



CFS Secretariat
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RE: Finalization of the set of recommendations on Connecting Smallholders to Markets

Dear CFS stakeholders,

I am pleased to inform you that the one-off Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) meeting to agree on recommendations on Connecting Smallholders to Markets will take place on 8 and 9 of June 2016 in the Red Room of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Rome, Italy. The objective is to finalize the set of recommendations for submission to the CFS Plenary for endorsement in October 2016. The Chair's proposal, circulated on 6 May, attempts to address in a balanced way the written inputs received and the outcomes of the informal consultation, and will be the basis for reaching agreement.

During the informal consultation on 28 April 2016, we had an exchange on the substance of the document as well as on the process. There was general support that the nature of this document is to recommend policies and practices which evidence suggests can help smallholders connect to markets, without being prescriptive bearing in mind the lack of data on informal markets.

With regards to the process the OEWG should follow in June, the majority of stakeholders are ready to support a slightly different process. I thus propose the following approach to reaching consensus:

Procedures: The process will follow the rules of procedure established by CFS. It will be facilitated by the OEWG Chair and will be supported by the CFS Secretariat. The Chair may request the assistance of members to facilitate Friends of the Chair discussions, if they are needed.

Format: The Chair will ask for input on any i) change to be made (deletion of a topic or additional topic to be covered), and ii) clarifications on meaning. In the interest of time, I will ask all CFS Members and Participants to abstain from making opening statements, avoid editing and instead target interventions on substantive topics or issues that need to be amended.

Modalities: The proposed modalities for the negotiation are as follows:

- Priority will be given to regional and group interventions – as such Regional Groups and Participant constituencies are encouraged to form collective positions wherever possible;

- Proposed changes will be recorded by the Secretariat in order to support the Chair in formulating a Chair's proposal for consensus agreement, but will not be scribed on screen with each intervention;
- In the interests of time and efficiency, the Chair will consider how many interventions will be heard before coming up with a Chair's Proposal;
- Based on the round of interventions, a Chair's proposal will be then formulated for the paragraphs under discussion and projected on screen in track changes, on which the Chair will ask for agreement;
- If there is no agreement, the Chair will call for an additional round of interventions, after which a new Chair's proposal will be formulated and presented in track changes for agreement;
- If no agreement can be reached in the second round, the Chair will immediately invite a Friends of the Chair discussion or encourage a bilateral or smaller group discussion where the issue may need discussion between only a small number of participants. Friends of the Chair discussions will, if required, be held either over lunch time or late afternoon after the end of plenary session, to resolve outstanding issues.

Sessions: There will be two sessions each day (9.30-12.30 and 14.30-17.30). Each session will last three hours unless otherwise decided by the Chair. As foreshadowed in the informal consultation on 28 April, and due to lack of funding provided for the work, unfortunately no interpretation service foreseen. If needed, the Chair may call for extra evening sessions to make sure that agreement is reached by the end of the second day.

I strongly urge all CFS Members and Participants to review the draft set of recommendations in detail and share in advance of the June negotiation any key issues requiring changes with the CFS Secretariat, no later than Friday 27 May.

All delegations are encouraged to arrive with clear instructions and mandate to agree on the Final Draft of recommendations on Connecting Smallholders to Markets.

I am confident that in spirit of cooperation and partnership we will be able to reach a successful conclusion by 9 June.

Many thanks and looking forward to seeing you in June.

Anna Gebremedhin

Chair of the OEWG on Connecting Smallholders to Markets