



Special Event

From Agreement to Action Towards Implementing the 2030 Agenda: Learning from the First Volunteer National Reviews

“What you’ve done in CFS, this juxtaposition of energy and clarity on the role of CFS in the wider context of the 2030 Agenda, is an example for other UN intergovernmental bodies.”

David Nabarro, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on the 2030 Agenda and Climate Change



Foreword



David Nabarro, Under Secretary General, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary General on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and Climate Change

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development brings together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors. The Agenda is to be implemented through partnerships. The Agenda's review mechanism is people-centred, open, inclusive, participatory, gender-sensitive, transparent for all people and human rights centred.

The CFS 43 Session is a critical milestone in the CFS history. In this 2016 Plenary, the CFS has endorsed a Framework for engaging in the 2030 Agenda that is relevant, comprehensive and rich. The CFS will contribute fully to the achievement of the SDGs.

The CFS is a unique venue. It brings all stakeholders together and enables those most affected by food insecurity to have their voice heard. The CFS addresses key policy issues that are critical to achieving several SDGs, facilitates policy coordination and convergence, monitors and reviews, shares good practice and contributes to accountability.

Only nine months after the onset of the 2030 Agenda, the global community witnessed how dozens of countries are taking serious action, and we see more are following. At the High Level Political Forum held in New York in July 2016, 22 countries volunteered to present national reviews of how they are advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We saw how these countries have prepared to implement the new Sustainable Development Agenda, reflecting the different country situations and contexts. We heard that the review exercise helped countries to advance their national processes of aligning with the SDGs in a unique way. The CFS Special Event mirrored the HLPF Voluntary National Review exercise. The 22 countries that volunteered to National Reviews in the HLPF were invited to share their experience on their efforts to integrate their food security and nutrition strategies across national policies for achieving the SDGs. Eight of these volunteer countries – China, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Mexico, Norway and Switzerland – responded to this invitation and shared their experiences, progress and challenges.

Through their written reports shared with the CFS, and during the Special Event, we heard voices from subnational governments, civil society, private sector, and the UN System agencies. Participants benefited from their experience. We have seen how important it is to learn from success and to share disappointments.

This Special Event built a link between in-depth reviews of progress on national food and nutrition security and the Voluntary National Reviews on progress towards the SDGs. It showed the value of CFS products.

I am delighted to see that this exercise is proposed as a regular activity. This will trigger positive incentives for countries to better integrate food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and inclusive rural transformation, within plans for the achievement of the SDGs. It will stimulate the use of CFS products at country level. I hope it will also encourage countries to draw upon multi-actor platforms that involve smallholder farmers and communities most affected by hunger and malnutrition.



Her Excellency Amira Gornass, Chair of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

At its 43rd Plenary Session in October 2016, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has organized a Special Event inviting volunteer countries to reflect on their national experiences in implementing the 2030 Agenda, giving special attention to their efforts to achieve the food security and nutrition related targets of the SDGs.

This Special Event was the first of its kind to be organized by CFS and it has offered an ideal space to present progress, to have dialogue between participants, and to share experiences and learnings of the actions that CFS stakeholders have taken towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In itself, the Special Event has been a tremendous opportunity to hear from eight countries - China, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Mexico, Norway and Switzerland - who volunteered to share their experiences how they are making progress in the fight against hunger and malnutrition by integrating their food security and nutrition objectives across their national policies.

In addition to the national government perspectives, at the Special Event, we also heard voices from local governments, civil society, private sector, and the Rome-based Agencies. Together, their stories reflected the multi-stakeholder nature of CFS and its deliberations.

Leveraging institutional structures and legal frameworks; political leadership; fostering ownership and inclusiveness; and policy integration were common topics in many of the presentations that we have heard. I was impressed by the different presentations and by the high level commitment showed by countries which, in some cases, have established effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to be able to track their progress on the ground.

It is encouraging to see that many countries have already been so active in implementing the SDGs. In my view, the 2030 Agenda can only be achieved by collective action and we need more countries to follow these frontrunners. We also need local, regional and global levels to enhance their collaboration and more multi-stakeholder partnerships to be established to better support government-led initiatives.

Being the foremost inclusive multi-stakeholder platform for food security and nutrition, CFS is a unique example of the new kind of partnerships that we need to establish to create ownership of the 2030 Agenda, to explore the nexus between the 17 goals and to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development.

The Special Event was particularly successful - and many feedbacks we received confirm so – because it has stimulated a frank and open discussion. For this, I want to congratulate especially the countries who accepted to share their experiences as they did not only present their success stories but also the challenges they face. Discussing the challenges, and possible solutions, is an equally important way to support others who may face the same obstacles.

Last, I am proud to say, this Special Event showcased the leadership that the CFS is exercising through its response to the 2030 Agenda. Last year, CFS has strongly increased its presence in New York and its relevance to the global development agenda; and this review process that has started at CFS43 is another element that goes in the same direction.

CFS will continue in the coming years to be the space for all CFS stakeholders to share their different approaches how countries are operationalizing the new Sustainable Development Agenda, reflecting the different country situations and contexts, and contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

Learning together and sharing experiences is a critical step in policy formulation and reforms. CFS provides the space for all members and participants to do so in a focused and coordinated manner. By continuing exchanging lessons and good practices on food security and nutrition policies, CFS stakeholders can accelerate the progress and make a huge contribution to the Agenda 2030.

Introduction

While the last twenty years have seen unprecedented progress in the fight to eradicate hunger, more than 793 million people were still going to bed hungry as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came to an end in 2015, with persisting rates of child stunting and wasting. Furthermore, other forms of malnutrition are increasing, with over 1.9 billion adults currently classified as overweight according to WHO. No country – developed or developing – is immune from nutrition problems, with all countries facing some form of malnutrition, be it undernutrition, overweight and obesity, micro-nutrient deficiencies, or multiple forms of malnutrition. At the same time, the global population continues to grow, particularly in countries where agriculture remains an important share of the national economy, and natural resources such as arable land, water, are fast depleting. Faced with these many and interlinked challenges, quick action by all countries to implement the integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its indivisible goals is needed.

“Business as usual will not take us where we need to be in the next 15 years. Our current course risks taking us towards more environmental damage, more inequality, more instability, when instead what is required is a trajectory towards shared prosperity, healthy ecosystems and effective governance.”

Arne Cartridge, Private Sector Mechanism (PSM)

At its 43rd Session, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) adopted a strategy to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among the activities proposed for CFS to support country-led efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was the identification and documentation of experiences to achieve national goals and the SDG targets related to food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture. In the run-up to CFS 43, the countries that volunteered for the first round of reporting to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York were invited to share their experiences with other CFS Members and stakeholders, on what “implementing the 2030 Agenda” means for them.

In three consecutive panels, the eight volunteer countries - China, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Finland, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland - and representatives of civil society, private sector, the UN Rome-based agencies (RBAs), and local governments shared their early experiences of the reform of their institutional frameworks, national approaches to policy integration, and how to foster broad ownership of the goals. Although each country-driven and context specific process is unique, a number of common themes emerged with convergence on some lessons learned, and initial indications of the challenges encountered so far.

There follows a summary of the experiences shared and subsequent discussions highlighting some of the key common themes.

Bringing home the SDGs: institutional arrangements

Different approaches have been adopted to align the national and international agendas on sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition issues, and a number of countries initiated reforms even before the adoption of the SDGs. Sustainable development is permeating national agendas through a variety of entry points. For some countries such as Egypt and Ecuador the principles of Sustainable Development are included either in their constitutions or in national sustainable

development strategies or objectives such as Egypt's Vision 2030. Finland and Switzerland have specific national indicators and milestones, while others have already designed specific agricultural development plans or national strategies for agriculture in line with 2030 Agenda. These include the food sovereignty system in Ecuador, the 13th five-year agricultural development plan in China and the national strategy for ecological transition towards sustainable development in France. Often, an inter-ministerial working group or committee was established with the specific task to follow-up on the implementation of commitments and ensure alignment with national priorities. In some cases, this body also enables the participation of representatives of civil society, academia, the private sector or local governments. Many countries benefitted from the experience and lessons resulting from the implementation of the MDGs and built on their framework: in Mexico, the technical committee for the MDGs became the technical committee for the SDGs.

Political leadership

All countries emphasized the importance of political leadership as a game changer in facilitating rapid implementation. This leadership is evidenced in many ways including volunteering to be among the first countries to report to the HLPF, and playing a prominent role in a variety of global processes. Examples include the introduction of the notion of Sustainable Development by Norway in the 1980s, France's commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate, and Egypt, Norway and others' important role during the negotiation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. In some countries, the institutions involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are placed directly under the authority of the Head of State or Government (President or Prime Minister) such as in Mexico where the National Council for the 2030 Agenda is headed by the President of the Republic and the specialized technical committee is headed by his office. In China, the 18th session of the National Congress of the Communist Party led to a new Food Security Strategy, steering the 13th five-year agricultural development plan. Strong political will at the very top played a key role in giving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development national importance, and in creating new momentum within the administration and society. High level political commitment and advocacy also accelerated the sense of ownership of sustainable development issues and the motivation to act at the individual level. High-level leadership is also needed from the private sector, and particularly from multinational businesses, whose activities impact many countries at different stages of the food chain. In this respect, a representative of Yara International presented the adjustment that the company made to its vision and mission, influenced by the new SDG framework: "a collaborative society, a world without hunger, a planet respected".

Fostering ownership and inclusiveness: communication and multistakeholder engagement

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for inclusive implementation by all, and requests countries to follow-up and review the progress over the next 15 years through participatory and transparent processes. In some cases, inclusive processes such as national multistakeholder consultations were used when designing the national strategy for sustainable development. The preparation of Egypt's Vision 2030 involved a two-year process with more than 150 specialised multistakeholder workshops and open meetings. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook proved an

effective communication channel in Ecuador for the government to facilitate contributions from civil society. In Norway stakeholders were invited to participate in national reporting to the HLPF, through the establishment of a mailbox for all citizens to provide inputs. Many countries have established ad hoc structures to support multistakeholder engagement in reporting through 2030.

Some countries such as Mexico have created participatory institutions at the highest level for inclusive country-led implementation. The National Council for the 2030 Agenda, headed by the President, includes local governments, international organizations, representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector. Its working groups, which monitor progress on indicators, also include a range of stakeholders. Civil society representatives in CFS called for more democratic governance of food security and nutrition issues at country level, and in particular the participation of smallholder producers (indigenous people, artisan fisherfolk, rural women, youth in rural areas, agricultural workers, nomadic pastoralists) and their communities in the design of national strategies in order to develop fair and equitable policies. The private sector called for a broader alliance, building an ecosystem of shared values. Significant progress in incorporating civil society and the private sector has been made. For example in Ecuador, the Plurinational and Intercultural Conference of Food Sovereignty (COPISA) is comprised of local governments, ministries, academia, consumers, small and medium size farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolks, harvesters, indigenous people, people of African descent and Montubios. It recommends policies, new laws, and oversees implementation of existing laws.

“Food sovereignty gives a name and a face to food producers and consumers, and places rural women at the heart of our food systems”.

Ms Veronica Cristina Vargas Román, Ministry of Health, Ecuador

Incentives to facilitate collective implementation of the 2030 Agenda have taken various forms. The Finnish National Commission for Sustainable Development set up the tool "Society's commitment to sustainable development"[LINK] in 2013, through which currently more than 250 actors (civil society, private sector, academia) have signed more than 300 operational commitments. In other countries such as Mexico, alliances for sustainability have been built among specific stakeholders including the private sector. In Switzerland, popular initiatives on food security, food sovereignty and sustainable trade have been launched.

“Often, local and regional governments are on the front line with regards to inequalities, poverty and unemployment. For them, food has been an element of debt rather than enrichment. We believe that faced with globalization, the answer could be local communities.”

Ms Valérie Nicolas, Régions de France (Union of Cities and Local Governments)

Policy integration

The majority of countries sharing experiences decided to set-up inter-ministerial working groups, both for the design of effective multi-sectorial policies, and to coordinate integrated inputs reported to the HLPF. Examples of integrated policies take various forms including:

- an approach centred on food sovereignty touching on social, ecological, health and cultural dimensions of the agricultural chain (Ecuador, Switzerland);
- agro-ecology as a framework encompassing all three dimensions of sustainability and a law on the future of agriculture and forestry with a food-systems' approach touching on social justice, food education and youth, the fight against food waste and a new momentum to developing rural areas (France);
- through the introduction of the notion of circular agriculture (China);
- by considering agriculture as a priority entry-point to other sectors such as youth employment, health, rural development, shelter (Egypt);
- by considering nutrition as a segue to environment, health, education, social inclusion, and gender equality and rights issues (Finland).

A number of countries stressed the potential benefits of using a territorial approach for policy integration, and better incorporating local governments into policy making. A representative of the Union for Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) cited a number of initiatives at the local level which aim to improve food security and sustainable agriculture and create benefits for a number of additional sectors and actors, and called for multi-levelled food governance.

“Food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture are central issues which touch upon a variety of policies: agriculture, agribusiness, nutrition, social protection and international solidarity. Agroecology is an example of how all dimensions of sustainability can be integrated into national and international policy making.”

Ms Sylvie Lemmet, Ministry of Environment, Energy and the Sea, France

“China is the most populous developing country: feeding 1.3 billion people is a top priority of government. In our 13th five-year plan, policies aim to strengthen agriculture, benefit farmers and enrich rural areas altogether. “

Mr Xie Jianmin, Permanent Representation to the UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture, China

Human rights

A key lesson learned for Mexico from experience with the MDGs was the need for a stronger focus on human rights in the public agenda. Echoing this sentiment there was broad convergence among panellists that food issues are at the very heart of human rights. According to some panellists, ensuring human rights should be

“Individuals, countries, are not objects of development but active subjects. We all have responsibilities, and we all have rights in the area of development.”

Mr Diego Alonso Simancas Gutierrez, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico

the fundamental foundation of everything we do and should be the basis of international relations as part of the collective effort to implement the 2030 Agenda. Illustrating this point, many countries incorporated rights into their efforts to achieve the food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture. They focused

on securing the right to access production resources like land and water in Ecuador, credit, infrastructure in China, the right to education in Egypt and women's and girl's rights in Finland.

Civil society is advocating for indicators to measure the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights in order to accelerate progress and achieve the SDG targets. They also call for the need for the SDGs to recognize territorial rights and collective land rights such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples as recognized by the General Assembly.

"No country and no society can achieve development and stability without respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

H.E. Amr Helmy, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Means of Implementation:

Financing transformative change

While some donor countries such as Switzerland have made financial support to partnerships to implement SDGs a priority of their international strategy, financing the shift towards sustainable development has been presented by all countries as a challenge. When hosting the regional sustainable development forum for Africa, Egypt organized events linked to the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda aiming to spark concrete commitments to finance the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Countries' responses to this challenge include : investing in science and innovation, as for instance in China; better diversification of agricultural machinery; water conservation techniques; enhanced understanding of patterns underlying major agricultural and natural disasters; more effective forecasting technologies; techniques for comprehensive, region-specific disaster prevention and capacity building.

Emphasis was also given to capacity building, training and collaboration at the national and international levels to exchange good practices so that those who have successfully made their transition can share lessons with others. Examples include collaboration on climate change issues encouraged by France, or the Egyptian Agency for Partnership for Development's capacity building and sharing of expertise activities, development assistance for trilateral, bilateral and South-South cooperation.

Enhanced collaboration between local, regional and global levels

Collaboration between different levels of government was also found to accelerate progress. While Ecuador, France, Mexico, and Switzerland support collaboration between the national/federal, and local decentralized levels, a number of regional and international collaboration mechanisms were also cited as an essential way towards building a shared language to tackle common sustainable development challenges.

At the regional level, coordination occurred through the African Regional Sustainable Development Forum organized in Egypt in May 2016 under the theme "Ensuring inclusive and integrated implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063" and a high-level meeting aiming to coordinate the preparation of the National Voluntary Reviews (NVR) to the HLPF.

"To achieve the SDGs, the combination of two processes is needed. Collaboration between the national and the international levels should be an inside-out, and an outside-in process"

Mr Bernard Lehmann, State Secretary for Agriculture, Switzerland

Regional collaboration in the Scandinavian region, sharing a number of geographical, climate, social and cultural features, also led to the development of common nutritional guidelines and joint research between Nordic countries.

The UN was highlighted as important for international collaboration. A representative of the RBAs gave examples of how FAO, IFAD and WFP support country-level implementation through their programmes, and some countries mentioned how collaboration with the UN specialized Agencies to prepare the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018-2022 resulted in better alignment of national priorities with SDG objectives. Some developed countries advocate for agricultural policy convergence in their development and cooperation strategies to achieve the SDGs. Their international strategies include the participation in multistakeholder international initiatives, such as the Ten-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production (10YFP) co-chaired by Switzerland with South-Africa, support to UN coordination mechanisms (High Level Task-Force for Food and Nutrition Security), and strengthening food security governance (CFS).

Tracking progress mechanisms

The establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the implementation of the SDGs in countries is at different stages but has generally taken the form of an inter-ministerial working group. In Egypt, a Sustainable Development Unit was established to lead the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the SDGs and Egypt's vision 2030, and monitoring and evaluation units were established in "line ministries" to support the monitoring of programmes and policies. By setting up a new IT platform with all the information on the SDGs, including disaggregated data by gender, age, geographical location and schooling, Mexico aims to guarantee a fully transparent process. In Norway, an inter-ministerial working group is reporting both to Parliament and to the budget commission. In Mexico and Switzerland, such groups are currently defining national (and local) objectives, indicators and milestones. While monitoring is the responsibility of countries, the UN is called to play a central role in supporting them to establish monitoring frameworks and generating quality data. For food security and nutrition, this data will be compiled and analysed in the new State of Food and Nutrition in the World Report, jointly published by FAO, IFAD and WFP in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, to be released in June 2017, which will enable a global-level progress review.

"Making a change is not easy, the SDGs are a huge challenge to all. Implementing the 2030 Agenda is not always a win-win based on common interest, but we need to find solutions. Such exchanges in CFS are great to learn from each other and should continue."

Ms Sirpa Sarlio-Lähteenkorva, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland

Use of CFS products

Although monitoring commitments are States' responsibility, CFS can play a fundamental role in guiding countries towards success by promoting the implementation of existing policy tools such as the Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (VGGT). CFS policy products are by nature inclusive, through the multistakeholder process to develop them, and are in most cases also multisectoral, addressing food security issues that cut across sectors. Their implementation will support country efforts to achieve the SDG targets in an integrated manner. Countries such as Ecuador, Egypt, France and Switzerland are actively promoting the use of CFS policy guidance and recommendations at home and in international cooperation programmes and in many cases have collaborated with non-government stakeholders such as the CFS Civil Society Mechanism, the Private Sector Mechanism and the RBAs in using CFS products at national and regional levels.

“States have duties to establish specific, well founded initiatives to define and monitor commitments, and CFS can play a fundamental role in helping countries towards success, giving them guidance in the area of policy, and promoting the implementation of what they have decided upon and agreed, guided for example by the VGGTs.”

Taina Hedman Perez, Civil Society Mechanism (CSM)

Challenges faced

Financing and resource mobilization were considered the main challenges. Regional disparities, either between rural and urban areas within countries, or between countries themselves in regions, was considered another.

Developed countries with no previous MDG experience expected the implementation of the SDGs to be challenging, but their experience turned out to be very positive. Contradictory international (binding or non-binding) policy frameworks are deemed an obstacle to implementing the 2030 Agenda, and there was a call to promote policy coherence and address these trade-offs sooner rather than later in the relevant international bodies. Lastly, communicating the 2030 Agenda to ensure common ownership and implementation of the goals is a challenge still faced by many countries who will be “learning by doing” in the next few years, and learning from the experiences of the next volunteer national reviews in 2017.

“We haven’t focused in our discussion yet on how we address the contradictions in what we do. Technological fixes are not good enough; science and research are very important, but capacity development and dialogue are also needed. There’s nothing magic about it. It’s just about having the will to connect”.

Rob Vos, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO

Contradictory international (binding or non-binding) policy frameworks are deemed an obstacle to implementing the 2030 Agenda, and there was a call to promote policy coherence and address these trade-offs sooner rather than later in the relevant international bodies.

“Our concern was that the goals would not be relevant for Norway, being one of the most developed countries of the world. Yet working together for the voluntary reporting felt inspiring, engaging, and created networks that were not previously there. There was unanimity in favor of the process”.

Ms Gunnvor Berge, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
