

CANADA COMMENTS: CFS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON AGROECOLOGICAL AND OTHER INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS THAT ENHANCE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION, DRAFT ONE

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Paragraph 5

- Using the wording 'need for a radical change' is not appropriate as CFS, and every body of the FAO, should strive to have a holistic, inclusive and realistic approach. The wording: "innovative approach for sustainable agriculture" seems to be more realistic and less charged.
 - Alternative text proposed: "...there is an urgent need [delete: for radical change and] for innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems."
- The authors of this document are in contradiction when proposing that "the agriculture sectors have proved themselves to be relatively resilient compared to other economic sectors" and that "there is an urgent need for radical change".
 - If the authors see "the importance of resilience as a key lesson" of the pandemic and believe that agriculture sector were resilient, then what is the basis for "radical change"?
- The report notes that agriculture sectors have proved themselves to be relatively resilient compared to other economic sectors but that the pandemic has exposed some of the risks, fragilities and inequalities. It might be worth noting that there have been supply-chain disruptions in many countries, mostly relating to processing due to the pandemic, as well as issues for certain agricultural sectors that rely on workers to harvest (such as horticulture).

Paragraph 6

- Canada recommends that paragraph 6 reads as follows: "The challenges faced by food systems are highly complex, context-specific and unpredictable. Consequently, holistic and innovative approaches to addressing food system challenges have been gaining the interest of many stakeholders over the past several years. This interest led the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to request its High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to develop the report, Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition, which [inform, along with other considerations] ~~provides the basis for~~ these policy recommendations. Agroecological approaches²¹ were highlighted in the CFS request to the HLPE, and are increasingly prominent in debates around sustainable agriculture and food systems because of their holistic approach and emphasis on equity. As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agriculture and food systems points to the critical importance of resilience, interest in innovative approaches that strengthen resilience is growing, particularly in [understanding how] agroecological approaches[can complement other agricultural approaches to meet food security objectives]."
 - Canada finds that the HLPE report titled "Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition" was not inclusive of the critical role of biotechnologies in achieving sustainable agriculture and food systems. The CFS' policy recommendations should

always remain based on science and evidence, taking into account all approaches that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Paragraph 7

- “Such frameworks must consider the environmental externalities, both positive and negative, of agriculture and food systems in relation to not only how food is produced but also how much is consumed and how it is processed, transported and sold.”
 - Canada recommends the following amendment to the CFS draft:
 - “Such frameworks must consider the environmental, [social and economic] externalities, both positive and negative, of agriculture and food systems in relation to not only how food is produced but also how much is consumed and how it is processed, transported and sold.”
 - CFS policy recommendations should always refer to the three dimensions of sustainability identified in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Paragraph 9

- Canada suggest the following text amendments : “While some technological innovations have been characterized by marked disagreement, this is generally not related to the technologies themselves but to how they are [perceived,] controlled, accessed and used [over time].”
 - Innovative technologies (e.g., plant protection products or products of biotechnology) are often wrongly perceived by consumers which impact policy decisions in ways that are not evidence-based.
 - Consequences can change over time as we learn more about impacts.

Paragraph 10

- Canada strongly believes "modern biotechnology" should be added to the list of “agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems”.
 - The HLPE report also looked at modern biotechnology. This approach should be added to the list, for inclusiveness.

Paragraph 11

- “Policies in most countries are guided by the drive to increase production levels and revenues, rather than by taking a holistic approach that also prioritizes sustainability and equity concerns. They favour a model of agriculture and food systems in which environmental and social externalities are not properly considered or factored into costs and decision-making.”
 - This wording unjustifiably presents a false duality of policy striving to achieving sustainability. There are three equally important components to sustainability: social, economic and environmental.
 - Canada believes this broad generalization should be deleted statement or adjusted to reflect how policies have the potential to drive sustainable agricultural approaches.
- “For example, policies that provide subsidies and research funding for unsustainable practices tend to lock agriculture and food systems into unsustainable pathways.”

- Canada recommends either deleting this statement or providing specific examples of such a situation.
- “Meanwhile agroecological approaches, which have shown promising results, tend to be under-researched worldwide and investment has been severely limited when compared to other innovative approaches.”
 - This argument suggests decisions and a concerted effort to not fund this type of research. Agroecology is a relatively new and complex concept. When the potential of such agroecological approaches is better understood, resources will follow.

Paragraph 12

- “Developing more appropriate policies requires understanding of the impacts of innovative approaches and specific innovations.”
 - Suggesting deleting "appropriate" as there is no definition of what it means or should mean. Suggest replacing by "holistic agricultural" policies to drive analyses that look at the impact of innovative approaches, when used alone or in combination with others.
- “Many technological innovations – despite having some positive impacts when assessed on single criteria – have generated significant negative externalities. Thus going forward innovation in agriculture and food systems must address major social and environmental challenges simultaneously by being scrutinized against the criteria of sustainability.”
 - Canada believes that trade offs should be further taken into account. The Life Cycle Approach could be a good way to assess the overall impact of measures on sustainability.

Paragraph 13

- Canada suggests the following amendments: “At the same time, concerns about access, capacity-building, leveling the playing field, and appropriate safeguards regarding data privacy, access, control and ownership signal the need to consider [the possible implications of logistical aspects of this technology] to food security and nutrition and [farmer livelihoods].”

Paragraph 14

- “The aim of the following policy recommendations is to assist Members and stakeholders in strengthening agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition.”
 - Canada suggests adding: “information-sharing” as aggregating knowledge is one of the primary roles of the FAO.

Paragraph 15

- “These recommendations aim to support the achievement of the goals of the UN Decade on Family Farming (UNDF), the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), the upcoming UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA), the Convention on Biological Diversity’s upcoming post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and to contribute to the UN Food Systems Summit.”

- Canada suggests adding: “the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) efforts for achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN), fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” to this list.

Policy Recommendation 1

- “1. Lay the policy foundations for agroecological and other innovative approaches to contribute to sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition”
 - Canada believes other objectives linked to sustainable agriculture, such as health and livelihoods, should also be included.

Paragraph G

- “Strengthen public policies to harness market mechanisms to enable sustainable agriculture and food systems by factoring environmental, social and public health externalities into prices;”
 - Canada suggests adding the term “as possible” after “Strengthen public policies to harness market mechanisms”.
 - The formulation of this recommendation does not take in consideration how higher food prices decrease its accessibility which negatively affects food security.
 - CFS policy recommendations should also take in consideration the limitations that public policies have on influencing market prices.

Paragraph N

- “Ensure coordination and coherence with respect to their strategies, policies and programmes on agroecological and other innovative approaches, including through the Scaling up Agroecology Initiative, taking into account the present policy recommendations.”
 - Policy recommendations should be inclusive of other innovative approaches and not solely focus on agroecology.

Policy Recommendation 2

Paragraph E

- “Encourage data collection (differentiated by factors including gender and farm size) and analysis at national level, documentation of lessons learned and information sharing at all levels to support the adoption of agroecological and other innovative approaches; and,”
 - Canada encourages this recommendation. Sharing factual information, science-based information, even case studies, will be prioritized to enable farmers to make the most appropriate decisions about adopting agricultural innovations.

Policy Recommendation 3

Paragraph B

- “Strengthen public policies, investment and research in support of holistic approaches that harness natural processes and create beneficial biological interactions and synergies among the different components of agroecosystems (crops, animals, trees, soil and water), such as agroecology;”

- Canada recommends adding “and other innovative approach” to ensure consistency and inclusiveness.

Paragraph C

- “Provide producers with incentives for diversification and integration of agricultural production, including support during the process of transitioning to more sustainable systems;”
 - Canada reminds the authors that sustainability has 3 dimensions: economic, social and environmental. This recommendation will only be successful if it also takes in consideration economic components by demonstrating profitability for farmers.

Paragraph F

- Canada suggests the following amendments: “Raise public awareness (in particular among producers and consumers) [on the role of responsible management of] risks of pesticides and other agrochemicals to [ensure] human, animal and environmental health.”
 - This recommendation put all pesticides in the same categories with no distinction about their science- and fact based risks. Public information about plant protection product should be science- and fact-based, not driven by consumers perception. Risk of pesticides are managed within the approval (or not) process of regulatory agencies.

Paragraph G

- Canada suggests the following amendments: “Promote the use of [an integrated pest-management approach which includes the use of] ecological alternatives to pesticides [and promotes] the greater integration of biodiversity to prevent pest outbreaks in order to optimize the use of pesticides in the short-term and phase them out to the extent possible in the long-term;”
 - This recommendation put all pesticides in the same categories with no distinction about their science- and fact based risks. Public information about plant protection product should be science- and fact-based, not driven by consumers perception. Risk of pesticides are managed within the approval (or not) process of regulatory agencies.

Paragraph M

- “Incentivize young people to remain in, or move to, rural areas by creating decent and dignified work opportunities, including through addressing specific challenges for young people, such as access to land, credit and information, and by investing in rural infrastructure and services to reduce gaps between rural and urban areas.”
 - Canada proposes the following wording to ensure this recommendation is inclusive of tools other than incentives: “Create an environment where ~~incentivize~~ young people want to remain in, or move to, or work in rural areas by creating decent and dignified work opportunities,”.

Paragraph N

- “Work with the private sector to promote local, regional and global markets, as appropriate, that demonstrate concrete contributions to the social, environmental and economic

sustainability of agriculture and food systems, enhance food security and nutrition and avoid negative impacts on human rights;”

- Canada suggests adding a reference to trade facilitative arrangements.

Policy Recommendation 4

Paragraph A

- Canada suggests the following amendments: “~~Reform~~ [Enhance] agricultural knowledge, information and innovation systems to support [credible science-based information about] agroecological and other innovative approaches by ensuring that research, extension/dissemination and education/capacity building are integrated in an inclusive, participatory, and problem-oriented approach;”

Paragraph C

- Canada suggests the following amendments: Re-design agricultural knowledge, information and innovation institutions to: enable transdisciplinary science, valuing the knowledge of all relevant stakeholders and involving them, including in the setting of research priorities; engage in research at the local, national, regional and international levels, [promoting neutral communications and sharing factual and science-based] ~~ensuring communication and sharing of~~ knowledge between them; consider and address power imbalances and conflicts of interest between stakeholders and researchers; and, reward researchers who engage in such research;”.

Paragraph D

- Canada suggests the following amendment: “Prioritize problem-oriented research that addresses the needs of vulnerable groups, and focuses on the local dimensions of global challenges, such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, ecological footprint of different production systems and value chains, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, [land and soil degradation,] ecosystem service provision, positive and negative externalities of agriculture and food systems, global emergencies such as pandemics, and market concentration across supply chains;”

Paragraph L

- Canada suggests the following amendments: “Increase responsible investments in public and private research and development [on agricultural innovative approaches that will enhance sustainability] at national, regional and international levels and ~~redress the relative under-investment in agroecological approaches~~; and,”

Policy Recommendation 5

Paragraph F

- As previously stated, the report cited here is severely biased and should be revised before being used as the basis for neutral recommendations and activities of the United Nations.

Annex: Definition

Innovative Approach

- The “innovative approaches” in the definition section stems from the HLPE 2019 report and refers to a philosophical and strategic vision of sustainability. Canada recommends a fact-based definition that would encompass all agricultural approaches featured in the document and suggests using an official FAO definition of innovative approaches that has been endorsed by Members.