

Summary

CFS 49 Side Event 9 on Human Rights Nutrition and Law: Keys to Transforming Food Systems

On 13 October 2021 FAO, Laval University, WHO, UNICEF, IDLO and UN Nutrition held a successful Side Event at the 49th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on the subject of Human Rights, Nutrition and Law: Keys to Transforming Food Systems.

Stineke Oenema, Executive Secretary of UN Nutrition moderated the event. In her opening remarks, she noted the establishment of a Community of Practice under the auspices of UN Nutrition on the subject of nutrition, human rights and law. This helped bring the organizers together in the side event.

Professor Geneviève Parent, Legal Research Chair in Food Diversity and Security at Laval University and Margret Vidar, FAO Legal Officer presented the first keynote presentation, which provided an overview of the recent FAO Legal Paper [Transforming agri-food systems - Legislative interventions for improved nutrition and sustainability - Preliminary version for public consultation](#). They stressed the central role of legal frameworks in the transition towards sustainable food systems, looking at international, regional and the national level (constitutions, framework laws and sectoral legislation) inducing changes in systems supporting food production, in food supply chains, and in food environment/consumers behaviors.

Katrin Engelhardt, WHO nutrition scientist, then presented considerations on ethics and human rights-based approach in WHO's normative work related to the implementation of food environment policies, including fiscal policies to promote healthy diets, school food and nutrition policies, food marketing policies and nutrition labelling policies and linked it to the newly adopted CFS [Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition](#).

Afterwards, five panelists discussed the role of the law and human rights in advancing food systems transformation. They shared their experiences on a variety of issues related to human rights, nutrition and law, ranging from the Latin American experiences with framework law on food security and nutrition (Juan García y Cebolla), Sri Lanka's front of pack traffic light system for beverages (Dr Lakshman Gamlath) and India's supreme court case on the right to food and its National Food Security Act (Dr Dipa Sinha), to strategic litigation to push for regulation of marketing to children in Uganda (David Kabanda) and human rights based approaches to food security and nutrition building from the HIV/AIDS experiences (Allan Achesa Maleche).

A rich discussion ensued among the panelists and participants on the essential role of law in the transition towards more sustainable food systems. The discussions covered a range of different ways in which laws, including legislative measures and litigation, were used to implement change to the food system. The shared experiences also illustrated how human rights based approaches can initiate, facilitate and strengthen legal and policy reforms. Participants also raised need for coherence at all levels (international, regional and national) and the necessity to break down silos.

In final reflections, legal experts from multilateral organizations (Katherine Shats, UNICEF, Maria Chiara Campisi, IDLO, Margret Vidar, FAO and Kate Robertson, WHO) provided their key takeaways and highlights from the event, including the following considerations:

- a child rights perspective;
- the importance of ensuring civil society participation in the legislative process to transform food systems;
- the multisector nature of food systems;
- the importance of identifying potential pathways for legislative reform under domestic law and taking a practical approach, using existing mechanisms where feasible;
- call for further work in the field of transformative legislation.

More information about the event is available at the [CFS website](#) (under Side Event 9). You can also look at the [Flyer](#) for the event is here and the [Agenda](#) here. [Watch the recording](#) of the event.