

U.S. Comments
Group of Friends of the CFS Chair– Implications of UNFSS on CFS
January 10, 2022

United States Comments

CFS 1/20/2022

1. How can we increase the impact of CFS policy products? How can the CFS membership better disseminate and make use of the existing and future policy products in a way that they better inspire our governments' policies and strategies, and empower all stakeholders, including as key reference frameworks for the FSS National Pathways and Coalitions?

- A major factor affecting the uptake of CFS policy products is not awareness, but their relevance to local and national policy makers. Policy products must be simultaneously useful/applicable to policy makers while addressing the needs of implementors, farmers, and food systems' workers. Supporting these stakeholders to convene at regional and national levels and develop strategies or roadmaps may ensure a more unified, un-siloed approach to how these products are ultimately written, disseminated, and used.
- Showcase CFS policy products within relevant FSS Coalitions and ask them to further disseminate the products.
- Ensure that cross-cutting issues, such as COVID-19 (i.e., pandemic impacts on food security/economy/etc.) are woven into CFS policy products, where relevant.
- Ensure that policy products are focused on the task at hand and are realistic in what they are attempting to achieve (e.g., if we're developing recommendations on how to promote youth engagement in agriculture, we should remain focused on that goal rather than attempting to insert objectives or political wins that are loosely or not related). Too often CFS policy products attempt to advance a global agenda rather than addressing the needs of local and national policy makers.

2. How can CFS better support countries' efforts to articulate and implement national food security, food systems and nutrition strategies, including the emerging National Pathways?

- Focus on developing policy products that can be plucked off the shelf at any time (timeless), avoiding prescriptive approaches while still articulating relevant recommendations that respond to actual barriers to food security that are applicable to a range of contexts
- If CFS wants to better support the efforts of countries to implement strategies and pathways, it should put more emphasis on listening to countries. CFS will be more effective if its discussions are informed by voices from countries rather than viewing itself as a source of top-down guidance for countries. CFS could provide regular opportunities for countries to share their experiences of implementing their national pathways, allowing for meaningful dialogue, breakout sessions/workshops, and linking countries with relevant FSS coalitions.

3. How can the CFS provide its platform to multi-stakeholder alliances, coalitions and initiatives to share progress, connect with each other, in a strategic way (including those that emerged from the FSS and already existing ones)? How shall the CFS consider the five action areas (plenary, special events, side events...)?

- As a multistakeholder platform and an inclusive UN body, the CFS represents a diversity of voices and viewpoints as it is currently structured. However, it must always seek to showcase a

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balance of stakeholders, both in sector and in priority/approach. It should also be more transparent in how it determines what and whom it is showcasing (decision-making process).

- The CFS should also encourage Members to broaden the stakeholder base with which they engage. Members and Participants cannot claim to represent the views of an entire sector if they do not attempt to engage stakeholders that have views that may differ from their own.
- The CFS should focus on its role as a convenor utilizing Plenary sessions (including side events), Advisory Group sessions (via guest presentations), and potentially special sessions to allow for continued discussion and momentum for the initiatives, “outcomes”, and updates of progress made toward national pathways of the FSS.

4. How can the CFS global science-policy interface represented by the HLPE be strengthened and well connected to other science-policy interface UN mechanisms, in view of the proposals in this area that emerged in the context of the FSS?

- The HLPE would be strengthened by broadening its review of relevant research to inform its approach to the various workstreams it is asked to support. It must recognize that there are differing views amongst members.
- The HLPE should not lead the science-policy interface in the follow up to the FSS, as it does not contain the technical capacity nor resources to anchor coalitions or support the implementation of national pathways.
- Further, the HLPE has allowed itself to become politicized. In order for it to successfully coordinate with any new science policy interface, it would need to take a new direction/approach that is focused on addressing the needs of all CFS stakeholders, rather than the subset to which it often seems to cater. This would improve the body’s credibility and ability to deliver robust reports, which are the foundation of CFS policy guidance.

5. What is possible to strengthen accountability within and among all stakeholders?

- The concept of accountability in this context needs to be clarified.
- The CFS and HLPE can strengthen accountability to Members by ensuring that workstream processes and stakeholder engagement strategies are more transparent and align with Bureau decisions.
- Accountability amongst all actors may be strengthened by:
 - Recognizing the parameters under which member states and mechanisms operate so as to build a positive, collaborative environment
 - Ensuring that the CFS remains a member state-driven body that operates on the basis of consensus decision-making and avoids politicization
 - Supporting more opportunities for stakeholder input via virtual consultations, such as the Regional Consultations for the Gender workstream