

FAO supports the revised MYPOW process as it strives to streamline and focus the work of the Committee to make the most efficient use of scarce time and resources. We offer the following comments to further strengthen and sharpen the proposals in the MYPOW.

The topics proposed are all relevant to CFS and to address food insecurity and malnutrition in the world. However, FAO considers that some topics are too complex for CFS to tackle and others needs to be sharpened with clearer objectives and expected outputs.

As shared during the open meeting, the concept of “pragmatic reverse engineering” should be applied to all the proposals – to clearly identify what the final output will be, what is the problem being addressed, and the most relevant components that can be tackled in the context of CFS.

To illustrate this idea, FAO offers two examples of proposals that have been reformulated to sharpen the language and objectives – one on Promoting Youth Employment and one on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (see below).

Several of the proposed topics are too complex and too broad, such as, Reducing Inequalities and Conflicts and Forced Migration. While recognizing that these are important topics regarding FSN, they go well beyond the mandate of CFS and there is no consensus on how to frame the topics in the context of CFS. The revised proposal on Gender Equality can address one of the most pervasive forms of inequalities in the context of FSN in a more focused manner.

The proposal on Data Collection should be considered as a standalone proposal and initially have at least an event, to discuss the barriers and constraints to using evidence in policy dialogues and decision making, which is fundamental to the work of CFS and to eradicating hunger and malnutrition.

FAO suggestions for proposal 2.1.3. Gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition (SDG2 <-> SDG5)

Relevance of gender equality and women’s empowerment for CFS: Persistent hunger and malnutrition is a problem affecting millions of people globally, the majority of whom are women and girls. A large body of evidence demonstrates that improving gender equality and empowering women and girls have positive effects on food security and nutrition (FSN).

The objective of the workstream is to develop a set of globally accepted Voluntary Guidelines (VGs) on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition. The VGs will enable the CFS to address the specific gaps and problems in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment and identify transformative interventions that can eliminate the structural discrimination against women and girls for improved food security and nutrition.

Added value of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the context of FSN: Despite the evidence on the strong relationships between gender inequality and food insecurity and malnutrition and the numerous global commitments made to address gender inequalities, progress in eliminating gender discrimination in the context of food security and nutrition has been slow. With only ten years remaining to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is of paramount importance to translate political commitments into action at country level and accelerate the achievement of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The VGs will help to achieve this. The guidelines will take the mandates and commitments expressed in international fora (e.g. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UN CSW agreed conclusions, etc.) and regional agreements and strategies (e.g. the Gender Strategy of the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication 2025, the Gender Strategy of the African Union 2017-2027, etc.) and CFS policy recommendations to the next level. They will provide Member Countries and development partners with concrete practical guidance on how to implement their commitments to advance gender equality, women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment as part of their efforts to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Developing the VGs in the context of the CFS will make it possible to mobilize those stakeholders who are the most relevant for food security and nutrition and raise political attention for the importance of gender equality, women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment issues in relation to achieving FSN.

An additional added value of developing the VGs in the context of the CFS will be the inclusive and consensus-based process through which it will be formulated. It will be the first global policy convergence document on this topic in the context of FSN, negotiated and agreed upon by all Member States of the CFS as well as all the other CFS constituencies who work for agricultural and rural development and food security and nutrition. This will ensure the legitimacy of the VGs and facilitate their uptake at country level.

How the workstream will add value to the work of CFS? The workstream will consolidate the previous work that has been done by CFS on this topic into globally accepted voluntary guidelines on gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition. In particular, the workstream and the VGs will build on: (i) the CFS Policy recommendations on Gender, Food Security and Nutrition (CFS 2011/Final Report); and, the background document (CFS 2017/Inf 21) and the outcomes of the CFS Forum on Women's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition (CFS 2017/44/Report). In addition, the VGs will complement and contribute to the effective implementation of existing standard-setting documents, such as the VGGT, CFS-RAI, FFA and the Right to Food Guidelines.

Recommendation: Given the large body of evidence to draw from it will be very important to clearly prioritize the most relevant issues that can best be tackled in the final version of the VGs in the context of CFS and FSN.

Synergies with other UN initiatives: The workstream will support the implementation of the UN Decade of Family Farming and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. Establishing complementarities and synergies especially with the UN Decade of Family Farming will create opportunities for applying a more coordinated and integrated approach to tackle issues of women's empowerment and gender equality in the context of FSN.

The principle of "leaving no one behind" guides the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and gender equality is essential for achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the VGs will support the country-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by helping to achieve all the SDGs, with particular focus on SDG 2 on zero hunger.

FAO suggestions for proposal 2.1.4. Promoting youth employment in food systems, sustainable rural transformation and territorial approaches (SDG2 <-> SDG 8)

Background:

- FAO welcomes the proposal referring to the engagement of CFS on the theme of youth employment and sustainable rural transformation.

- The theme is of critical importance because current and future employment challenges globally are staggering. Frequently quoted numbers indicate that globally there are about 10 million people entering the labor force each year, most of them in developing countries. In addition there are today about 200 million people unemployed while 45 percent of total employment is in low paid informal or seasonal jobs.
- CFS has a crucial role to play in addressing such a challenge in view of the fact that underemployment or lack of any employment opportunities is pervasive in agriculture and rural areas compromising the capacities of people to access food, increases poverty and most importantly undermines rural and agricultural development.
- CFS need to be engaged in the topic by identifying bottlenecks and providing policy guidance that will address challenges in agriculture and rural labor markets. In these way decent employment opportunities, in agriculture, rural areas or elsewhere can be generated for youth entering the labor force in the years to come.

Recommendation:

- For effective engagement in this topic, a number of adjustments need to be made in the proposal. In this way the Committee will be able to address issues based on solid evidence, which reflects real challenges and the Committee will contribute to the challenge by providing effective guidance to all stakeholders.
- The Committee needs to inform stakeholders about the particular characteristics of employment in agriculture and the challenges resulting from missing or non-well-functioning labor markets in order to be able to engage effectively.
- Specifically, there is a widespread perception that refers to the low labor productivity in agriculture. This perception is based on assumptions and extrapolations regarding the daily, weekly or monthly information reported by farmers on their working patterns on farms.
- Newly published evidence that uses detailed information on hours worked indicates that this is not the case. Labor productivity in agriculture by accounting actual hours worked is close and in some cases higher than productivity in industry or manufacturing.
- Productivity per person per year low in Agriculture vs non-agriculture (1/3.5). Productivity per person per hour worked in Agriculture vs non-agriculture not so different (1/1.5), so very similar as shown in (Figure 1) given number of hours worked per year in Ag/nong Ag= (1/2.6).
- Typically, farmers supply much less time yearly in agriculture relative to other sectors every year (figure 2). The seasonal character of agricultural activities is responsible for the widespread misconception on the low productivity in agriculture. This misconception evidently over the years has influenced policies and programs in many countries quite likely in the wrong direction.

Summary:

- FAO supports the proposal on youth employment and sustainable rural transformation as long as it is adjusted to reflect challenges in agriculture and rural labor markets. FAO considers that if such challenges are properly addressed in the context of CFS, all stakeholders will be able to effectively design and implement policies and programs that will promote youth employment in agriculture and food systems and advance sustainable rural transformation.
- FAO suggests that the proposal should be adjusted to reflect on the following set of critical issues:
 - o The Committee needs to assess and inform stakeholders about employment challenges in agriculture and food systems based on solid evidence. This includes improved understanding of characteristics of labor markets and the implications resulting from their absence or failures;
 - o Two important challenges: (a) allocation of labor across sectors, and (b) seasonality of agriculture require more flexible labor regulations (example of Peru)
 - o The Committee will need to work on shaping solutions, suggest tools, and propose frameworks or guidelines that will be able address challenges emerging from labor market failures or missing labor markets in order to provide guidance to its stakeholders on how agriculture, food systems and rural labor markets can provide more and better jobs for youth.

Figure 1. Productivity by sector¹

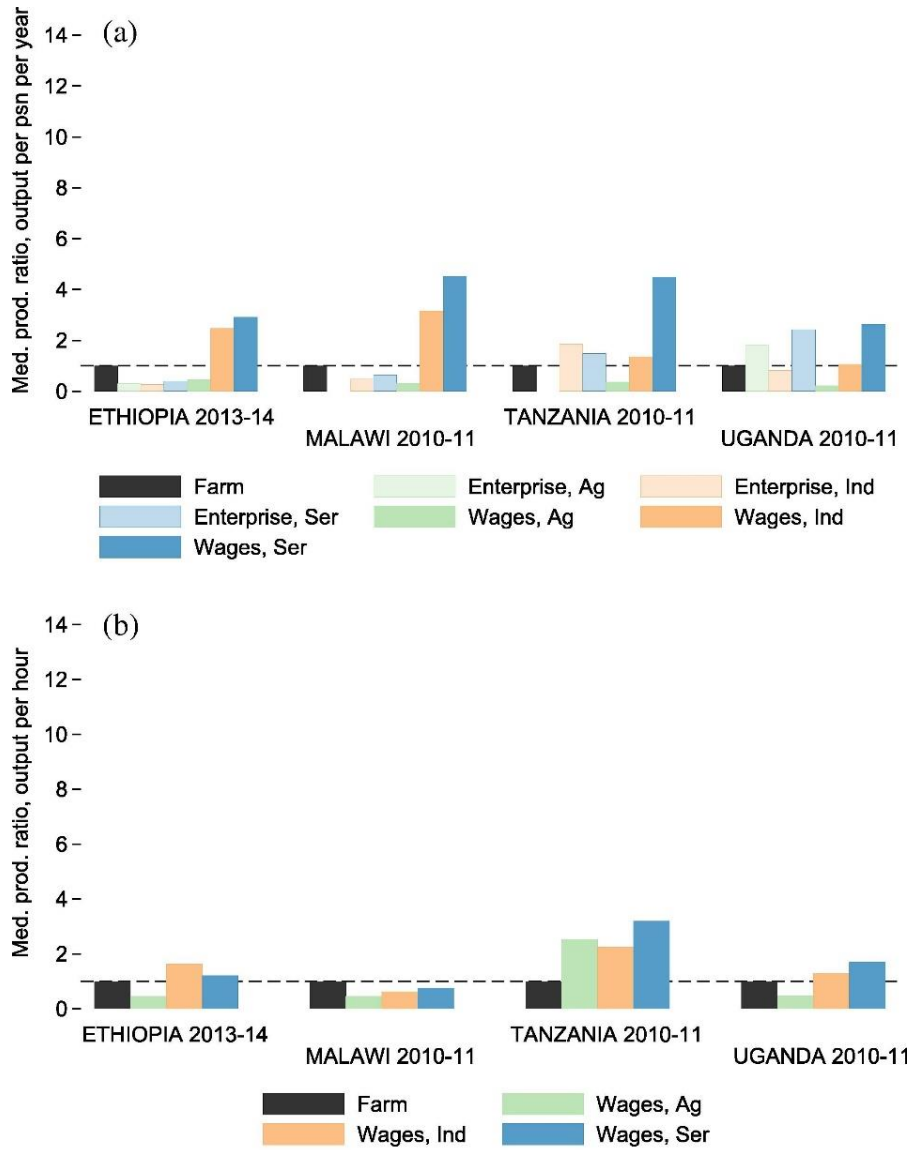
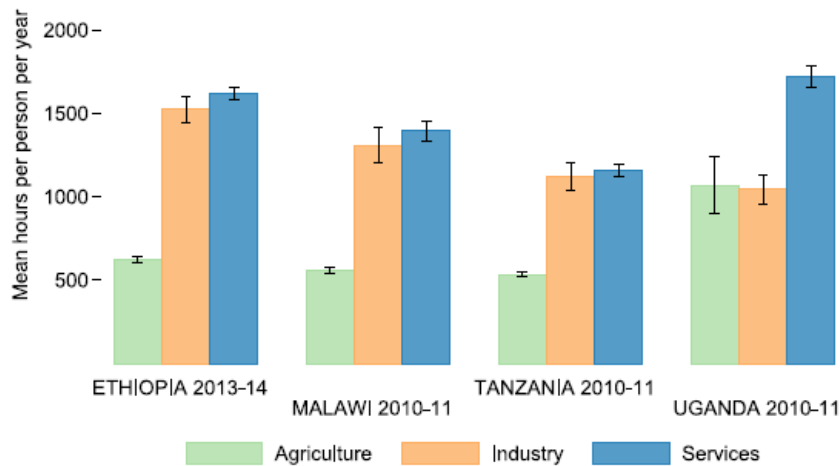


Figure 2. Average hours worked per year by sector participants²



¹ McCullough, E., Labor productivity and employment gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa, Food Policy, 67 (2017), pp. 133-152

² McCullough, E., Labor productivity and employment gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa, Food Policy, 67 (2017), pp. 133-152