

**UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Michael Fakhri**

**Comments on CFS 2024-2027 Multi-Year Programme of Work (MyPoW)**

**Zero Draft**

**24 May 2022**

Thank you for creating a Zero Draft that captures the ambition, breadth and diversity of perspectives at the CFS. I take the point from the Chair that a narrative is important around the MyPoW and I therefore provide one drawing from the Zero Draft with suggestions for a way forward.

We are in the midst of a food crisis that continues to worsen and get more complicated every day. Many expect another pandemic sometime soon and the effects of climate change continue to worsen. At the outset of the pandemic, it was difficult get the right to food into the international agenda. However, due to the hard work of the CFS and the right to food community more broadly, we now find ourselves at a hopeful moment where the right to food is widely recognized. Since the right to food is at the heart of the CFS's vision statement, the spotlight is now on the CFS more so than ever before.

This MyPoW is the opportunity to give the right to food specific meaning to not only respond to this food crisis, but to make food systems around the world more resilient. The CFS was reformed and strengthened in the wake of the last food crisis. Now is the time for the CFS to put this strong structure into use.

I will describe the CFS's three roles – platform, policy, and uptake – as I understand them today:

**Platform:** The world cannot overcome the crisis without an international coordinated response. Moreover, because all food systems are ecologically and economically interconnected, no national food transformation will succeed without international coordination. Only the CFS, with its roles as the foremost inclusive platform that can coordinate collective action at all levels. Despite the crisis worsening, the CFS has strengthened its profile and gained increasing recognition in New York and Geneva amongst a wide-range of UN institutions. The CFS is on strong ground to commit as much as possible to this role. While other institutions may play a role in uptake and the practical application of the right to food (such as the FAO, Human Rights Council and ILO), only the CFS is the foremost coordinating platform.

**Policy:** The CFS has developed a large number of policy tools since 2009. As we know, one complaint about the CFS has been the significant degree of work it requires especially from smaller or poorer countries. In the last three years, policy instrument negotiations have been very intense and have left most parties without a clear sense of whether it was worth the effort. This has further contributed to a less-than-ideal rate of Member State participation in the CFS. I think the CFS has a strong set of policy tools already at its

disposal. The primary challenge over the years is that CFS policy tools taken as a whole are uneven and potentially inconsistent with each other. This because the references to human rights law, and international law more broadly, have not been progressive – as per international legal obligations – but inconsistent.

**Uptake:** If the CFS had a stronger uptake agenda, more countries would be willing to actively participate in the CFS. In terms of national policy, many countries have developed national plans to transform their food systems. But because the right to food and related CFS instruments has not been central to those national plans, many of these plans remain unclear and are not framed in terms of action. The CFS needs to have a more explicit strategy on how to work with partners and Member States to encourage national and regional uptake. The key thing to remember about the CFS's role in uptake as described in the Reform Document, is that the CFS is committed not just to the uptake of CFS policy instruments but to the “practical application” of the right to food.

With this in mind, and taking in the proposed topics and themes from the Zero Draft, here is what the next four years could look like:

Year 1: This year would set the stage for the entire MyPoW with “**1A) Right to Food - Action towards 2030**”. This theme is the most inclusive, encapsulating a lot of the suggested proposals, and garners a lot of support already. Focusing Year 1 on this theme is an opportunity to build on the growing commitment to the right to food and set the tone for the remaining years. At the heart of the CFS vision in the reform document is a commitment to strive for a world free from hunger where countries implement the right to food. Thus, such a focus would re-energize all of the CFS's potential and policy tools.

The food crisis remains the most important issue of our time and requires work over several years. Therefore, work would also begin on the CFS's role as a platform and policy convergence under theme “**2B) Coordinating policy responses to emerging global food crises**”. The outcome in Year 4 would be the development of policy recommendations on coordinated policy responses to global food crises.

Bookending the MyPoW with the right to food in Year 1 and a policy response to the food crisis in Year 4, gives the CFS – and the UN system – clearer vision and focus in all its work over the four-year period.

Years 2 and 3: During this period, the CFS would continue the coordination work on the food crisis, but also include two themes (one per year). Theme “**2A) Building Resilient Food Systems**” would complement the focus on responding to the food crisis with an eye to preventing crises. Such theme would include “**3B) Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss to achieve SDG2**”, since climate change and biodiversity loss are the major causes of instability in food systems. Moreover, the Climate Change COP and Convention on Biodiversity have been incredibly slow to address food systems and a CFS policy instrument could play a key role galvanizing the entire UN system around the issue.

The second theme would be **“4A) In-depth debate on enhanced efforts to increase global awareness and use of CFS Policy Products”**. Time has proven that much more work needs to be done to encourage uptake. A workstream dedicated to enhancing uptake is key to ensuring CFS policy instruments are cohesive and effective.

Year 4: Drawing from the work of the previous three years, and good practices developed since the food crisis began in 2020, this year would be primarily devoted to the CFS’s role as a platform and policy convergence under theme **“2B) Coordinating policy responses to emerging global food crises”**. These recommendations would draw from existing CFS tools, and thus the CFS would lead by example by using its own tools. By definition, such a policy instrument would address all the themes in Thematic Area 1: farmers, workers, and Indigenous peoples. To ensure the policy recommendations answer the question of “how”, it could also include the notion of multiscalar governance capturing **“4B) Localizing SDG2: multilevel governance for more sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems”** and **“4D) Collaborative governance for more effective, resilient and inclusive agrifood systems”**.