

PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS CONCERNING CFS THEMATIC WORKSTREAMS

PROPOSAL F

Reducing inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition

a) Proponents

Joint Proposal of CSM, Hungary, Indonesia and South Africa.

b) Outputs associated with the proposed thematic workstream

The workstream is intended to contribute to output 1.1 (inclusive discussions) and also to output 2.1 (global policy guidance).

c) Rationale for including the proposed thematic workstream, based on the prioritization criteria and building on CFS main comparative advantages, as described in Annex B of the CFS Evaluation Implementation Report

The HLPE Note on Critical and Emerging Issues from 2017 describes the relevance of inequalities for food security and nutrition in very clear and precise terms. The first four paragraphs of the following rationale are primarily based on the HLPE Note and include some additional aspects which are important to the proponents:

Social and economic inequalities were one of the main causes of the “hunger riots” in 2008 (HLPE, 2011). This issue, identified in the first HLPE C&EI note (HLPE, 2014a), continues to be critical. Inequalities are pointed out as a major concern by many organizations (OECD, 2011; WEF, 2013; IMF, 2014; Oxfam, 2014; IMF 2017). Since then, evidence shows the increasing risks to food security and nutrition can be linked to high level of corporate concentration in food production, input supply, transformation, trade and distribution (Hendrickson, 2014; HLPE, 2016). Unequal endowments in agricultural assets and access to natural resources on the one hand (De Schutter, 2011) and, consequently, to income on the other hand remain complex and multifaceted major concerns for FSN.

These inequalities lead to increased rates of poverty and malnutrition, impact on the governance of food systems, on unequal access to food, land and decent working conditions; they raise more broadly ethical, economic (IMF, 2014), social and environmental concerns. Unequal access to food is in turn a driver of many other inequalities and extreme hunger. Sustained disparities between vulnerable and other social groups can slow growth and lead to political instability (Stiglitz, 2012) and to low levels of investment in the provision of public goods and services (UNDESA, 2013b). The resulting social tensions, migration fluxes and political instability continue to affect many countries.

The increasing awareness that inequalities should be addressed as serious impediments to social cohesion, economic transformation and political stability (Piketty, 2014) is generating an

international mobilization, reflected in the title of the 2030 Agenda: “No one should be left behind,” and calls for the exploration of innovative pathways to significantly reduce inequalities and thereby enhancing FSN. The title of SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities explicitly points to the need to “reduce inequality within and among countries”.

The issue of inequalities has been highlighted by many respondents to the 2016 HLPE consultation, with a focus on gender and youth. Empowering women and closing the gender gap, while providing decent employment, especially for young rural people (Losch *et al.*, 2012; World Bank, 2012), are seen as critical for sustainable food systems and improved FSN. The CFS Forum on Women’s Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition in 2017 discussed the challenges that remain in realizing women’s empowerment and to promote a shared understanding of the need to achieve gender equality and the full realization of women’s rights in the context of food security and nutrition (CFS 2017).

The proposed thematic workstream will contribute to the CFS Vision and the overall objective to address the root causes of food insecurity with a focus on the people most affected by hunger and malnutrition: the reduction of inequalities is central to the progressive realization of the right to food; social and economic inequalities are among the key root causes of poverty, hunger and malnutrition. The workstream will particularly promote gender equality, women’s and girls’ rights and women’s empowerment in the context of FSN, as defined in the CFS overall objective. The workstream will build on previous CFS policy processes which dealt with different aspects of inequalities, such as the CFS Policy Recommendations on connecting smallholders to markets, the VGGT, and others.

The Workstreams will contribute to the attainment of Strategic Objectives 1 and 2 of the CFS MYPOW for 2020-2023: it will use the convening power of the CFS for inclusive and extensive discussions among all relevant actors; it will also employ its policy coherence and convergence function through the elaboration of policy guidelines pertaining to reducing inequalities on food security and nutrition.

The CFS added value and comparative advantage to address this issue lies in the nature and mandate of the CFS itself: the CFS, as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for global coordination and policy convergence on food security and nutrition, with its vision defined in the CFS Reform and the strategic objectives agreed in the response to the CFS evaluation, is the most appropriate forum to address social and economic inequalities as root causes of hunger and malnutrition, and to propose policies to reduce inequalities towards the progressive realization of the right to food, with a focus on people most affected of food insecurity and malnutrition. Not other UN Forum can claim such added value on this relation between FSN and inequalities with a comparable degree of inclusiveness and legitimacy. An evidence-based report of the HLPE could provide the basis for an informed discussion and policy convergence process. The topic is of high interest for the Rome-Based Agencies and other UN bodies working on FSN and inequality issues.

The proposed workstream on inequalities and FSN would be an essential contribution of the CFS to achieving the Zero Hunger Goal (SDG 2), the very title of the SDGs “No one should be left behind”, with strong links to SDG 1 (End Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong institutions). The workstream would provide a significant contribution to the upcoming UN Decade for Family Farming,

given that most family farmers of this world face inequalities as challenges to FSN and their own development as a daily reality. Addressing inequalities are also a key factor for achieving the objectives of the UN Decade on Nutrition.

d) Expected results and how they will contribute to the achievements of the CFS MYPoW Strategic Objectives and FSN-relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda

Three specific expected results can be envisaged for this workstream: a) an HLPE report will provide a comprehensive, in-depth and updated overview of the relevant knowledge available on the matter; b) the report will be the basis of an inclusive discussion at the CFS; c) the report and the inclusive discussion will lead to a policy convergence process towards policy guidelines on reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition. These three elements will contribute to the Vision and overall Objective of the CFS by addressing one of the key root causes of hunger and malnutrition with a focus on the people most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition and by elaborating policy guidelines guided by the CFS vision to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and advance the progressive realization of the right to food.

e) Potential activities that could be considered after the adoption of the CFS policy product to promote its use and application

The HLPE report and CFS policy guidelines on reducing inequalities for FSN will have a high potential for being used within the SDG context and the global debate on this topic within and outside the UN.

f) Budget estimate, human resources and timeline

Potential Timeline: HLPE report could be requested for 2021; inclusive discussion at CFS 48 (2021); TOR for policy convergence process adopted at CFS 49 (2022); policy guidelines adopted at CFS 50 (2023).

Cost estimate: HLPE report; translation of documents; translation/interpretation negotiation process; e-consultations; regional consultations.

g) Indications on whether the preparation of a HLPE report is foreseen and its potential contribution to the proposed CFS thematic workstream

An HLPE report shall be requested. The HLPE note on Critical and Emerging Issues suggests three major sets of questions to be addressed if CFS decides to work on this topic:

- “How can the reduction of global, regional and national inequalities in income and in access to resources foster sustainable economic and social transformation and improve FSN? Which different pathways should be considered?”
- How can the reduction of inequalities through sustainable food systems and better FSN contribute to conflict prevention, peace building and decrease in migration problems?
- How can gender mainstreaming approach and youth employment programs in the agriculture sector and rural areas contribute to social justice and better FSN?”

These questions could be a starting point for further discussions within the CFS about the precise request and scope for an HLPE report on inequalities and FSN.