

Comment of Thailand

on ‘Zero Draft’ of ‘Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches for Sustainable Food Systems that ensure Food Security and Nutrition’

27 March 2020

Thailand **welcomes** the ‘Zero Draft’ of the ‘CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches for Sustainable Food Systems that ensure Food Security and Nutrition’, and **agrees in principle** on the substance of the document which provides valuable policy recommendations for transforming Food Systems and for supporting transition to Food Systems to enhance Food Security and Nutrition for all.

Our comments relate to:

- definition of Agroecology and importance of role Agroecology can play in sustainable transformation of Food Systems.
- role of farmers in Food Systems transformation and importance of grant farmers possibility to make free and informed choice among the many innovative approaches and innovations available to them
- role of States in granting access to healthy food
- role of International Trade in granting Food Security
- challenges, as well as potential, posed by digitalization of agriculture and food systems

Please find below detailed comments and concrete proposals.

1. Introduction Section:

Comment: In the course of previous meeting held on 27 January 2020, we **understand** that *“there is no single, consensual definition of agroecology shared by all the actors involved, nor agreement on all the aspects embedded in this concept”*, and that *“there is no definitive set of practices that could be labelled as agroecological”*.

Agroecology, although recommended in HLPE Report #14 as one approach contributing to sustainable food system, is not adequately referred to in the Introduction Section. (Two paragraphs (1-2) provide reasons why food system should be transformed. Four paragraphs (3-6) address the important roles of innovative approaches. One paragraph (7) expresses concern over the risks on the use of digitalization in food system transformation).

Concrete proposal: Add paragraph to Introduction Section dedicated to scope/definition/clarification of **Agroecology**, in order to balance the many understandings of the concept of ‘innovative approaches’.

2. Policy Recommendations:

2.1 Section I

Comment: Farmers, particularly small-holder and family-farmers, are the ‘main actors’ as well as the ‘agents’ of Food System Transformation. They must be enabled to freely choose what really benefits them in term of long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability.

And States are accountable and liable for day-to-day choices made by farmers, particularly small-holder and family-farmers.

Concrete proposal: Add paragraph to Section I, on role of States who should ‘create an enabling environment for farmers, particularly small-holder and family–farmers, to freely choose among the many available ‘innovative approaches’ and ‘innovations’ to improve their livelihood and food security and nutrition’.

2.2 Section V

Comment: Sustainable access to productive resources is the fundamental prerequisite to sustainable food security for all.

Concrete proposal: Add paragraph to Section V, on role of States who should ‘ensure that vulnerable groups, including women and youth, and marginalized groups have access to or are provided with healthy food to meet their basic needs, eventually by cultivating it or by any other appropriate means, where applicable.

2.3 Paragraph 63

Comment: It is unclear to us whether the issues of international trade/trade agreements should be addressed in CFS forum.

Moreover, international trade may not benefit the most vulnerable nor grant their food security sustainably.

Concrete proposal: Reformulate paragraph 63 by adding words in **bold**: ‘Invite WTO to co-organize a dialogue during CFS plenary in 2021 on **‘if, in what circumstances’** and how trade agreements can better support...’

2.4 Paragraph 66 and 67, Promotion of digitalization

Comment: Thailand welcomes the idea of promoting digitalization to enhance the sustainability of food system and nutrition. However, it is important to further discuss and provide recommendation on the efficacy of policy framework in regulating the digitalization-related risks and challenges in order to ensure that digitalization really benefits small-holder farmers, subsistence farmers and family-farmers.

Concrete proposal: Add reference to and warn against disruptive potential of digital technologies and digitalization of agriculture (e.g. replace human skills with machines and thus cause unemployment, greater inequality and vulnerability)

2.5 Request for clarification: ‘Innovations’ vs. ‘Innovative approaches’

The keyword “innovations” has been used twice in the introduction and twice in the policy recommendations.

Clarification is requested on whether the word ‘innovations’ is being used interchangeably with the words ‘innovative approaches’ and with the same meaning or if the word ‘innovations’ has a different meaning from the words ‘innovative approaches’ and what the eventual difference of meaning would be.