



CFS REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ON THE PREPARATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

PANAMA CITY, 28-29 OCTOBER 2019

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

There were 56 participants at the meeting representing governments¹, civil society and indigenous peoples organizations, private sector, international organizations², and research and other relevant institutions³.

The CFS Secretariat was represented by Mr Emilio Colonnelli.

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

The meeting was opened by Mr Jairo Flores, Coordinator General of the Parliamentary Front against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms Guadalupe Valdez, FAO Special Ambassador Zero Hunger for Latin America and the Caribbean, 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

In paragraph 6, it was requested to add the following elements as relevant causes of malnutrition:

- Poverty and economic inequalities; Increasing consumption of ultra-processed foods as well as offer less nutritious foods, and the progressive reduction of consumption of traditional foods;

¹ Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Venezuela.

² FAO, WFP, IFAD, WHO, and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

³ International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana (SICA), Frente Parlamentario contra el Hambre, Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples for Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC).

- Climate change and its impact in particularly fragile ecosystems like the Dry Corridor;
- Impact of bilateral conflicts and economic measures imposed by third countries which undermine efforts to meet SDGs;

In line with paragraph 16, existing instruments, initiatives and programmes should be mentioned.

Cultural and traditional aspects of food supply and consumption should be mentioned.

Paragraph 26 should include a reference to parliamentarians as actors of high importance regarding the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines. This paragraph should also mention indigenous peoples and communities in the bullet referring to civil society.

Some participants underlined that the text should include a mention that food systems should protect and promote the Right to Food and other human rights.

It was requested to acknowledge that despite international instruments like the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the current focus in the UN on family farming, agriculture continues to be performed according to highly extractive production models which often violate the Right to Food.

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

The development of the definition of sustainable healthy diets by FAO and WHO was welcomed by participants as a key element to be included in the next version of the Voluntary Guidelines.

It was requested that the definition of traditional food systems be incorporated in this chapter.

It was suggested to have the principles on the Right to Food listed first.

Paragraph 35 should make reference to the need for these principles to promote effective actions and policies by governments and others.

The first principle on holistic and evidence-based approaches should consider evidence provided by a wide range of actors, including traditional knowledge.

The principle on context-specific policies should make reference to “long-term policies” and also include a reference to “local” level.

The principles on healthy people and planet should aim at “ensuring” rather than “promoting” the sustainability of food production.

The principle on women’s empowerment should consider women beyond their productive role, recognizing their position as right-holders.

The principle on nutrition education should consider cultural aspects and local knowledge as key aspect towards the empowerment of the different segments of the population;

Considering the relevance of the reference to the right to adequate food, it was requested to consider the indivisibility of and inter-correlation between human rights and the role of governments in fulfilling them.

An additional principle on indigenous peoples was suggested to acknowledge their fundamental role in maintaining biodiversity and developing resilient traditional food systems.

An additional principle on the key role of governments which are responsible for developing policies, allocating resources and implementing actions was suggested. In the context of an effective and transparent governance of food systems, specific attention should be paid to managing and addressing potential conflicts of interest.

Discussions took place on whether to add a guiding principle on multistakeholder partnerships. Diverging views were presented.

Additional principles on access to technology and knowledge sharing, bearing in mind the need to make technology available at all levels; on accountability, calling on the responsibilities of the different stakeholders; on the need to address inequalities as well as the rural-urban gap; and on food sovereignty; were suggested.

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

Participants indicated the importance of having public policies and adequate budget to improve food systems and address malnutrition. This should figure clearly in the Voluntary Guidelines.

In order to ensure effective and transparent governance of food systems, it was highlighted that political stability and coordinated medium and long-term public policies are key.

The Voluntary Guidelines have to be explicit on how to promote effective governance of food systems to ensure dialogue and collaboration between different actors across sectors, with a view to considering interlinkages and impact of sectoral policies, bearing in mind the overall objective of ensuring healthy diets.

The responsibility of governments to undertake corrective work on their regulatory frameworks, and to amend laws and policies as appropriate when these generate obstacles to improving food systems was stressed.

The Voluntary Guidelines should be an important tool to promote dialogue between different actors in and across sectors, present cross-sectoral actions, and promote coherence and collaboration, while fostering transparency and addressing conflicts of interest. The establishment of multistakeholder platforms is a valuable option, provided roles are well defined and the power imbalance among stakeholders are addressed in an appropriate way.

The Voluntary Guidelines should be closely linked to existing international programmes and frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda, and may represent a useful tool for UN agencies to promote dialogue and collaboration.

The key role of national and local councils, fostering citizenship participation, was highlighted.

Women's access to land must be included in Chapter 3.

Access to clean water for consumption and water for food production (irrigation) is critical and should be incorporated in the Voluntary Guidelines.

Monitoring and evaluation of policies, including identification of precise indicators, is a key aspect that should be addressed in Chapter 3, in the section dealing with governance of food systems.

Coherent trade policies are also important as a vehicle to ensure access to technologies and innovations.

Fair prices should be ensured for food producers and pricing policies should be put in place to promote production and affordability of nutritious foods.

Specific emphasis should be put on climate change and adaptation strategies.

Need to support smallholders to meet food safety standards to supply national and export markets. At the same time, a certain flexibility is necessary and standards can also be adapted in order to maintain traditionally produced and processed foods which meet local and national preferences.

Food safety should be addressed as a way to consider not only hygiene practices and the use of agrochemicals, but also to reduce use of additives.

Importing countries face a lack of control on labelling of imported goods. Coordination should be established to ensure consistent measures at least within the same regions.

It is important for importing countries to be able to promote the import of nutritious foods for healthy and diverse diets, keeping a balance between prices of local and imported products.

Special attention should be paid to traditional crops as a way to influence and promote consumption of healthy diets.

Relevance of school feeding programmes to foster adoption of proper food habits was highlighted as well as of nutrition education initiatives which promote consumption of fresh and natural foods.

Public procurement should be a way to connect family farming to food and meal consumption within public institutions.

Food losses and waste were identified as a key area for consideration in this chapter in order to promote analysis at country level to quantify food losses in food supply chains and their impacts on consumers.

Measures are needed to regulate advertising and marketing addressed to all population groups, not only children. Without establishing restrictions on industrial food advertisements, progress is unlikely to happen.

Labelling on food packaging should be promoted through mandatory approaches, joined by stronger nutrition education programmes and honest marketing and advertising.

Labelling could represent a useful tool to limit consumption of less nutritious foods and promote reformulation and nutritional quality of food.

The origin foods (traceability) should be addressed by the Voluntary Guidelines.

Interventions supporting women at child-bearing age and promoting breastfeeding and appropriate feeding practices were suggested as a key aspect to improve nutritional status of children. Also Mother's Own Milk Banks should be promoted.

The Voluntary Guidelines should look at gender dimensions (and youth) beyond the aspects concerning economic empowerment.

Nutrition education is a key policy area but should be implemented at all levels (production, marketing and consumption).

Commercialization of food at local levels should be strengthened (fairs, local markets, local procurement programmes, restaurants) to enhance the production of local nutritious food and ensure better and stable income to local producers.

Importance of limiting consumption of sugar, trans-fats and salt, however the promotion of healthy food habits should be tailor-made to the various human groups.

Food fortification can represent an effective intervention but it should not be applied to all types of food product, such as ultra-processed foods.

The need to promote research and investment in biofortified crops was highlighted.

With reference to indigenous peoples, it was requested to promote their recognition in national constitutions, protect their food systems, and disseminate information about processed food composition in indigenous languages.

The promotion of locally meaningful production systems (i.e. milpa) was mentioned as a sound approach which links food and agriculture traditions, ensures availability of native seeds and promotes community markets.

It was mentioned that the production of quality food is closely linked to the use of appropriate technologies and capacity building.

It was suggested to consider the recommendations included in the FFA of ICN2, analyse the outcomes achieved so far in their application and use these data for the preparation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

As in the first four previous regional consultations, the CSM delegation propose to re-structure Chapter 3 according to five main areas of focus.⁴

The PSM delegation recalled its 17 recommendations to transform food systems.⁵

⁴ a) Governance, b) Protection and regeneration of nature, c) health and wellbeing, d) Modes of production, employment and exchange, e) Culture, social relations, and knowledge.

⁵ a) Join Up policies, b) Food Losses and Waste, c) Address Climate Change, d) Link Smallholders to Markets, e) Women Empowerment, f) Capacity Building, g) Investing in Nutrition, h) Data collection and Monitoring, i) Food Safety, j) Facilitate Trade in Food, k) Consumer Education and Marketing, l) Labelling, m) Evidence-based Policies, n) Innovation, o) Inclusion, q) Technology Development and adoption, r) Partnering for Outcomes.

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

The key role of UN agencies, and especially the RBAs, was reiterated in relation to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines, following their endorsement, and to build capacity of relevant actors in their uptake.

In order to promote the operationalization of the Voluntary Guidelines in terms of policies, it is key to reform various mechanisms of governance that are existing at regional levels to make sure that in addition to actors from the food, agriculture social, health and education sectors, they include relevant actors from ministries of economy and finance.

It is important to go beyond the traditional actors and collaborate with the private sector and consumer associations. Parliamentarians are of utmost importance as they are typically responsible for the definition of policies and allocation of resources.

The Voluntary Guidelines need to be practical, easy to understand and to implement, helping to define clear objectives, focused interventions, and to be applicable in different contexts.

Existing mechanisms should be used for monitoring implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

The impact of the Voluntary Guidelines should be assessed in the medium-term, analysing how they contributed to a shift of paradigm and change of narrative concerning food systems and nutrition.