



# COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

## **Forty-ninth Session**

***"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"***

**11-14 October 2021**

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF  
THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL OF EXPERTS (HLPE)**

**Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we have heard, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the weaknesses of our current food systems and the urgent need to reform them. Hunger and malnutrition remain a major concern, as the SOFI report points out. The triple burden of malnutrition now makes it the world's leading public health problem.

No society, no country escapes it, whatever its level of development.

If nothing is done, current trends, especially the explosion of hunger and obesity, will lead us to disaster.

I am particularly glad that the critical and emerging issues identified by the HLPE in 2017, included in the CFS Quadrennial Programme of Work for 2020-2023, and the 2017 HLPE report on Nutrition and Food Systems have, this year, resulted in important voluntary guidelines.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the warm words from previous speakers about the important work of this Committee and the HLPE.

Friends, I am serving this week for the last time as chairperson of the HLPE Steering Committee. So allow me, today and in the days to come, to acknowledge the fantastic work done over the past twelve years by our predecessors and colleagues in the project teams, the Steering Committee, but also all those who have contributed, through the open electronic consultations or as peer-reviewers, to make 16 HLPE reports, 2 notes on critical and emerging issues and 3 issues paper on COVID-19 which we have heard about. And they are documents, I think, whose quality has been recognized by peers and by the political sphere, well beyond CFS.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the HLPE Secretariat. You know, you think about this current term, it has been a completely virtual term: the current Steering Committee only met once, in Rome, and then we were right into the COVID issues paper, the “Global Narrative” report (HLPE 15), which meant a lot of extra-burden on the Secretariat. It is a wonderful work and support that they have done this year, so I just wanted to mention that.

As you know, the HLPE was created in 2009 with explicit reference, actually, to a “Food Security IPCC”. How can science and knowledge help to make political decisions in our uncertain world? This is certainly – and remains – a major issue today.

Food systems cannot be resilient to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic if they are not sustainable. So we do need to redesign our food systems which today account for nearly one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, consume large amounts of natural resources, result in biodiversity loss and negative health impacts (due to both under- and over-nutrition) and do not allow fair economic returns and livelihoods for all actors, and especially, particularly for primary producers.

So putting our food systems on a sustainable path will bring new opportunities for operators in the food value chain. New technologies and scientific discoveries, combined with increased public awareness and demand for sustainable food, would benefit all of our stakeholders.

The HLPE 2020 “Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030” report identified four crucial policy shifts needed to achieve this essential radical transformation. This year, our report on “Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems”, which will be presented to the CFS plenary on Wednesday, gives us the keys to passing on the torch to future generations.

We already have all the evidence to decide to act. And, of course, this requires courageous actions, but inaction, apart from passing on a terrible legacy to future generations, would cost us even more.

Beyond Manichean rhetoric, the scientific community can and must enlighten the management of the world by the critical analysis of facts and speeches, highlighting uncertainties, explaining possible trajectories and understanding the blocking factors, controversies, conflicts of interest and asymmetries.

One thing we always try and do within the HLPE, whatever diverging views or conflicting ideas in the literature, is to really understand why there are diverging views and present them in an articulate way to help policy makers and readers understand the different positions.

Other expert groups, notably the IPCC and IPBES, are now addressing food issues. I am delighted that the Secretariat's special event on Thursday is devoted to interactions with the Rio Conventions.

So I would like to close, on behalf of the HLPE, by thanking you all for your support and warm wishes, and I wish us fruitful debates throughout the week!

Thank you very much.