



CFS REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR EUROPE ON THE PREPARATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

BUDAPEST, 17-18 SEPTEMBER 2019

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

There were 59 participants at the meeting representing governments¹, civil society and indigenous people organizations, private sector, international organizations², and research and other relevant institutions³.

The CFS Secretariat was represented by Mr Emilio Colonnelli and consultant Dr Jessica Fanzo.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Liliane Ortega, Chair of the CFS Open-Ended Working Group on Food Systems and Nutrition. The CFS Chairperson, Mario Arvelo, participated in the second day of the consultation.

The meeting was opened by Ms Beata Felkai, Head of Department of the Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary, Mr Vladimir Rakhmanin, FAO Assistant Director-General for Europe and Central Asia, and Dr Liliane Ortega.

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

Comments and proposals on Chapter 1 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

Among the more prominent themes and commentary emerging throughout this discussion, participants urged that the draft Guidelines (the VG's) should be more explicit on defining problems, issues at stake,

¹ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan.

² FAO, and WFP.

³ The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (IFPRI) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN).

and the importance of this policy process in transforming food systems in the framework of 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the VG's should take into account a generally poor public awareness of the impacts of poor/inadequate diets on the ability to reach SDG2. In addition to the provisions included in paragraph 16, this process should be more clearly linked to other ongoing international initiatives and progress. Meanwhile, the VG's should include more references to the SDGs and the ICN2 process.

Hunger and malnutrition and some of their core causes - poverty and inequality - should be identified more prominently in the text, stressing the need to address unsustainable food production practices like over-dependence upon industrial agrochemicals, child and other labour exploitative practices, and rampant deforestation and poor land administration practices. More attention should be made in the VG's to promoting income generation and employment opportunities – especially for women and youth - in both rural and urban settings, along the entire food production value chain.

Some participants expressed their expectations about having a more people-centred and human-right based text, highlighting human dignity and recalling the different human rights related to nutrition. Others argued that these aspects are out of the CFS mandate.

In paragraph 13, need to add the acronym for the Voluntary Guidelines and use it consistently throughout the document. It was suggested to use the following acronym: VGFSN.

All causes of malnutrition should be mentioned in paragraph 6, with specific attention to those related to food systems.

Gender aspects and power imbalances between different actors should be better reflected in the text.

Many participants identified the critical importance of education - particularly on and about nutrition - as absolutely vital to improving individual and collective food choices. In particular, governments should be insisting on more nutrition education for health professionals and across education systems to reduce diet-linked disease and improve public health outcomes.

Specific attention was paid to the different dimensions of sustainability. On environmental sustainability, it was requested to focus more on the importance of climate change as one of the major factors impacting food systems now and in the next decades. At the same time, taking into account the scientifically-defined impacts that food systems are having on the increase of greenhouse emissions. With regards to social and economic sustainability, it was suggested to elaborate more on the huge economic costs associated with not improving food systems and nutrition.

Antimicrobial resistance should also be mentioned as a critical threat to food systems/security, public health, and public finances.

Paragraph 9 should mention that consumer decisions have an enormous impact on food systems and may hinder those systems in delivering healthy diets.

It has been suggested to further address the drivers mentioned in paragraph 24 in other sections of the document.

The role of traditional diets and more language on the relation between diets and culture should be added.

More attention should be devoted in chapter 1 to the actors that will be involved in the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines. Governments are important actors, without being the only ones with a relevant role.

Different participants raised the importance of developing a user-friendly and easy to operationalize document which can help policy makers adapt it to local contexts.

Moreover, several specific additions were requested (e.g., adding “vitamins, aquaculture, and sea source foods in paragraph 3).

Comments and proposals on Chapter 2 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

Participants welcomed that a definition for sustainable and healthy diets is being developed by FAO and WHO⁴.

It was requested to put more emphasis on the human rights-based approach and to include more references to the progressive realization of the right to food in an equity and justice perspective, although some stressed CFS’s mandate and argued that the VGFSN should avoid issues being dealt with by other international bodies.

With regards to paragraph 33, it was requested to amend footnote 19 by referring to the right to “adequate” food.

Some suggested that reference be made, perhaps in the chapeau of the section on guiding principles, to facilitating enabling environments that facilitate the transformation of food systems, and encourage consumers to make healthy and environmentally sustainable choices (possible expansion of paragraph 35).

The importance of the guiding principles on gender equality, nutrition knowledge, and capacity building was reiterated.

In paragraph 36.d on gender equality, it was requested to add “promoting and fulfilling” before “their rights”.

In addition to gender equality, it was suggested to dedicate a principle on youth, and to the need to promote their stronger engagement in agriculture-related value chains.

It was suggested to include a guiding principle on preserving traditional healthy diets, their linkages with agrobiodiversity, and the diversity of genetic resources, as well as their contribution to more resilient and sustainable food systems.

Additional guiding principles on decent employment and on preservation of rural areas were suggested.

⁴ An explanation has been provided on the preparation a definition of sustainable and healthy diets by FAO and WHO whose expert meeting met in July. This proposal will be included in the Draft One of the VGs for consideration by CFS stakeholders.

Comments and proposals on Chapter 3 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

The potential entry points mentioned in paragraph 41 were positively considered by the participants who made specific reference to the need to deal with the governance of food systems, gender equality, nutrition education, diversification of food production and promotion of healthy and diverse diets.

Different members highlighted the importance of defining an accessible structure and a very pragmatic set of policy entry points

Participants raised relevant options for the promotion of an enabling environment for delivering healthy diets:

Nutrition education: children at school should receive specific lessons from Ministries of Education to encourage them to reduce the intake of several ingredients (salt, etc). The objective would be to have them (and their parents) read and understand food nutrition labels and make purchase appropriately healthy decisions. Additional programmes can be put in place to enhance nutrition education among children and their families with specific attention to long-term health issues and to ecological impacts of food production, transportation, and disposal.

Food system governance: this is seen as a crucial entry point to promote transparency and address the policy fragmentation but also to revise sectoral policies which encourage several production patterns and usually do not reward innovative initiatives towards small scale and nutritious food production. This should be supported by broad-based national movements among consumers and practitioners in dialogue with the different interested parties. Governments have a key role to play.

Participants highlighted that it is key to foster dialogue between different actors and across sectors (in line with paragraph 12) and this should be an important entry point to be addressed in the section that will be dedicated to the governance of food systems.

More specifically, it was suggested to consider that multistakeholder platforms should be put in place and institutionalized at national or regional levels. They can design concrete measures and define responsibilities among the different actors, governments (direct access to relevant ministries is needed), private sector and civil society. At the same time, it is important to establish networks and coalitions focusing on consumer awareness raising, and advocacy for policies to promote the elimination of harmful practices, sustainable food production.

Food price is an essential issue which need much more transparency. Regulations may be needed to ensure balance within the food chains, and between the different actors involved, from producers to retailers.

Food production and commercialization: suggestions have been made that food production be better integrated into territorial planning (ref. to cities with food supply plans). Local markets are key to supply nutritious food to the poor segment of population and discussions took place on the need to design policies that promote local food supply and short supply chains, also to reduce the pollution cost related to food import and long transportation

Short food chains are increasingly welcome by consumers as well as more transparency from the retailer side.

The **role of fair trade** was highlighted in order to ensure that the source of food is sustainable and the people engaged in the production have decent conditions.

The importance of digital technologies to develop sustainable food value chains was raised.

Food marketing: discussions need to take place on food marketing for children. In addition to laws to control broadcasting, a dialogue needs to be put in place with private sector to encourage voluntary adjustments in support of children's nutrition improvement.

Labeling and geographical indications were raised as effective measures to promote healthy diets. Labelling could be mandatory or voluntary (example of system used in France of putting colour codes on products to help categorize food for consumers). In addition, an overview was provided of the French phone application to scan the product and get information on its content, and receive recommendations on healthier alternatives (the application works only for processed labeled food).

Consumers' choices are influenced by many factors and considering the seasonality of food is a way to connect food systems, food consumption patterns and culture, while being consistent with environmental concerns.

Countries should apply standards recommended by WHO regarding broadcasting of misleading information which should be banned from hospitals and schools. Key information should be disseminated on nutritional needs of children.

Food safety: the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) was mentioned as a relevant example of collaboration with private sector to address issues related to the global supply chains and improve food safety. The objective of GFSI is to support countries in complying with existing standards. In this context, governments should take action to enforce the application of policies and monitor them. Local authorities can be tasked to do inspections and identify biggest sources of risk.

It has been raised that the lack of cooperation between actors both cross-border and at the national-level has a negative impact on food safety.

Food waste: consumers, corporations, and governments should work together with local foodbanks to ensure that food which is not consumed is getting to people in need. Measures can be put in place to incentivize food industry to collect food which is close to the expiration date and to redistribute to those in need.

More explicit references **to fisheries** were suggested for possible inclusion in the Voluntary Guidelines.

A number of members reiterated the importance of considering cultural and social relations and knowledge.

With regards to **fortification**, it was mentioned that this should be considered as a short term intervention for specific contexts. At the same time, the importance of having a dialogue on this aspect was underlined also with the aim to clarify the differences between food fortification and biofortified crops.

Specific examples:

An overview was provided of the public health legislation introduced in Hungary, taxing food products with high sugar and fat content, banning food products with trans-fat content, and setting standards for school and public food supply.

In Italy, the initiatives taken by small scale farmer associations to organize local food markets is very successful as they give value to these food as well as to the labor of the producers, create or maintain a demand for this food among the population and maintain a close linkage between urban consumers and local food producers.

Comments and proposals on Chapter 4 of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines

Role of the United Nations was highlighted in relation to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines. Specific efforts should be made to integrate the Voluntary Guidelines in the workplans of the Rome-based Agencies.

Discussions took place on paragraph 61 and on the role of multistakeholder platforms and partnerships which are above all dedicated to the respect of the interests of the citizens. It was clarified that the objective is to jointly define actions that could promote the implementation of effective and transparent platforms in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

In this context, the SUN Movement represent a good example of UN-based initiative and other similar initiatives might be included in this chapter.