

## 51st plenary session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS51)

**Agenda item VI:** *Leveraging the Use of Data for Driving Food Security and Nutrition Policy: Endorsement and Uptake of the Policy Recommendations on Strengthening collection and use of FSN Data Collection and related Analysis Tools.*

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### **Statement by FAO Chief Economist, Dr Maximo Torero Cullen**

- FAO welcomes the Policy Recommendations on Strengthening Collection and Use of Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Data and commends the CFS for discussing the endorsement this relevant document, which will play a key role in ensuring that FSN policies are adequately informed;
- As we have said in the past, we interpret the inclusion of the data workstream in the CFS agenda as a recognition of the central role that relevant, timely and granular data play in strengthening a virtuous process of evidence-based policy making to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition;
- For this aim, we need to recognize the complexity of the systems that generates food security and nutrition for all people. Therefore, we need proper conceptual and modeling frameworks that capture the essential elements and how they are linked, from the macro to the micro, from the global environment to the food production and distribution systems, focusing on the ultimate impact at the individual level, to be able to guide agrifood systems transformation.
- In this sense, FAO agrees with these recommendations, and, as the specialized agency of the United Nations on food and agriculture with a clear mandate on data, is ready to work on their implementation;
- As a first commitment in this regard, we would like to inform you that the work of the CFS's stream on data and its resulting policy recommendations will be included in FAO's biennial report to the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in February 2024;
- The UN Statistical Commission is the highest intergovernmental decision-making body responsible for promoting and coordinating the development of national statistics and data-related systems, discussing, and endorsing international standards and the development of concepts and methods, including their implementation at the national and international levels.
- Moreover, FAO has already engaged with WHO, UNICEF and Member Countries to jointly support and advocate for the creation of a new statistical data domain on food security and nutrition statistics in the UN Statistical Commission, which is expected to catalyze higher and more focused attention to this issue;
- FAO as Secretariat of the Committee of Experts on Food Security, Agriculture and Rural Statistics, a specialized Committee under the auspices of the Statistical Commission composed by country members. stands ready to serve as a bridge between the CFS and the Commission. This Committee of Experts will not only be the appropriate place to discuss the harmonization of FSN data, but will also serve as an amplifier of these CFS Recommendations;
- The new CFS Policy Recommendations on FSN data are therefore very timely, and are expected to stimulate productive discussions on the production but more importantly the use of FSN data in decision-making;

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- The recommendations will help define a more systemic view of FSN data as they address many outstanding issues, that are usually not comprehensively discussed due to the fragmented nature of FSN data at the national and international level;
- In particular, we believe it is important to work together to find solutions to the constraints that hamper the production and use of FSN data, mainly by building capacities and raising awareness, as well as, closing data gaps, especially in:
  - specific domains, such as the gaps on data on diets and the quality of diets;
  - geographically, as there are entire regions of the world where data availability and access are severely limited; and
  - group-specific, such as data disaggregated by sex and age, or data for small-scale food producers.
- We would also like to emphasize the need to alleviate the financial constraints that low and lower-middle income countries face and prevent them from investing in data. In this way, this recommendation should be a call to the international donor community and International Organizations in general, to coordinate and scale up investments aimed to overcome the data gaps.
- FAO plays an important role in providing solutions to these issues through initiatives such as the 50x2030, the largest initiative the world has ever seen to support the strengthening of the statistical systems and generate relevant data on agriculture in low and lower-middle income countries.
- Another example is the Global Strategy for improving agriculture and rural statistics and Voices of the Hungry project, which developed the Food Insecurity Experience Scale and is currently supporting countries to collect and analyse the data required to assess the state of food security at country level. Also worthy to mention is the IPC Global Platform which is a multi-partner initiative that provides decision makers with an agreed assessment on acute food insecurity to inform emergency response in crisis countries.
- These initiatives need to be strengthened and scaled up but at the same time there is a need to mobilize financial resources to develop new initiatives aimed at filling the fundamental gaps that the new CFS recommendations recognize, in particular from national governments, donor countries, philanthropies and the private sector.
- Finally, we have ahead of us the objective of defining governance frameworks for the different types of data that have emerged during the so-called Data Revolution and these recommendations also take this discussion into account, hopefully in a productive way towards strengthening coherent and reliable FSN data systems at the country level;
- It is likely that many of these discussions will continue in the countries and in other international fora, but it is certain that the CFS has set a very important path towards the common interests of its members, which is to contribute to improving food security in the world through better data.
- Once again, we would like to reiterate that FAO, as the United Nations mandated agency to achieve food security and promoting healthy diets for all, is fully committed to playing a stronger role in the implementation of these agreed recommendations.