

Thursday 4 June 2020, 15:00-17:00

Informal discussion #4: Right to Food; Gender; Agency; Sustainable healthy diets

Rapporteur's Summary

Item 1 - Introduction by the Rapporteur

The Rapporteur introduced the background document with its guiding questions and explained the rationale for not addressing two specific issues which were previously identified as requiring additional discussion: (i) *'stakeholders'* - in line with the HLPE report, there is a convergence of views on the need for the policy recommendations to address all relevant stakeholders; and (ii) *'sustainable healthy diets'* – recognition that terminology will be coherent with the outcomes of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition workstream.

Discussion on questions (1, 2, 3 and 4)

1. *How do different innovative approaches for sustainable food systems that ensure food security and nutrition contribute to the right to food?*
2. *Do each of the various innovative approaches for sustainable food systems that ensure food security and nutrition contribute to gender equity and equality?*
3. *Do you think that the 4 pillars of food security (availability, access, utilization, and stability) are adequate to cover all important aspects of how food security is achieved? Could the concept of agency fill in any gaps that may exist?*

The open floor discussion produced the following points. Each bullet point below represents views shared by stakeholders on specific topics. No attempt is made to reconcile different views nor correct verify references, so that the full diversity of views expressed by CFS stakeholders during the informal discussion could be captured below.

- Need to align the policy recommendations with the HLPE report, which considers the human rights perspective as the basis for sustainable food systems. Human rights are key to both transformation and transition. Agroecological approaches treat human rights as a central feature, and bring science and knowledge together in a way that best serves the right to food, among other rights. Sustainable intensification approaches work against the right to food as they concentrate power in a few hands and do not clearly address social issues and ecological health.
- Need to consider the right to food as part of the foundation and overarching framework of CFS (as per its reform), as well as key to achieving its mandate. Therefore, all approaches should be evaluated according to their contribution to the right to food.

- Support for keeping the HLPE report approach that favours agroecology particularly from a human rights perspective, and questions whether sustainable intensification may be useful to transition to more sustainable food systems.
- Support for developing coherent policy recommendations which take into consideration that agroecological approaches are human rights approaches, while sustainable intensification approaches are not.
- Need to reference other international frameworks such as UNDRIP and the Decade of Family Farming, and its Global Action Plan and especially Pillar 3 (on gender equity), in the First Draft. Need to strengthen in the preamble that the right to food provides a basis for ensuring sustainable food systems, and then use the right to food to frame the entire document.
- Support for the recommendations being based on a human rights perspective, especially focusing on the right to food but also UNDRIP and UNDROP, considering that agroecology contributes to the realization of the right to food, while the contribution of the other innovative approaches need to be assessed.
- Need to strengthen investment in agroecological approaches, which have been severely limited when compared to other innovative approaches, as shown by the HLPE report.
- Need to consider that the right to food, gender equality and women's rights, and agency cannot be addressed in isolation, as they are all profoundly connected and core elements of transformation to sustainable food systems. Agroecology can transform food systems taking all these elements into account. It contributes to the right to food by placing smallholders first, recognizing their rights to access and control the resources that they need to produce while ensuring available healthy food, and contributes to gender equality and women's rights by addressing the root causes of inequality in society.
- Need to consider that agroecology is a participatory approach, thus the best approach to guarantee the right to food. This right is threatened by intensive agriculture, which brings health problems, and promotes commercial interests only. Those who defend intensive agriculture are defending individual commercial interests only. This is not a good way to safeguard lives and healthy food systems. Intensive agriculture should be made sustainable by approaches like agroecology.
- Need for a human rights framework which ensures a holistic approach that guarantees sustainable and equitable approaches to sustainable food systems.
- Need to consider that the right to food is an important component for reaching the SDG 2.
- Need to highlight that many innovative approaches may contribute in complimentary ways to sustainable food systems.
- Support for keeping para 31 of the Zero Draft: impacts of agroecology and all innovative approaches should be assessed based on their impact on the right to food.

- Need to consider that communities must have the right to reject approaches that they do not want. Many communities in rural areas are losing their right to use agriculture in the way that they want. Support for agroecology as the best approach which respects environment and gives people the capacity to not depend on anyone.
- Suggestion to include an exhaustive list of innovative approaches in the First Draft, which is currently missing in the Zero Draft.
- Need for an appropriate assessment framework to assess how agroecological and other innovative approaches can contribute to gender equity and equality.
- Support for looking for synergies between the different approaches: the innovative approaches can all contribute to the right to food as long as they are available to farmers.
- Support for considering the current Zero Draft as adequately addressing the right to food and the need for the policy recommendations not to overlap with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food.
- Need to strengthen references to gender equality and youth in the recommendations, and make stronger references regarding implementation of the Policy Recommendations.
- Need to use internationally agreed language in the next draft.
- Suggestion to consider that the right to food is adequately covered by the term “food and nutrition security” therefore there is no need to repeat it.
- Concerns over the term “sustainable, healthy diets.” Production practices determine the sustainability of dietary choices. The term “sustainably produced food and healthy diets” could work. Healthy diets are not necessarily more sustainable than unhealthy diets.
- Need to consider that all innovative approaches have the potential to contribute to gender equity and equality. How they are implemented makes the difference, regardless of the approach that is used.
- Suggestion to consider that the CFS vision in the Reform Document allows the right to food to be referenced in the document, but other rights not directly related to the work of the CFS should not be included, thereby supporting a division of labour among UN agencies.
- Support for referencing the UN Declaration on human rights or other relevant documents in the First Draft.
- Support for recognizing the centrality of women’s rights and the role of women in knowledge accumulation and agricultural production, as well as strengthening the concept of gender equality.



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Suggestion to strengthen topics such as women's education and training, rural women's leadership, ending gender-based violence, women's rights to access to land, etc.

- Suggestion to strengthen the concepts of health, nutrition, and consumers' role in the First Draft, as well as access to global markets and food price volatility, rural-urban linkages, social movements participation and empowerment in food security and nutrition approaches, building resilience.
- Need to strengthen gender equity and equality in the recommendations, which should not be considered together. Moreover, it needs to be assessed whether other innovative approaches contribute to gender equality and equity.
- Support for highlighting the concept of gender equality and women's empowerment as reinforced in 2015 in the SDGs, particularly SDG 5, and as discussed by the CFS in 2017 in the Forum on Women's Empowerment.
- Need for all approaches to place a strong emphasis on human and social values and seek to address gender inequalities, as rural women and men together are recognized as holding the key to ending hunger and extreme poverty.
- Suggestion to follow CEDAW's recommendation to state parties to address gender inequalities that affect rural women so that they participate in, and benefit from, rural development.
- Need to develop precise recommendations, which follow the HLPE report text on gender issues, that provide clear indications on how to address existing gaps, for example through re-orientating institutions and organizations to explicitly address gender inequalities.
- Need to recognize the inter-linkages between the right to food, women's rights, and agency.
- Agreement with HLPE report on the need for gender transformative policies, and gender equity as a driver, and to address gender based violence.
- Suggestion to ensure women's rights and self-determination as a starting point for transforming food systems.
- Strengthen gender equity, as well as justice for people, in the recommendations, including discriminated groups such as workers, and migrants.
- Need to highlight the importance of practical impacts of the innovative approaches on the ground that policy makers, stakeholders and farmers should be considering when making their choices among innovative approaches, or even combining them.
- Suggestion to consider that nutrition-sensitive agriculture could contribute to FSN and the right to food especially when following agroecology approaches. However, it is important to look at the context, and clarify what is the transition we want to achieve.

- Support for keeping the four consensual pillars of food security, which are broad and comprehensive and provide the needed structure for their implementation by all stakeholders, and not including the concept of agency as it is not yet clearly defined.
- Disagreement over the inclusion of agency as a pillar of food security as the four pillars have been defined and endorsed by the World Food Summit in 1996 and CFS is not the forum to change that definition.
- Need to highlight the growing importance of the concept of agency, therefore its inclusion as a food security pillar.
- Support for highlighting the concept of agency, since people are crucial agents.
- Agency is interesting, but more discussion and clarification is needed. The CFS could further discuss it in the future.
- Support for recognizing that agency is a core element of achieving gender transformative policies and the right to food for all. Agency ensures control over resources and decisions.
- Need for more clarity on the concept of agency. Currently, there are four pillars for food security that say the “what”, and agency is the “how”. It is not part of the concept of food security itself, but a pre-condition to achieving it.
- Relevance of the concept of agency as it focuses on power imbalance in food systems and the need to guarantee conditions to individuals and communities on what food systems they want, and it is related to the governance structure of entire food systems, reinforcing the communities’ capacity and progress in achieving food security and nutrition for all. As reported in the HLPE report, achieving agency implies access to information, and the ability to secure rights, including access and control over productive resources, harvesting and preparation of food. Therefore, this concept should be highlighted in the recommendations to underline that individual and community power is needed to realize the transformation of food systems.
- Support for keeping the four pillars, but highlighting the concept of agency, especially the key players in all stages of the food system.
- Support for aligning with the HLPE report that asserts that agroecology is the truly transformative approach towards sustainable food systems, showing that the transformation will only be achieved through the agency of small scale food producers, indigenous peoples, workers and their knowledge, practices, and organizations. Based on a human rights approach, the agency of the main contributors to the food system should be promoted, including small scale producers, indigenous peoples and workers, especially women and youth, in democratic decision-making processes.

- Support for evolving and ‘updating’ the four pillars of food security, and for CFS to be involved in this development.
- Need for the other innovative approaches to be available, accessible, affordable, appropriate and context specific in order to ensure the right to food. They should be tailored to farmers’ ability to use them, and farmers should be correctly informed of pros and cons of all innovative approaches, so they would be available to make the right choice that best fits their needs.
- Need to identify what kind of innovative approaches would best suit women’s needs based on specific context, and how to enhance their capacities and access to agricultural resources.
- Need to align the policy recommendations with the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition, which fail to recognize the importance of sustainable healthy diets for transformation of food systems, which COVID-19 mortality has exposed as fragile. Agroecology is key to assessing all approaches and their impacts on food security and nutrition.
- Consider that emphasis on production rejects a food systems approach, which is one of agroecology’s strengths.

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

The Rapporteur recalled that during the last informal discussion there had not been broad support for dividing all innovative approaches into two categories. He also highlighted the diversity of views among stakeholders and the value of holding informal discussions, which are prepared with the support of Technical Focal Points, as well as the CFS Secretariat’s Technical Consultant. He also clarified that the guiding questions for the informal discussions series derive from the HLPE report and/or from CFS stakeholders’ feedback on the Zero Draft.

The Rapporteur thanked all stakeholders for their continued engagement, participation, and for allowing a fruitful discussion.