

Second, in creating the HLPE, governments decided to let the Panel produce its recommendations and advice independently from governmental positions, in order to enrich discussions and debates at CFS. Thus, the internal process and its results guarantee the independence of the HLPE.

Third, the HLPE aims to help CFS to better understand the diversity of issues and rationales when dealing with food and nutrition insecurity. To do so, it will thrive to clarify contradictory information and knowledge, elicit the backgrounds and rationales of controversies, and identify emerging issues. This will among others build upon the diversity of disciplines, backgrounds and regional origins of the Steering Committee members and of Project Teams.

Fourth, the HLPE is not mandated to conduct new research. The HLPE will draw its studies based on existing research and knowledge already conducted by various expertise-providing institutions (universities, research institutes, international organizations etc), and adding value by global, multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary analysis.

Last, HLPE recommendations and studies will combine scientific knowledge with experiences from the ground, in a same rigorous process. The HLPE will translate the richness and variety of forms of expert knowledge from many actors (knowledge of local implementation, knowledge based on global research and knowledge of “best practice”) that draw on both local and global sources, into policy-related forms of knowledge.

The Rules and Procedures of the HLPE were specifically designed so that the whole process is undertaken in a credible, relevant and legitimate way.

**What is the structure of the HLPE?**

The HLPE has a two-tier structure (see Figure 1) :

- A Steering Committee composed of 15 internationally recognized experts in a variety of food security and nutrition related fields.
- Project Teams acting on a project specific basis, selected and managed by the StC to analyze/report on specific issues.

## **Who serves in the HLPE Steering Committee?**

15 world-renowned experts have been appointed by the Bureau of the CFS in July 2010 to serve as members of the Steering Committee of the HLPE until CFS Plenary 2012. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson have been designated by the 15 members of the HLPE Steering Committee at their first meeting, 16-17 September 2010.

### ***Chairperson:***

**Monkombu Sambasivan Swaminathan** (India), Agricultural scientist acclaimed by TIME magazine as one of the 20 most influential Asians of the 20th century.

### ***Vice-Chairperson:***

**Maryam Rahmanian** (Iran), Research associate at the Centre for Sustainable Development in Iran.

### ***Members:***

**Catherine Bertini** (United States of America), former Executive Director, World Food Programme.

**Martin Kumar** (Australia), Fisheries and Aquaculture Expert and Adjunct Professor, at the Flinders University of South Australia, in the Steering Committee since July 2011, in replacement of Derek Byerlee.

**Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher** (Ethiopia), Director General of the Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia.

**Lawrence Haddad** (United Kingdom), Director of the UK Institute of Development Studies.

**Sheryl Lee Hendriks** (South Africa), Researcher at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

**Alain de Janvry** (France), Professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

**Renato Maluf** (Brazil), Associate Professor at the Federal Rural University of Rio Janeiro and President of the National Council of Food and Nutrition Security in Brazil.

**Mona Mehrez Aly** (Egypt), Director of the Animal Health Research Institute of Egypt.

**Carlos Perez del Castillo** (Uruguay), Chairman of the Consortium of CGIAR centres.

**Roelof Rabbinge** (Netherlands), Professor at the Wageningen University in the Netherlands and Outgoing Chairman of the Science Council of the CGIAR.

**Huajun Tang** (China), Research Professor and Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

**Igor Tikhonovich** (Russia), Director of the All-Russia Research Institute for Agricultural Microbiology at the Russian Federation.

**Niracha Wongchinda** (Thailand), Senior fishery expert.

The selection of the 15 experts was done by the Bureau of the CFS following a call for nominations and the review of candidatures and a proposition by an ad-hoc technical selection committee comprised of members of FAO, WFP, IFAD, Bioversity International (CGIAR) and a representative of the CSO/NGO Community.

They encompass a variety of backgrounds, disciplines and regions of the world.

HLPE Steering Committee members participate in their individual capacities, and not as representatives of their respective governments, institutions or organizations.

### **How is the HLPE commissioned?**

The CFS or its Bureau commissions studies to be undertaken by the HLPE. This ensures the relevance of the studies undertaken, and their insertion in a concrete political need and agenda at international level.

### **How are HLPE reports approved?**

HLPE reports, studies and recommendations are approved by the HLPE Steering Committee only.

This guarantees that the views expressed in the reports are independent from the positions of member states and other stakeholders. This also enables the HLPE to better tackle potentially controversial issues, in the respect of the principle of sound, balanced and comprehensive assessments.

### **How do HLPE reports feed back into CFS?**

HLPE reports are forwarded to the CFS to inform debates, or suggest deliberations.

The CFS Bureau, in consultation with the Advisory Group and Secretariat, determines the best ways to take forward the process of developing recommendations or options to be discussed at CFS.

The HLPE is therefore a tool to provide state-of-the art, independent expertise to the CFS to improve decision making at all levels.

### **What is the HLPE Work Program and mandate received from CFS?**

The CFS, at its 36th session (11-16 October 2010) has entrusted the HLPE with a strong mandate, requesting it to undertake studies and present policy recommendations on a wide range of outstanding issues for the world's food and nutrition security, including:

- 1. Price volatility and food security,**
- 2. Land tenure and international investments in agriculture,**
- 3. Climate change and food security**
- 4. Social protection and food security** (*see box below*).

The reports on price volatility and food security and on land tenure and international investments in agriculture have already been finalized and published in July 2011. They served as background to the CFS 37<sup>th</sup> Plenary discussions that took place in October 2011.



The reports on climate change and on social protection are expected to be ready for July 2012, to feed discussions at CFS 38.

At its 37<sup>th</sup> session (October 2011), the CFS has further decided that the HLPE should undertake two new studies on:

5. **Biofuels and food security**
6. **Constraints to investments in smallholder farming.**

The HLPE aims at completing these studies ahead of CFS 39 (October 2013).

In addition, the HLPE may provide input on priority issues identified by the CFS in the consultative process to develop the first version of **the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)**.

### **CFS Requests to the HLPE**

*Requests from October 2010 – CFS 36: verbatim from the final report, paragraphs 26-27.*

The Committee requested the HLPE to undertake studies, to be presented at the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the CFS, on the following important issues, in accordance with the CFS reform document agreed in 2009, and the Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE:

#### **Price volatility** (HLPE Report 1, published in July 2011)

all of its causes and consequences, including market distorting practices and links to financial markets, and appropriate and coherent policies, actions, tools and institutions to manage the risks linked to excessive price volatility in agriculture. This should include prevention and mitigation for vulnerable producers, and consumers, particularly the poor, women and children, that are appropriate to different levels (local, national, regional and international) and are based on a review of existing studies. The study should consider how vulnerable nations and populations can ensure access to food when volatility causes market disruptions.

#### **Land tenure and intl. investment in agriculture** (HLPE Report 2, published in July 2011)

- the respective roles of large-scale plantations and of small-scale farming, including economic, social, gender and environmental impacts;
- review of the existing tools allowing the mapping of available land;
- comparative analysis of tools to align large scale investments with country food security strategies

#### **Climate change**

review existing assessments and initiatives on the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition, with a focus on the most affected and vulnerable regions and populations and the interface between climate change and agricultural productivity, including the challenges and opportunities of adaptation and mitigation policies and actions for food security and nutrition.

#### **Social protection:**

ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety nets programs and policies with respect to food and nutritional security, taking into consideration differing conditions across countries and regions. This should include a review of the impact of existing policies for the improvement of living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations, especially small scale rural producers, urban and rural poor as well as women and children. It should also take into account benefits for improving local production and livelihoods and promoting better nutrition.

### *Requests from October 2011*

#### **Biofuels** (see CFS 37 final report, para 51-i)

The Committee recommends the following action points, their development and implementation, by the appropriate parties and stakeholders: (...) Actions to reduce volatility (...) Review biofuels policies - where applicable and if necessary - according to balanced science-based assessments of the opportunities and challenges they may present for food security so that biofuels can be produced where it is socially, economically and environmentally feasible to do so. In line with this, mandate the HLPE, with full consideration of resources and other CFS priorities, to conduct a science-based comparative literature analysis, taking into consideration the work produced by the FAO and Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), of the positive and negative effects of biofuels on food security to be presented to the CFS;

#### **Constraints to smallholder investment** (see CFS 37 final report, para 30-vii)

The Committee (..) requests the HLPE to include in its plans for future work, taking into account available resources, a comparative study of constraints to smallholder investment in agriculture in different contexts with policy options for addressing these constraints, taking into consideration the work done on this topic by IFAD, and by FAO in the context of COAG, and the work of other key partners. This should include a comparative assessment of strategies for linking smallholders to food value chains in national and regional markets and what can be learned from different experiences, as well as an assessment of the impacts on smallholders of public-private as well as farmer cooperative-private and private-private partnerships;

### **How is the HLPE supported?**

The HLPE is exclusively funded through a voluntary trust fund based at FAO. This trust fund covers the costs of the preparation of reports, Steering Committee and Project Teams meetings, translation and publication of reports, and minimal Secretariat support.

HLPE Steering Committee members and experts involved in the process are not financially compensated for their time and salary, a standard practise in all international expert panels.

The HLPE Secretariat is part of the CFS Secretariat. It shall assist the work of the HLPE StC and its Chair. Its functions include, though are not limited to:

- i) assist with the preparation of working budget and establishment of trust funds,
- ii) maintain a roster of experts,
- iii) organize meetings of the HLPE StC and assist Project Teams, as needed,
- iv) assist with the preparation of other support documentation,
- v) liaise as appropriate between the CFS Bureau and the HLPE Steering Committee,
- vi) maintain a system of communications, including posting of relevant reports and analyses.

The annual budget for the HLPE is of approximately 1 Million USD. The HLPE Trust Fund has received so far contributions from France, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Spain, Russia, Australia.

### **References**

- CFS Reform document adopted at the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the CFS (2009)
- Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE (27 January 2010)
- All documents and other are available on the HLPE website [www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe](http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe)

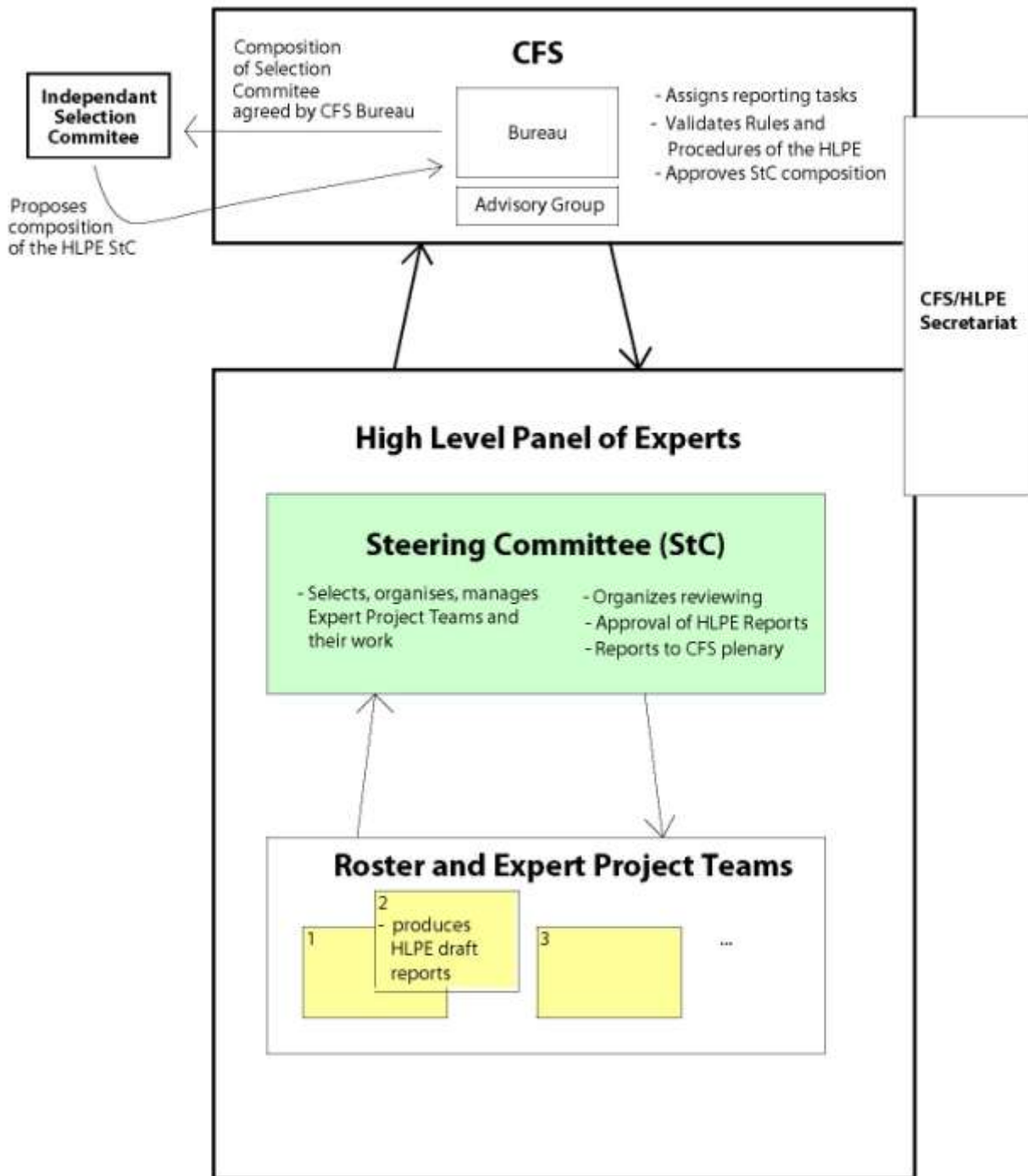


Figure 1. Schematic Illustration of the HLPE Structure and its relationship to CFS

**Figure 2: HLPE Project Cycle**

**Studies on Price Volatility  
and on Land Tenure and International Agricultural Investments**

