IFAD's comment on the Zero draft of the Policy document "Agroecological and other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Food Systems that Ensure Food Security and Nutrition

The introduction.

Identify the challenges – the need for change (para 1). The text rightly departs from the 2030 globally agreed agenda and also lightly mentions the challenges with environmental sustainability of agricultural systems including impact on biodiversity, soil and land. What should be strengthened is the consequences of and contributions to climate change. Combined with growing populations, and conflicts the accelerated impacts from climate change is without doubts one of the biggest challenges facing all types of farming systems and causes breakdowns in food systems of vulnerable people. The document should mentioned that the last 5 years food insecurity is actually increasing showing that we are losing grounds, which is highly worrisome. "The number of undernourished people in the world has been on the rise since 2015, and is back to levels seen in 2010–2011" (The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, FAO 2019).

The urgency in stepping up efforts to reach the 2030 agenda through transitioning to sustainable food systems should be clearly linked to the urgency in addressing climate change adaptation and resilience as well as mitigation in agricultural systems, mentioning that agriculture is responsible for between one fifth and one third of global GHG emissions (23 percent according to (https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/). Because of the dynamic changes in rainfall patterns and slowly increasing temperatures, water is the one big issue (not mentioned in the document) for sustainable food systems ensuring FSN. This include not only water for agriculture but also safe water for drinking and cooking. Taking this challenge into account, will help this document to have added value to the parallel CFS document to be presented to the CFS plenary in October 2020; the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSN).

The updated figure on food loss from post-harvest to retail is up to 14% globally (FAO SOFA 2019), consider to revise the quoted 30% figure.

Define sustainable food systems and qualifying principles for innovative approaches (para 2). Regarding the definition of food systems, we suggest to maintain and expand with some examples the first paragraph and remove the reference to the three broad food systems (since these are not mentioned and explained anyway). Use instead the definitions used in the VGFSN (para 27 zero draft version) for food systems and for sustainable food systems to be coherent between the two documents.

In order to define qualifying principles for agroecology and other innovative approaches the paragraph establishes "three intertwined operational principles define transition pathways toward sustainable food systems for food security and nutrition: (i) improving resource efficiency; (ii) strengthening resilience; and (iii) securing social equity/responsibility". Retaking the point on climate change and its impacts on periodic breakdown of the food systems of a growing number of vulnerable people, we suggest to add two more operational principles: iv) reducing GHG emissions and increasing carbon sinks; and v) increasing biodiversity in farming systems supporting resilience and dietary quality and diversity. The latter is suggested for coherence with the agriculture section of the VGFSN. The zero draft VGFSN rightly emphasizes "more diverse and integrated production systems at different scales tend to be more resilient to external shocks and contribute to dietary quality and diversity" (para 41) and "Promoting the use of a diversity of crop varieties and livestock breeds, including local

agrobiodiversity, increases resilience to shocks (i.e. heat, drought, pests and infectious diseases), and ensures food diversity and fosters income diversification (para 43).

Define innovative approaches typologies (para 4). While it is welcomed that the document is striking a better balance between and is open to both agroecology and other innovative approaches, it is a shame that it now avoids distinguishing between different alternative approaches. The overall grouping of approaches under Agroecology (seeking holistic transformation embracing also social and rights aspects of food systems as adopted by the FAO Council in the 10 elements) and sustainable intensification (seeking substantial incremental improvements with less attention in its starting point to social and rights aspects), offer different pathways to sustainable food systems. Clarifying the differences in starting points will help to also see the strength and weaknesses for both pathways and how they can be complementary. It should be mentioned that when it comes to actually adoption of practices and technologies on the ground both approaches have concrete challenges in common and can learn from each other. Technologies, such as digitalization, can be used for innovations by both approaches but in different ways. While some of the other approaches mentioned can be grouped under either agroecology (permaculture and agroforestry) or sustainable intensification (precision agriculture), others are crosscutting depending on how they are applied such as climate smart agriculture.

The consequence of mixing all approaches in one pot is unfortunately that agroecology does not get the space it deserves as a strong alternative response to the current serious challenges and the recommendations for agroecology becomes rather weak. As a starting point agroecology is under-researched and supported in developing its potentials compared to the sustainable intensification that is more an increment to already strongly supported conventional approaches with roots in the industrial input intensive agriculture. For both approaches to be fully complementary and support the opening up of different pathways for the needed transition to sustainable food systems, agroecology needs to be given adequate space, as was the intention with the HLPE report.

Recommendations

I – Lay policy foundations for transforming food systems to ensure sustainability and enhance food security and nutrition through agroecological and other innovative approaches

10 (linked to 11). In addition to impact assessments add true costs analysis to ensure negative externalities such as loss of soil and carbon sinks, GHG emission, pollution of soil and water resources with agrochemicals, and loss of access to land for vulnerable groups are taken into account. These externalities prevents environmental sustainability and medium to long term economic and social sustainability and ultimately FSN for future generations and need to be accounted for in policy and investment decisions.

13. Add livestock and fisheries along agriculture and forestry.

17. The text suggests considering agroecology when considering job creation – this seems a bit narrow, given the definition of innovative approaches in para 4. What is missing in this section is an analysis to understand where one approach over another has an advantage. E.g agroecology, organic agriculture, or high input agriculture might not work in all places. So a recommendation for use of geospatial

analysis and earth observation to develop recommendation domains for what should be supported where would be good. CIAT did some great work with their Homologue modelling work to do this (see https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/53024).

18. Add securing communal land rights and among listed groups add "other communities" since communal land rights may not only refer to indigenous people.

II – Support transitions to diversified and resilient food systems

19. Add 'increases carbon sinks' and 'buffer against climate shocks': "Promote diverse and resilient agroecosystems that increases carbon sinks and assemble soil, water, genetic resources (crops, livestock, trees and aquatic species), and other elements in spatially and temporally diversified schemes, favoring natural processes and biological interactions that optimize synergies so that diversified production units are able to buffer against climate shocks and sponsor their own soil fertility, soil water, crop protection, animal health and welfare, and productivity".

20. Along the use of agrochemicals, also optimize the use of animal drugs, and link it with food safety and nutrition: "Strengthen and enforce regulations on the use of agroechemicals and animal drugs in order to protect and improve nutrition and human and environmental health."

21. Define family farmers in a footnote using the UNDFF definition, including and mentioning indigenous and pastoralists communities (the word "pastoralist" is completely lacking in the Zero Draft).

22. Add carbon sinks: "Encourage sustainable consumption patterns that maintain or enhance, rather than deplete, carbon sinks, natural resources and support circular economies".

After 23. Add an additional recommendation; "Promote and establish alternative energy facilities at farm and landscape levels to reduce waste of biomass, GHG emissions and fossil fuel dependency and boost recycling of biomass and nutrients."

24. Add 'stable food production': "Promote sustainable healthy diets and stable food production through enhanced diversification of production and food and nutrition education,…"

27. Proposed changed formulation: "Support innovative approaches in short food supply chains, including adequate infrastructure, participatory guarantee systems (in compliance with public policy and safety standards), and digital technologies (with appropriate safeguards for data protection) for linking consumers and producers and provide transparent information on a product's story and content from farm to table.

28. Proposed addition: "Support small and medium sized enterprises that provide goods and services for diversified and resilient food systems including innovative digital solutions tailored to local family farmer's needs and capacities"

29. Very generic, does not really say very much. Proposed reformulation but still not optimal: "Promote functional local (both formal and informal), regional and global markets that contribute to

sustainable food systems that ensure food security and nutrition, including the strengthening of local managerial skills for sustainable management of local farmers' markets infrastructures and physical spaces".

III – Strengthen comprehensive monitoring and impact assessment to ensure that innovative approaches support sustainable food systems that enhance food security and nutrition

30. While it is appreciated that the recommendation retakes the principles from the HLPE report in terms of what needs to be assessed and monitored, for the coherence of the document, the recommendation should maybe star with retaking the 5 (with our two proposed additional ones) operational principals defined in para 2: (i) improving resource efficiency; (ii) strengthening resilience; (iii) securing social equity/responsibility; iv) reducing GHG emissions and increasing carbon sinks; and v) increasing biodiversity in farming systems supporting resilience and dietary quality and diversity. As recognized by all stakeholders in the CFS process so far, there is a need for scientific evidence of all approaches for their contribution to sustainable food systems for FSN and develop and pilot metrics and indicators that could eventually be agreed upon in collaboration between countries. The cross-country collaboration here eventually in processes lead by FAO, could also be part of the recommendation.

Add a recommendation on the development of performance metrics at farm level that assess farm level cost-benefits and incomes in normal and good years as well as in bad years impacted by climate shocks.

31. Proposed reformulation: "Assess the impacts of innovative approaches on <u>climate change mitigation</u>, the sustainability <u>and resilience</u> of food systems, food security and nutrition, and the right to food <u>and conduct comparative studies on different food production systems and their feasibility in different specific local contexts.</u>

After 32. Add a recommendation: "Assess the impacts of market incentives, barriers for small producers and power balances on the sustainability of food systems and food security and nutrition for all."

33. It is a shame the true cost accounting has been down-toned and the ecological footprint approach has been left completely out. While there is no agreement among the SFC stakeholders on using the ecological footprint as a methodology (considered immature by some), all stakeholders in the consultations have been agreeing that more understanding and evidence is needed on the negative externalities of current food systems. One important instrument to address this gap is the true cost accounting. That tool, in fact, also need further development, but it seems like there is more consensus in trying to internalize all costs in the assessments than tr
ying to reach agreement on what goes into an ecological footprint. At the same time, the ecological footprint approach may be developed in parallel as a complementary approach by interested countries.

IV – Strengthen support for research, training and education and reconfigure knowledge generation and sharing to foster co-learning

A recommendation on sharing and co-learning between countries could be added including the potential of collaboration among national entities. For example, ministries of agriculture of neighbouring countries, working in partnership on a common action plan to strengthen agroecology and other adequate innovative approaches at their common scale, respecting context-specific requirements.

Considering the climate emergency, there could also be a specific recommendation for more research on carbon footprint and contribution to GHGs emissions of various crop/livestock/ aquaculture production systems and derivate food commodity value chains. This should take in FULL consideration the specificity of such food systems in terms of (i) agro-ecological situation and location, (ii) production systems (industrial/commercial, extensive, semi-intensive, family farming, organic etc…) and in the case of livestock, specific species and breeds.

40. Include assessing the impact of animal drugs usage.

43. This recommendation is mixing too many things. Propose to split in two recommendations:

"Strengthen training programmes for agricultural extension and use farmer field schools (FFS) and farmer-to-farmer learning and sharing approaches to mainstream extension advice and experimental learning on agroecological and other innovative practices for diversified, resources use efficient and resilient farming systems that increase carbon sinks."

"Strengthen training programmes for public health workers on composing healthy diets from local diversified agroecological and other innovative farming systems that contribute to the local availability of nutritious food."

45. Proposed formulation: "Redirect current investments in research and development towards enhancing diversification and resilience of sustainable food systems <u>and support substantial innovations and improvements in agroecological practices e.g. by using ICT technologies to support modelling and monitoring to improve the efficiency of water, nutrient, energy and biomass recycling.</u>

On the utilisation of the term "animal", clarify in footnotes if and when the term include wildlife animals and when it includes also livestock, fish, and insects producing food (e.g. honey). For instance para. 40 refers to "impact of the use of agrochemicals on human, animal and environmental health". Are animals here all kinds of livestock animals or does it more refer to wild animals or both?

V – Strengthen stakeholder engagement, empower vulnerable and marginalized groups and address power inequalities in food systems

47. Add create and support mechanisms for policy dialogue involving local communities and family farmers' organizations in policy-making processes.