



14 April 2020 – 15:40 – 17:10

Virtual Open Meeting

Rapporteur's Summary

Item 1 - Introduction by the Rapporteur

Rapporteur, H.E. Mohammad Hossein Emadi (Iran) presented the objective of the open meeting, which was to provide a space for an open, transparent, meaningful, and inclusive discussion among CFS stakeholders on: (i) the main policy issues emerging from the written feedback received on the Zero Draft and on; (ii) the potential impact of COVID-19 on the substance of the Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches.

Item 1a - Summary overview of Zero Draft and of written inputs received

The Rapporteur introduced the *Summary of main areas of reflection* emerging from the written inputs on the Zero Draft. Numerous issues were highlighted as requiring additional discussion in order to produce a First Draft which articulates convergence among CFS stakeholders. To this end, a series of brief, weekly thematic and informal small group consultations open to all stakeholders will be organized in the coming weeks.

Item 1b - Overview of implications of COVID-19 on policy recommendations' content and process

The Rapporteur highlighted that many recent reports, including from the Rome-based agencies, suggest that COVID-19 is having direct impacts on food systems. He noted the opportunity of integrating important lessons from this pandemic into the recommendations and encouraged feedback from CFS stakeholders on the role that Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches can play in building more resilient food systems.

With regards to the process, the Rapporteur informed that the Bureau was expected to make decisions on 17 April 2020 on CFS business continuity with regards to the implementation of CFS MYPoW for 2020.

Item 2 - Exchange of feedback by CFS stakeholders

The open floor discussion included the following points:

- Need for more balance between agroecological and other innovative approaches;
- Request to use the HLPE Report's recommendations as a driver to develop the policy recommendations, including when describing "other innovative approaches;"

- Request to integrate reference to FAO's *"Ten Elements of Agroecology"* adopted in 2019 by FAO's Council. Request to include a definition of agroecology in the introduction of the Zero Draft, as defined in the *"Ten Elements of Agroecology"* as well as re-insert paragraph four from previous draft (Rapporteur's Note) in the next draft;
- Support for highlighting that transformation of our global and national food systems is needed, specifying that agroecology is a truly transformational pathway to address all the structural changes needed in our food systems in a systemic and integrated way, as pointed out in the HLPE report;
- Need to clarify, both in the introduction and in the recommendations, differences between agroecological and other innovative approaches, consistent with the HLPE report;
- Need to strengthen the concept that diverse and resilient production systems contribute to reducing the ecological footprint, as part of a 'One health approach' which takes into account human, plant, animal, and environmental health considerations;
- Suggestion to strengthen the policy recommendations on the regulation of agrochemicals in order to protect human, animal, plant, and environmental health. Agrochemicals should be used in accordance with international standards, guidelines, and best practices, including those aimed at ensuring food safety;
- Support for recognizing agroecology as crucial for the progressive realization of the right to food, and for the resilience and transformation of food systems;
- Suggestion for the policy recommendations to provide guidance on medium- and long-term actions needed to mitigate shocks by building resilient food systems. In particular, suggestions were made to focus the "Next Steps" section of the document on long-term actions;
- Need to distinguish between approaches and techniques. This will allow farmers to determine the most appropriate ways to manage their farming practices, and thereby highlighting the need for appropriate policy guidance applicable to all farm sizes;
- Support for strengthening the concept of access to, and sharing of knowledge on, new technologies and their impacts on all actors and stakeholders;
- Need to recognize the importance of the role of states in creating enabling environments for farmers, particularly family farmers, to choose among innovative approaches to strengthen their livelihoods, food security, and nutrition;
- Need to provide definitions and examples of digitalization, strengthening regulations on risks, and challenges to ensure that they really benefit family farmers. There is also a need to rebalance the attention given to digitalization in comparison to the other approaches;

Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches

- Suggestion to include recommendations which aim at strengthening practices that have been already tested in many countries, that aim to achieve environmental, social, and economic benefits with significant potential to provide decent employment;
- Suggestion to strengthen the importance of the role of farmers as main actors of food system transformation. The policy recommendations should provide guidance on what is beneficial for them in terms of social, economic, and environmental sustainability;
- Support for strengthening and highlighting the importance of local, traditional, and indigenous knowledge throughout the document;
- Ensure coherence between the policy recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches and the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, e.g. text on “healthy diets” and on “sustainable and resilient food systems”;
- Request that the Policy Recommendations use internationally agreed language, where relevant. References to the “right to food” should reflect the full title of FAO’s “Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security”;
- Suggestion to add stronger text on the role of smallholders, and gender, which is particularly relevant in knowledge generation, agricultural production, and marketing. Issues related to sexism and gender-violence issues should be discussed in other fora;
- Suggestion to highlight the role of markets at all levels - local, national, regional, and global - throughout the document;
- Request to strengthen references to the concept of the “right to food” throughout the document;
- Suggestion not to include ‘agency’ as a fifth pillar of food security and nutrition as its meaning to some is not clearly defined;
- Monitoring and impact assessment: need to have agreed indicators, to ensure their measurability, and make sure they are consistent with those used in other fora;
- Include specific guidelines to strengthen future uptake and implementation of the policy recommendations;
- Call for these policy recommendations to build upon the CFS multi-stakeholder platform, thereby addressed to all stakeholders, not only Member States, including the entire food system. There should be more focus on the role that farmers, civil society, and the private sector play in developing, implementing, and expanding successful sustainable approaches.

Overview of implications of COVID-19 on policy recommendations' content and process

The open floor discussion included the following points:

- The COVID-19 crisis has further revealed the urgency of food system transformation. Draft One of the policy recommendations should make that point clearly;
- COVID-19 underlines the importance of increasing resilience of small-scale producers, and further underscores that intensive industrial agriculture has deeply weakened many ecosystems and enabled conditions for plant and animal disease outbreaks. This situation highlights the need to protect and conserve the environment and ecosystems by adopting agroecological approaches to food production, and in so doing, supporting the work and livelihoods of billions of small-scale food producers;
- COVID-19 highlights the importance of the concept of diverse and resilient production systems;
- COVID-19 impacts are still unknown, and more time would be needed to include reliable data in the policy recommendations. Still, the policy recommendations can provide useful input toward the UN Food Systems Summit scheduled for 2021;
- The world is still learning the impacts of COVID-19 on food systems, but the current pandemic already shows the importance of trade, well-functioning markets, as well as social protection programs for the most vulnerable - including farm workers and workers across food supply chains;
- Suggestion to avoid focusing too deeply on the impacts of COVID-19, which should be conducted outside of this workstream, and avoid duplicating other work of CFS and the RBAs.

Item 3 - Wrap-up and closing remarks by the Rapporteur

In thanking all stakeholders for their continued engagement, the Rapporteur reaffirmed the importance of continuing holding informal discussions aimed at bringing stakeholders with different views closer. He welcomed suggestions to integrate considerations around COVID-19 that are relevant to this policy process, highlighting the importance of maintaining an evidence-based approach.