

**CFS 47: Voluntary Guidelines on Food Security and Nutrition**  
**February 10, 2021, 9:30 a.m. (Rome)**

**U.S. STATEMENT:**

- The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition are the endpoint of an enormous effort by the Committee on World Food Security to reach consensus on a set of recommendations to improve performance across food systems for nutrition. We extend our gratitude to the Chair, and former Chairs.
- The Voluntary Guidelines are ambitious as they seek to enhance food system performance across the three pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic. They offer advice on building more sustainable food systems and improving nutrition for all, for current and future generations.
- Importantly, the Voluntary Guidelines do not categorize some food systems or agricultural approaches as sustainable or unsustainable. Our efforts to improve the sustainability of agriculture must be evaluated against measurable outcomes at the appropriate level on food affordability and accessibility, farmer income and wellbeing, and environmental indicators. The guidelines acknowledge we must do the hard work of assessing real impacts and outcomes.
- The Guidelines also highlight that there is not a one-size fits all approach to improving nutrition or the sustainability of agriculture or food systems and that recommendations should be adapted to local contexts. As a result, the Voluntary Guidelines largely avoid overly prescriptive approaches that limit the ability of governments to develop solutions.
- The Voluntary Guidelines recognize the vital role the private sector can play in promoting healthy diets and more sustainable food systems. Reaching these twin goals is an endeavor that truly requires all sectors to work together.
- Perhaps most importantly, the Guidelines lay the foundation for a “sustainable food systems” approach to food security and nutrition that recognizes the complexity of food systems and the fact that decisions made at one point in a system can reverberate throughout the system. This

approach seeks to balance the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and recognizes the need to assess and manage tradeoffs. The balanced, holistic sustainable food systems approach outlined in the Guidelines provides a strong foundation for our efforts to build more sustainable food systems and for the UN Food Systems Summit.

- We would like to note that the United States interprets the section on the make-up of healthy diets to call for regional and cultural flexibility in dietary patterns which best support their populations to consume healthy diets. We also interpret “nutrients of public health concern” to be both important nutrients that are required but consumed below recommendations (e.g., dietary fiber), or that people consume too much of (e.g., sodium).
- As mentioned during the negotiations, there remain issues in the Guidelines the United States does not fully support. Therefore, the United States endorses these guidelines with an Explanation of Position.
- Mr. Chair, the United States requests that this Explanation of Position be included, full-text, as an annex in the Committee’s plenary report. We also request a footnote be added to the page in which the Committee endorses the Guidelines, noting the U.S. Explanation of Position.
- I will now read our Explanation of Position at dictation speed so that it can be entered into the record. Following my intervention, we will provide a text copy to the Secretariat.

### **U.S. Explanation of Position:**

- **Paragraph 3.2.4(d) of the Guidelines:** We interpret the comment on “agreed relevant international and national standards” to mean that the Guidelines should be complementary to standards adopted by international standards setting bodies and adapted to national contexts, given that national standards do not need agreement from outside parties. We emphasize that specific recommendations contained in the Guidelines should be considered as one option out of many possible tools depending on local contexts.

- **Paragraph 40 of the Guidelines:** The Guidelines should be applied consistent with other instruments only as far as each of these instruments are relevant and applicable and as far as they have been agreed, acknowledged and/or endorsed by respective Member States and without prejudice to prevailing international agreements. The United States underscores that paragraph 18 of the 2030 Agenda calls for countries to implement the Agenda in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of States under international law. We further note that the 2030 Agenda is non-binding and does not create or affect rights or obligations under international law, nor does it create any new financial commitments. We also highlight our mutual recognition that 2030 Agenda implementation must respect and be without prejudice to the independent mandates of other processes and institutions, including negotiations, and does not prejudice or serve as precedent for decisions and actions underway in other forums.
- **Paragraph 44 of the Guidelines:** Economic sanctions, whether unilateral or multilateral, can be a successful means of achieving foreign policy objectives. In cases where the United States has applied sanctions, we have used them with specific objectives in mind, including as a means to promote a return to rule of law or democratic systems, to insist on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, or to prevent threats to international security. We are within our rights to deploy our trade and commercial policy as tools to achieve our objectives. Targeted economic sanctions can be an appropriate, effective, and legitimate alternative to the use of force.
- **Paragraph 45 of the Guidelines:** The United States would like to note that the negotiations to eliminate agricultural export subsidies referenced in paragraph 45 of the Guidelines, were finalized during the Tenth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC10). The United States maintains that it is incorrect to imply that the Doha Development Round negotiations were concluded on these issues, and any reference to the Doha Development Agenda should be avoided.
- **Paragraph 65 of the Guidelines:** It is our view that the CFS must respect the independent mandates of other processes and institutions, including trade negotiations, and must not involve itself in decisions and actions in other forums, including at the WTO. This includes calls that undermine incentives for innovation, such as technology transfer that is not both voluntary and on mutually agreed terms. The United States would also like to note that

implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines should be consistent with paragraph 18 of the 2030 Agenda, which “emphasizes that the Agenda is to be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the rights and obligations of States under international law.

- **Paragraph 66 of the Guidelines:** We note that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for action by all. We regret that language was inserted into these voluntary guidelines that seeks to selectively highlight different elements of the 2030 Agenda that are not broadly germane to the topic at hand and distract from its focus. This language should not be seen as a precedent for future documents. We underscore here that recalling selective paragraphs from the 2030 Agenda does not change their meaning or application, and paragraph 66 of the Guidelines indicates that they are recalled only to the extent relevant. For example, by recalling paragraph 12 of the 2030 Agenda, which reaffirms all the principles of the Rio Declaration, it should not be understood that all of the principles of the Rio Declaration are applicable to the range of issues addressed in these guidelines. Furthermore, with respect to the quoted footnote language on common but differentiated responsibilities, we note that the 2030 Agenda only reaffirmed that principle as it was set out in principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, where it was explicitly limited to certain types of global environmental degradation. Recalling paragraph 12 of the 2030 Agenda in this context does not imply, and the United States does not accept, that this principle has relevance or application to the broad range of issues addressed in these voluntary guidelines, the 2030 Agenda, food security or to sustainable development as a whole.
- **Paragraphs 3.1.1(c) & 3.3.1(a) of the Guidelines:** The United States would like to note its concern on two references to multilateral trade: paragraph 3.1.1(c) and paragraph 3.3.1(a). In both paragraphs, the language appears to blend references from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with references to multilateral trade under the World Trade Organization (WTO). We are concerned that blending voluntary commitments from the SDGs, with legally binding obligations agreed to by WTO Members, creates confusion around the scope of what has been agreed to in the WTO. For greater clarity, these two sentences should reference “...a rules-based, open, non-discriminatory, transparent, and predictable multilateral trading system...”, to reflect concepts that have been agreed to by WTO Members and are foundational principles of the multilateral trading

system. These two sentences should exclude “universal” and “equitable”, terms used in the context of voluntary commitments.

- **Paragraph 3.1.4(a) of the Guidelines:** The United States reaffirms its support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As explained in our 2010 Statement of Support, “the United States recognizes the significance of the Declaration’s provisions on free, prior and informed consent, which the United States understands to call for a process of meaningful consultation with tribal leaders, but not necessarily the agreement of those leaders, before the actions addressed in those consultations are taken
- **The United States is pleased to endorse the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition with the inclusion of this Explanation of Position** as the Voluntary Guidelines lay the foundation for a sustainable food systems approach to food security and nutrition. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts at working towards consensus language in all areas of the Voluntary Guidelines, the United States must disassociate from certain paragraphs due to the following issues. This Explanation of Position includes U.S. comments on paragraphs 3.2.4(d) and 40 of the Guidelines, and the United States disassociates from paragraphs 44, 45, 65, 66, 3.1.1(c), 3.3.1(a), and 3.1.4(a) of the Guidelines.

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- Mr. Chair, this is the end of our Explanation of Position.

