Women play key roles in food security as income earners and as food and nutrition managers in their households. But, women face discrimination in many areas, preventing them from participating in society on an equal basis and contributing their full potential to food security and nutrition. Evidence shows that women suffer disproportionately from shocks and stresses. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying economic crisis are having a differentiated impact on women and men and will likely further widen gender inequalities.

The importance of gender equality and women’s economic, social, and political empowerment is explicitly highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, as a stand-alone goal (SDG5 gender equality) and as a cross-cutting theme. A large body of evidence clearly demonstrates the fundamental, positive links between gender equality and women’s empowerment and food security and nutrition.

With world hunger numbers rising since 2015 and COVID-19 making matter worse, the roles of women in addressing global hunger and malnutrition have never been more important. To guide countries in their work on this, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) will develop Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment for Food Security and Nutrition (VGs), as part of its programme of work for 2020-2023.
The Guidelines, to be developed through extensive regional consultations and negotiations among CFS members and targeted for adoption in 2022, will help accelerate action by all stakeholders at all levels to achieve the vision and goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as part of the United Nations Decade of Action (2020-2029).

The CFS VGs will provide concrete policy guidance to Member Countries and development partners to overcome gender-based discrimination, promote women’s and girls’ rights, and empower them as part of their efforts to eradicate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition. The VGs will identify transformative interventions that can eliminate structural discrimination against women and girls and lead to improved food security and nutrition outcomes.

Given the important role that women play in family farming as well as in household food security and nutrition, the VGs will also contribute to the implementation of the Action Plans of the UN Decades of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) and on Family Farming (2019-2028).

The VGs will refer to the mandates and commitments expressed in international fora, acknowledge the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and consolidate previous work done by CFS on this issue. CFS previous work on gender includes policy recommendations on gender, food security and nutrition (CFS 2011/Final Report), and the background document and outcomes of a CFS Forum on Women’s Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and nutrition (CFS 2017/Inf 21 and CFS 2017/44/Final Report).

The VGs will complement and contribute to the effective implementation of other policy guidance tools such as the Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the context of National Food Security (RtF); Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT); Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI); and the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (FFA).

The VGs will be prepared starting in October 2020 following the selection of a Member State representative as the Chair of an Open-Ended Working Group to lead this work followed by an inclusive, regional consultative process, which is a distinguishing feature of CFS. Member Countries and other CFS stakeholders are encouraged to actively participate in all stages of development of the VGs.

The consultative process foresees open discussions with the participation of all actors, consultations with representatives of countries and other constituencies in five regions (Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe, Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean) to get inputs, comments, and suggestions on how to best align the VGs with regional and national priorities and needs, and final negotiations among member countries. An e-consultation will also take place in 2021 as an additional entry point for interested stakeholders.
If your country or organization is interested in supporting the development of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment or the development and implementation of other CFS policy products, please contact CFS@fao.org.

The inclusiveness of the process, particularly the organization of broad-based regional and electronic consultations, will depend on receiving adequate voluntary contributions. CFS stakeholders are invited to support the process with financial or in-kind contributions.

*In-kind contributions could, for instance, consist of hosting a regional conference, providing in-country accommodations and/or transportation, or seconding staff to the CFS Secretariat.

If your country or organization is interested in supporting the development of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment or the development and implementation of other CFS policy products, please contact CFS@fao.org.
The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was established in 1974 and reformed in 2009 to become the foremost inclusive intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform within the United Nations system dedicated to the elimination of hunger, food security and nutrition for all.

CFS is an integral component of global governance on food security and reports to the UN General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is hosted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO). Supported by a High Level Panel of Experts (CFS HLPE), the Committee supports country-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a special focus on Sustainable Development Goal 2 - Ending Hunger - and its linkages with other goals, targets, and indicators relevant to food security and nutrition.

CFS policy products have an unrivalled level of international legitimacy and authority as they are negotiated and agreed by 126 Member States, with the inclusive participation of all actors concerned with food security and nutrition: UN agencies and bodies, civil society, international agricultural research system, international and regional financial institutions, private sector and philanthropic institutions; they are informed by evidence and scientific analysis provided by the CFS HLPE; and they draw from the technical capacity of the three RBAs.

The Committee is jointly supported by the three Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP). The three agencies provide CFS with core funding.

CFS Secretariat is supported by:

- **FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization
- **IFAD** International Fund for Agricultural Development
- **WFP** World Food Programme

With generous voluntary contributions from:

- European Commission
- France
- Germany
- Switzerland
- United Arab Emirates