



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Forty-ninth Session

"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"

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**THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
CFS**

I. Background

1. The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) is scheduled to take place in New York City during the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2021. The Chair of the CFS is invited to participate, to represent the interests and views of the Committee and its High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), continuing a series of meetings between himself and Special Envoy Ms Agnes Kalibata, with whom he first met in person on 10 February 2020 in Rome. At their first meeting, joined by the HLPE Steering Committee Chair Mr Martin Cole and senior staff, the Chair briefed on the CFS's unique multi-stakeholder platform, its constituent parts, its products and current Programme of Work, and the structured science-policy interface that defines the CFS HLPE – modeled on the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change.

2. Following several subsequent exchanges, including several CFS Bureau meetings and public CFS events on COVID-19 where the Special Envoy and Deputy both spoke, the Special Envoy and CFS Chair exchanged letters on 11 November 2020 whereby CFS was offered an “enhanced structural role” in Summit planning, including having the CFS Chair join the Deputy Secretary General’s Advisory Committee, the CFS Secretariat as part of the five ‘Action Tracks,’ and PSM and CSM invited as constituencies in the Action Tracks. Also, the CFS HLPE Steering Committee Chair was invited (in his personal capacity) to join the 29-member Science Group, where no recognition of the HLPE nor its 15 reports published since 2009 was made – including HLPE Report #12 on Nutrition

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and Food Systems, which formed the basis of CFS's Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN), adopted in February of 2021.

3. During the UNFSS "Pre-Summit" held in Rome 26-28 July 2021, Deputy Secretary-General Ms Amina Mohammed (DSG) noted in the event's closing session that decisions and outcomes of the Summit would "return to Rome", where the three Rome-based UN agencies and CFS were expected to play some (unspecified) follow-up roles, respectively. Emphasizing that no new structures were needed, she highlighted the importance of "existing structures... being more 'responsive' to the ambition laid out by those participating in the pre-Summit." Referring to CFS as an "essential platform" for inclusive, collaborative work on food security and nutrition for all, she noted that CFS "must be more responsive" to meet the demands of the global community and achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. While not directly addressing the CFS's HLPE, she concluded that "science capacities at local and country levels must be strengthened".

4. At CFS 49, in Session IV scheduled for 12 October, Members and Participants will debate how the CFS - its platform, its products, and its HLPE - may be impacted by decisions taken and initiatives launched by national leaders and other stakeholders at the Summit. Given the lack of clarity on what, precisely, those decisions will include, this paper seeks to enumerate issues that are currently being discussed among groups engaged in the Summit's planning, and those based on outcomes of the pre-Summit. During CFS 49, with the benefit of knowing what those outcomes and decisions are, Members and Participants will have an opportunity to debate their respective understanding of potential implications for the Committee, its HLPE, and its Multi-Year Programme of Work. By the closing of this CFS-49 session, Members are expected to agree on Draft Conclusions prepared by the CFS Bureau for this session.

II. Issues for consideration for potential implications

A. The CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW)

5. The current CFS MYPOW (2020-2023) was negotiated and adopted at CFS-46 in October 2019. Along with the finalization of policy convergence processes on Food Systems and Nutrition and on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches, the policy products that are expected to be completed as part of this MYPOW are on the topics of gender, youth, data, and inequalities. Annual plenary sessions, governance meetings, inter-sessional events, public outreach and promotion, and resource mobilization are also part of this Programme of Work. Should new proposals or ideas arise in the context of the UNFSS, to respond to the DSG's call for a "more responsive" CFS, the plenary will need to debate the current structure, order, budget and workload of the Committee, its HLPE, and its Members and Participants to determine respective implications. The Committee may wish to consider if such additional projects linked to the UNFSS, and in conformity with a "more responsive" CFS is practical and desirable in light of the current funding levels, administrative modalities, and workload considerations.

B. Science-Policy Interface: the CFS HLPE

6. As noted earlier, despite the CFS HLPE representing the UN System's only formal science-policy interface on issues of food security and nutrition since its creation in 2009, the HLPE was not included in the UNFSS Scientific Group as an institution, though its current Chair (and previous) was invited to join in his/her personal capacity, along with one other current HLPE Steering Committee member. While a few references to HLPE work were made in the Science Group's nine substantive papers, the products and experience of the Panel have been largely ignored in the UNFSS preparation process. For example, in 2020 the CFS HLPE produced a synthesis report entitled: "Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030," which sought to bring together lessons learned from HLPE's first ten years of work. The report highlights the need to take a food system approach, mapped out four key policy shifts needed to achieve SDG2 and stressed the need to widen our

understanding of food security to include six dimensions – emphasizing the importance of agency and sustainability in addition to the standard four pillars most often seen in policy documents: availability, access, utilization and stability. Unfortunately, this important report has been largely overlooked in the UNFSS preparation process, as have been the HLPE’s latest report on youth, published in July 2021, marking the start of a CFS policy convergence process on a critical issue for food system transformation – youth engagement and employment –, and the 2019 CFS HLPE report on Agroecological and other innovative approaches that formed the basis of what was endorsed in June 2021 as formal CFS policy recommendations. In August 2021, the DSG sought the CFS Chair’s support to help sustain momentum post-Summit around science-policy interface, arranging a call with the head of the UNFSS Science Group and the chair and vice-chairs of the HLPE. In their call, the head of the UNFSS Science Group proposed a new scientific “round-table” structure, in which the CFS HLPE would participate. Not only would such a new structure be misaligned with what the DSG has stated publicly on many occasions about “no new structures”, but it would also seem to undermine the HLPE’s unique, member-state supported role as a legitimate, inclusive and transparent science-policy interface on food security and nutrition. Nonetheless, the UNFSS preparation process has called into question whether the size, scope and structure of the CFS HLPE is currently fit-for-purpose, to which the HLPE Steering Committee Chair has already suggested areas where the Panel can be strengthened and improved, including building links to regional science-policy bodies and initiatives, and/or country transition pathways that are emerging from the 145 national dialogues.

C. National dialogues/transition pathways

7. As clearly recognized by the DSG and others, the most important area for progress in food systems transition is at country level, whereby national transition pathways are in the process of being formulated and implemented by 145 UN member states. From their very first encounter, the CFS Chair requested the FSS Special Envoy to ensure that CFS’s multilaterally-negotiated flagship products (VGGTs, RAI Principles, Framework for Action, VGFSyN, Right-to-Food Guidelines), along with CFS’s inclusive, multi-stakeholder, science-informed model were promoted in the context of these national dialogues. As that has yet to happen in any meaningful way, the Committee may want to consider whether it wishes to pursue the promotion of CFS as a model format for these national dialogues, and whether any further efforts/decisions are warranted to promote CFS’s major policy products in the context of these national dialogues. Also, does the Committee wish to consider a role in reviewing the progress of these Dialogues/Pathways during its annual plenary session or other inter-sessional events?

D. Coalitions of action

8. At the conclusion of the Pre-Summit on 28 July, the DSG announced the intention of having eight “Coalitions” of action, into which the work and contributions of the five Action Tracks would be absorbed, with leadership coming from groups of Member States and other actors. At the Advisory Committee meeting in August 2021, the DSG noted the intention of further reducing the number of these Coalitions to five – a number which is more manageable for governments and the UN System. This issue is far from settled, as is the question of what, if any, role may be envisioned for the CFS in the context of these Coalitions. Will CFS products be promoted in these Coalitions? Will these Coalitions be supported by a structured scientific process, separate and independent of the CFS HLPE? Will the CFS have any role in reviewing the progress of these Coalitions, and if so, how and when? The Committee may wish to consider whether and how the CFS Chair, its Bureau, the Secretariat, and/or the HLPE is involved in these Coalitions.

E. Financial pledges by private sector, businesses

9. One of the areas of work ongoing via the leadership of the Chair of Action Track One is an effort to have private companies make significant financial investment pledges toward sustainable food systems during the Summit, and during subsequent events. The Committee may wish to consider

whether the CFS is an appropriate forum for the review of these pledges and for support for soliciting new pledges from various private sector and foundation sources.

F. Other initiatives

10. Initiatives such as the “Game Changers Lab” have approached the CFS Chair and Secretariat with suggestions for mutual collaboration to help link the Lab’s projects and initiatives with CFS Member States and others who might be interested. The Committee may wish to consider whether the CFS is the appropriate venue for consideration of such a brokering or platform role for initiatives of this nature that are associated with the UNFSS.

III. Conclusion

11. This is an initial mapping of possible implications of the UNFSS on the CFS – potentially impacting its mandate, role and/or structure – and on which the Bureau Membership would benefit to come to a common understanding and position. More issues may emerge from the Summit itself that would warrant a discussion at the CFS 49 Plenary.