

U.S. Comments

April 14, 2020

COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY (CFS)

Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Food Systems that Ensure Food Security and Nutrition

U.S. Statement

The United States recognizes the hard work that went into writing the Zero Draft of Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches and appreciates the opportunity to provide input on them today and through written comments.

We are pleased to see that the zero draft explicitly recognizes that there are no one-size-fits-all solution to improving food security and nutrition and that instead there are a diversity of approaches, adapted to local opportunities and challenges, that farmers, communities and states can employ to improve the sustainability of food systems.

We also welcome the emphasis the Zero Draft places on innovation which is necessary to meet the dietary needs of a growing world population.

The United States believes that the Policy Recommendations can go further in building the evidence base for agroecological and other innovative approaches through relevant metrics that consider the environmental, social, as well as economic impacts of various policies and approaches.

We also highlight the need for the Policy Recommendations to use internationally agreed upon language. The use of terms that have not been agreed to international will only cause divisiveness and make reaching consensus more difficult. All references to the “right to food” should reflect the full framing laid out in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.

The United States is strongly opposed to the use of the term “sustainable diets.” Like others, we are committed to improving the sustainability of the food we eat. It is not possible, however, to look at the composition of a diet—for example, whether it contains meat or only vegetables—to make a judgement about whether it was produced sustainably or not. All foods, including fruit, vegetables, seafood, dairy and meat, can be produced more sustainably or less sustainably. The term “sustainable diets” is misleading because it conveys the notion that some foods are automatically produced sustainably while some are automatically produced unsustainably. Such an assumption is wrong and detrimental to the goal of more sustainable food systems because it misleads consumers about how to evaluate the sustainability of their food choices and reduces incentives for producers to pursue more sustainable production practices.

We also feel the policy recommendations as currently drafted overly focuses on the role of states, and does not focus enough on the role that farmers, civil society, and the private sector can play in developing, implementing, and expanding successful sustainable approaches.

The United States recognizes that dramatic impact that Covid-19 has had on organizations in Italy and around the world and the need for international organizations such as CFS to adjust to

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these impacts. However, we have a strong preference for in-person negotiations as they create a stronger platform for international dialogue and consensus. We also have concerns on whether virtual negotiations in any CFS work stream can sufficiently accommodate the interpretation and translation aspects of negotiations which are necessary for them to be inclusive. As this matter is not exclusive to the Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches work stream, the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group is better positioned to address this in their April 17th meeting

Ensuring that these policy recommendations remain relevant given Covid-19 is a challenge, in part, because we are still learning the impacts of Covid-19 on food security and nutrition. As with any evolving situation, the true impact of Covid-19 will not be known until after it's over. However, the crisis is a tragic reminder of the importance of trade, the private sector and well-functioning markets, as well as social protection programs for the most vulnerable, including farm workers and workers across the food supply chain.

Any work done by the CFS should avoid duplication with the work being done elsewhere by CFS and the RBAs. The Policy Recommendations should remain focused on agroecological and other innovative approaches and any deep analysis into the impact of Covid-19 on food security and nutrition should be conducted outside of this workstream.

We look forward to seeing the next draft of the Policy Recommendations and to engaging further on this important topic.