

Dear Ambassador Emadi and CFS Secretariat,

TO: Committee on World Food Security

RE: Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable food systems that ensure food security and nutrition

DATE: 26 March 2020

FROM: Molly Anderson and Emile Frison, Members of the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems

We want to express appreciation first for the significant amount of work that went into HLPE #14. It is a very good report and contains excellent analyses of the impacts on food security and nutrition of different “approaches” or types of food systems. We especially appreciate that the Project Team Members differentiated agroecology (in Section 1) from other approaches.

One major issue with the draft policy recommendations is that they do not adhere to the structure of the report; agroecology is combined with “other approaches” at almost every point in the recommendations where it is mentioned, unlike in the report which begins by describing agroecology. The problem with this amalgamation is that agroecology is far more successful in meeting needs for food security and nutrition, as is illustrated well in Table 4 (page 63). Combining approaches in the way that the draft policy recommendations has done obscures the contributions that agroecology can make to food systems, including carbon sequestration.

Second, the recommendations, unlike the report, do not address the needed transformation of food systems. In keeping with all CFS products, recommendations must be grounded in the right to food; yet this is not visible now. The report devoted considerable space to how a transition to sustainable food systems might be accomplished, but this is missing from the draft. The main value of HLPE #14 is guiding food systems toward transformation and choosing among different pathways, yet the policy recommendations have lost that focus. In particular, the policy recommendations fail to acknowledge agroecology as the most significant transformative pathway.

Third, the criteria for assessment of food systems are quite clear in the report (resilience, resource efficiency, social equity/responsibility) plus the additions of ecological footprint and agency, particularly of women and vulnerable smallholder populations. These are not held up consistently in the recommendations. Furthermore, the recommendations place resource efficiency and the redesign of practices, markets and governance on a spectrum, thus implying that resource efficiency and redesign cannot be done simultaneously, which is erroneous.

Fourth, the recommendations do not maintain a clear orientation toward food systems throughout. Transformation of all food system activities is needed, not just “optimization”, as the statement on agrochemicals reads (and which is not based on the report itself). Agrochemicals should be phased out, as is consistent with agroecological approaches.

Fifth, while digitalization is quite important and needs to be better regulated for its benefits to all actors in the food system, it does not deserve such a prominent place in the policy recommendations.

Although we are writing as co-members of IPES-Food, the opinions here are our own. We are quite sure that many other members of IPES-Food share these opinions; but we did not have time to get a formal stamp of approval from the Panel, given the other disruptions in our lives now.