



**CFS REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR NORTH AMERICA ON THE PREPARATION OF THE
VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION**

WASHINGTON DC, NOVEMBER 14-15, 2019

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

The CFS Regional Consultation for North America was attended by representatives from the governments of Canada (by webcast) and the United States of America, civil society and indigenous peoples organizations, private sector, international organizations, and research, financial and other relevant institutions.

The CFS Secretariat was represented by Mr Christopher Hegadorn, CFS Secretary, Mr Emilio Colonnelli, and Dr Jessica Fanzo.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Liliane Ortega, Chair of the CFS Open-Ended Working Group on Food Systems and Nutrition.

Welcome remarks were offered by Dean Craig Beyrouti, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland.

The following comments and proposals were provided by participants during the discussion

Comments and proposals on Chapter One of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

The need to develop Voluntary Guidelines that are relevant and applicable in different contexts, taking into account different and sometimes diverging priorities and needs were reiterated by several actors.

The importance of following a comprehensive, holistic and evidence-based approach was highlighted as a key element to ensure policy coherence.

It was requested that references to a human right framework be more explicit in Chapter One.

Paragraph Five should be more explicit on the social and economic costs to society of non-communicable diseases due to malnutrition.

It was suggested to further expand paragraph Six by better articulating the root causes of malnutrition. Poverty, inequalities, poor education, and social exclusion should be further highlighted in this paragraph and throughout the entire document. The overabundance of processed, less nutritious food and large portions were identified among the important causes of malnutrition and should be included in this paragraph. .

Paragraph Nine should not be limited to the role of consumers, but also mention the role of the private sector in influencing and shaping food systems. The role of small-scale producers, underlining the more precarious conditions of women smallholders, should also be better reflected in this paragraph.

Paragraph 11 should make reference to marginalized communities, indigenous communities, as well as the specific requirements of the elders.

It was highlighted that it might be useful to add a reference to the SUN Movement in paragraph 15.

With regards to paragraph 16, it was requested to go beyond target 2.2 and make reference to other relevant targets such as 2.4. The list of relevant SDGs should also include Goal 13. In addition, it was mentioned that the achievement of Agenda 2030 should be more prominent in Chapter One and not mentioned only in paragraph 16.

In line with paragraph 20, it has been suggested that the Voluntary Guidelines foster analysis of the impact of sectoral policies on food systems.

Discussion took place on para 24 regarding categories of drivers that impact the functionality of food systems. In this regard, it was suggested to go beyond them by focusing specifically on expected outcomes, objectives and concrete interventions to address current challenges. It was suggested that this paragraph include a reference to inequalities.

It was requested to include indigenous peoples communities in paragraph 26.

The concepts of resilience and sustainability should be further highlighted in Chapter One.

More could be said about gender inequalities and the over proportionate difficulties for women (work load, lower incomes, and unpaid work).

Comments and proposals on Chapter Two of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

It was suggested to shift the structure of Chapter Two and move up the section on guiding principles that should precede the section on key concepts.

Information regarding the recent work of FAO and WHO regarding a definition of sustainable healthy diets was provided, which will be included in Draft One.

It was requested to improve the definition of Food Environments to make that section more clear and user-friendly.

It was requested to mention indigenous peoples in the principle concerning the realization of the Right to Food and to refer to the Declaration of the Rights of Peasants.

It was suggested to add a principle on transparency and accountability in policy making as a way to address power imbalances and conflicts of interest.

An additional principle on responsible investment in food systems should be added in line with the CFS RAI principles.

A guiding principle on the relevance of climate-smart approaches and interventions was suggested.

It was also requested to add a principle on resilience of food systems as well as on food sovereignty.

Comments and proposals on Chapter Three of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

Several participants stressed the importance of developing user-friendly and implementable Voluntary Guidelines. Main problems and challenges need to be identified in order to structure Chapter Three around potential interventions to address them.

An introductory paragraph should be developed to reflect the existence of different actors with different roles in food systems and to stress the key role of policies in creating an enabling environment toward sustainable food systems that promote healthy diets and nutrition.

A section on governance and on the role of governments in policy making was highlighted as a key component of Chapter 3.

In order to help countries monitor the impact of policies and intervention, it was suggested that the Voluntary Guidelines include language about the development of cost-effective policy tools that consider the cost of interventions versus the distribution of benefits.

The role of private sector and the existing power dynamics in food systems should be considered in this chapter.

The role of trade should be addressed in the Voluntary Guidelines in line with the ICN2 Framework for Action “to identify opportunities to achieve global food and nutrition targets through trade and investment policies”.

The impact of subsidies on food systems and nutrition was highlighted as an important element to be considered.

Policies and interventions to enhance resilience of food systems should be considered and discussed in the development of the VGs.

It has been recalled that standards and regulations regarding processed foods are under the responsibility of CODEX. It was also mentioned that the term processed food designate a very wide variety of products and should not be considered as one category.

The key role of innovation and technologies as a way to increase productivity and minimize environmental footprint as well as of policies to support their accessibility and adoption by farmers should be addressed in the Voluntary Guidelines. Support to small food producers could benefit from instruments like community-based financial mechanisms.

Production approaches like agroecology must be carefully monitored before being largely implemented through policies. The Voluntary Guidelines may provide elements to help countries in assessing the impact of these new approaches.

Specific attention should also be devoted to the role of youth in agriculture.

The relevance of nutrition education, food safety, and food losses and waste was highlighted by several participants who stressed the importance for them to be appropriately addressed in Chapter 3.

Nutrition education is certainly a good option but it must go along with other instruments as consumers' choice is mainly guided by price, preference and convenience. Nutrition education/food literacy should be part of university programmes.

Bearing in mind the relevance of responsible marketing to children, it was mentioned that advertising and labelling should be addressed to all age groups. The importance of clear and understandable labelling was reiterated.

With regard to investments in research for commercial development of nutrient-dense foods, it was requested to make reference also to animal-source food, in line with recommendation 10 of the ICN2 Framework for Action.

Discussion took place on fortification and bio-fortification as cost-effective and equitable interventions. Also, processing and product reformulation were discussed as relevant elements for inclusion in Chapter Three.

Food loss and waste should be considered separately as their respective relevance is at different levels of the food chains.

The role of education in addressing food waste was reiterated along with the key role of culinary communities and restaurants in addressing this challenge.

Initiatives undertaken by private sector to promote a better image on quality than on the size of servings are valuable. They also have a potential positive impact on reducing food waste.

A number of participants believed an ideal food system is one in which i) dietary guidelines supports food systems which provide healthy meals through sustainable means, ii) where quality over quantity is the hallmark with supportive government policy incentives, iii) where junk food is not marketed to kids, iv) where animal protein is produced by humanely and environmentally sound practices, v) where access to local, seasonal, healthy foods is promoted.

Among the key elements that have been raised, multistakeholder dialogues, inclusiveness, funding of local initiatives, improved food knowledge among youth, public procurement and social protection programmes, agricultural subsidies that promote nutritious foods, and support to breastfeeding were mentioned as important to strengthen food systems.

Comments and proposals on Chapter Four of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

It was suggested that the use and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines be promoted not only at national level, but also at local level, informing relevant initiatives undertaken by cities.

It was requested that specific references be included in this chapter to the 2020 Tokyo Summit and to the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, as relevant opportunities for CFS to present its policy framework.