

**Virtual High-Level Special Event on Food Security and Nutrition of the
Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
13-15 October 2020**

**Highlights from day three, Thursday, 15th October 2020
Food Systems Transformation**

Parts 1 & 2: Opening and Setting the Scene

The **third Plenary Session of the Special Event** (Thursday, 15th October 2020, 1:00-4:00 PM, Rome time), moderated by **Ms. Corinna Hawkes (Director, Centre for Food Policy, City University of London)** aimed at discussing the [draft CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition](#) and [draft CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches](#), and considering their relevance to the objectives of the UN Food Systems Summit 2021.

- **International Day of Rural Women (IDRW) tribute by [Ms. Dali Nolasco Cruz](#), Slow Food, Mexico:** Ms. Cruz highlighted that celebrating IDRW is a recognition of the crucial contribution of rural women in the development of rural agriculture, improvement of food security and eradication of rural poverty. It also means reflecting on what rural women are yet to achieve, namely the right to fair salaries, health, and land. She pointed out that globally 43% of rural women work in the field lacking safety nets, social security and adequate salaries. COVID-19 has made women even weaker, “that is why the UN has now decided to focus on building the resilience of rural women during the pandemic, focusing on their needs and requirements”, said Ms. Cruz. She also stressed that, despite these adversities, over the years rural women have created organizations to safeguard their rights and lands, as well as developed firms and businesses to guarantee food security of their people and nations. However, rural women still face recurring barriers and discriminations that limit their ability to participate in societies thus making their work invisible.
- **UN Deputy Secretary-General, [Ms. Amina Mohammed](#), in her [keynote address](#),** commended the CFS for convening the virtual Special Event in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as for bringing stakeholders together as early as the pandemic outbreak to exchange experiences, lessons learned and evidence-based policy guidance. On the occasion of the IDRW, Ms. Mohammed emphasized that efforts must be stepped up to reduce gender inequalities and place women at the centre of COVID-19 response and recovery plans. In this regard, she praised the CFS’ upcoming work to develop Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. Ms. Mohammed then pointed out that the increasing global recognition that transforming food systems must be central in the efforts to achieve the SDGs is the premise for the Food Systems Summit 2021, and is also implicit in the awarding of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize to WFP. According to Ms. Mohammed, the Food Systems Summit will be an opportunity to build on this momentum and it will be crucial for the CFS, with all its diversity of voices, to be engaged in the Summit’s preparatory process as well as to help lead on the outcomes and implementation. The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition, that are currently being developed by the CFS, have the potential to be a powerful contribution to the success of the Summit. To that end, she urged the Committee to complete the Guidelines soon and focus on their uptake and utilization.

Part 3: Rapid Fire Interventions: strategies to drive food systems transformation at scale

- **H.E. Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships, European Union (EU)** started off her [remarks](#) by stating that the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to WFP is a testament to the fact that peace and zero hunger go hand in hand. She mentioned that COVID-

19 is pushing millions more people to the brink of starvation and, by 2021, will push nearly 50 million more women and girls into extreme poverty. To that end, according to Commissioner Urpilainen, we need a long-term strategy for more sustainable and equitable food systems to provide healthy food for all. The following three priority actions were outlined : 1) through the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), the EU has proposed a vision to make Europe's food systems sustainable in an economic, social and environmental sense; 2) acknowledging the need to invest in rural women, who accounts for up to 80% of food production in developing countries, the EU is working to make 85% of its new programmes gender sensitive; 3) undivided attention should be given to the most vulnerable people in food crises, bringing together development, humanitarian and peace efforts. In this regard, she emphasized the EU's strong support to the Global Network against food crises along with FAO, WFP and others. In conclusion, she stressed the EU's commitment to work with all partners, including CFS, towards an ambitious outcome of the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021, ensuring it is "a people's summit" and "a solutions' summit".

- **H.E. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner, Agriculture and Rural Economy, African Union (AU)**, in her [statement](#), highlighted that before the COVID-19 pandemic, 690 million people were hungry worldwide, with 250 million of them living in Africa, while, according to WFP's projections, the pandemic is likely to push additional 130 million people into food insecurity by year end, with the majority of them being in Africa. According to Commissioner Sacko, the continent needs to fully embrace the African agricultural transformation agenda and strengthen the resilience of its agriculture and food systems, while stressing that the goals and targets of this transformation agenda are well articulated in the Malabo declaration. She also underlined that the implementation of the AU land policy initiative is informed and guided by the [CFS VGGT](#). In this respect, she informed that, given the AU's long-standing cooperation and partnership with FAO, WFP and IFAD, deliberate steps are now taken to translate the CFS policy recommendations into policy options, taking into consideration the specificities of the continent, and submitted to AU policy organs for endorsement and subsequent implementation by AU Member States. In her view, this can allow policy coherence between AU Member States and the global, regional and national levels to achieve maximum impact with the scarce resources allocated to agriculture.

Part 4: Panel Discussion: Contribution of the two ongoing CFS policy processes towards sustainable food systems

- **H.E. Julia Klöckner, Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture, Germany (by video)** underscored that, in the future, we will not only need to feed 10 billion people but also ensure they can eat as healthily as possible and, in doing so, natural resources must not be overexploited. Minister Klöckner stressed the relevance of CFS and its work on developing Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition and Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches, which can substantially contribute to next year's UN Food Systems Summit. In this regard, Minister Klöckner highlighted that Germany places strong focus on promoting mutual exchanges among all stakeholders to make sure that regional, cultural and local specialities are taken into account. She finally emphasized the need for sustainable, healthy food and resilient food systems, and to achieve this, Germany believes that a proactive CFS, in which all stakeholders participate, is key and thus urged all to stay involved in the Committee.
- **H.E. Mariam Al Mehairi, Minister for Food and Water Security, United Arab Emirates (UAE)** started off her [intervention](#) by stating that a complete paradigm shift is required in the way we produce food and our relationship with it. Minister Al Mehairi then highlighted the relevance of UAE National Food Security Strategy, launched in 2018, as a solid foundation for the country, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure food security for all. She also noted that UAE is aiming to become a hub for food technology and food knowledge given the high dependence on food imports (90%) as well as scarcity of arable land (5%) and water. UAE believes that the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition are a vital contribution to the goal of

transforming food systems and are in alignment with the country's endeavours to achieve a sustainable food secure future. In this regard, Minister Al Mehairi mentioned the following key issues of relevance to UAE contained in the Guidelines: sustainable food supply chains to achieve healthy diets in the context of climate change; food safety; agro-biodiversity; promotion of sustainable healthy diets through food and nutrition education; and focus on eliminating food waste. With regard to the latter issue, Minister Al Mehairi stressed that [UAE has partnered with WFP on its #StopTheWaste campaign](#) which helps support country's efforts to reduce food waste.

- **H.E. Limber Cruz, Minister for Agriculture, Dominican Republic** presented the following key focus areas and measures adopted by the government to date to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure food security in the country: 1) special funds for agriculture were provided, such as financing for farmers; 2) medium- and long-term plans and instruments have been put in place to preserve water resources and provide the agricultural sector with water reservoirs; 3) public-private partnerships to compensate for the reduced commercialization of products due to border closures; 4) strong focus on family farming, that includes women and young people, and rural development, recognizing the fundamental role played by women in the production in rural areas; 5) training programmes and technical assistance to educate producers and farmers and allow them to use technological innovation in their farms. Minister Cruz emphasized that we have to innovate the way we produce, and we need stability in the agriculture sector. To that end, he stressed that it is key that correct planning instruments for the production are in place. He concluded his remarks by mentioning the Dominican Republic's school feeding programme which makes sure that the food from farms reach the schools.
- **Mr. Patrick Webb, Technical Advisor, Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition (GLOPAN)** stressed that GLOPAN's work is guided by the core principle that food systems are not working but can be transformed. He presented the main findings of the recently launched ["Future Food Systems" report](#) which aims at linking global responsibilities and actions with those of low- and middle-income countries. The report focuses on steps needed to achieve food systems transformation, and emphasizes that diets are at the core of global challenges such as human health deterioration and climate change. In this regard, improving diets represents a point of reference for making the transition possible. Mr. Webb stated that many of the policies and programmes that need to be applied are well known but things need to be done differently: at global level, there is a need to rebalance the 600 billion dollars of subsidies that go to the agricultural sector towards those foods that are supportive of sustainable healthy diets; the same applies to agriculture research, which is dominated by staple foods and little, by comparison, on nutrient rich foods. Among the report's conclusions: healthy diets are to be made affordable to everyone, not necessarily by reducing the food prices, rather by increasing people's purchasing power; consumers should be empowered, not just through education, but through modifying the relative prices of foods to make informed choices that can improve their own health and that of the planet.
- **[Mr. Robert D. Saik](#), Chief Executive Officer, [AGvisorPRO](#), Canada and CFS Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) representative** pointed out that COVID-19 presents an opportunity for public and private sector to work together in new ways to address global food security. According to Mr. Saik, increasing soil health and farms' profitability are crucial to achieve sustainability. To that end, it is key to regularly learn what works and what does not work in the farm, as well as recognize that in each farming philosophy there are scientific principles that should be adopted and others that should be left behind. It is also needed to acknowledge the fact that what have fed the population in the past will not be adequate to feed the population in the future: soil cultivation, for example, leads to soil degradation, thus soil health is key to agriculture resilience and food security. In conclusion, Mr. Saik highlighted that the private sector does collaborate with farmers to leverage technologies to solve problems. In this regard, he mentioned that AGvisorPRO has created a digital platform to instantaneously connect farmers with agronomic experts,

recognizing that it is through the implementation of sound agronomics that issues relating to malnutrition can be addressed.

- **Ms. Shalmali Guttal**, Executive Director, [Focus on the Global South](#), and CFS Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM) representative emphasized that the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition and Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches represent an important and timely opportunity to radically transform food systems. She stressed that CSM will support their uptake and utilization through publications, advocacy and monitoring “depending on the extent to which they will reflect the priorities and vision of CSM’s constituencies on the ground”. Regarding the way forward, Ms. Guttal outlined the following four approaches on which CSM will be focusing on: 1) importance of reclaiming food systems as public goods that should not be left to corporations, philanthropes and free markets; 2) sustainability, human rights, human-animal-planetary health, biodiversity, and resilience are interconnected and interdependent, while sustainable food systems are based on and promote human rights, particularly the right of food; 3) sustainable food systems are rooted in food sovereignty and agroecology; 4) the transformation of food systems calls for transformation of their governance which must be guided by and rooted in public interest and well-being.

Part 5: Audience Interactive Question & Answer Session

During the interactive question and answer session, the following interventions were made:

- **Spain:** Mr. Gabriel Ferrero, Director-General for Sustainable Development Policies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation emphasized that Spain attaches great importance to gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) and, in this regard, he announced that the CFS will benefit from a EUR 170,000 contribution from the Spanish government for the upcoming GEWE workstream. With reference to the Food Systems Summit 2021, Mr. Ferrero highlighted that its preparatory process needs to be inclusive and bring together as many people and actors as possible, and CFS will be critical in this respect because of its multi-stakeholder nature. According to Mr. Ferrero, the Summit, among other issues, should look at family farming and the central role played by women and indigenous people.
- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):** Mr. James Lomax, Programme Officer, Sustainable Food Systems and Agriculture underscored the active role which is being played by UNEP in preparation for the Food Systems Summit. According to Mr. Lomax, the issue of governance is key: “we need the recognition from the highest levels of governments that change has to happen”. He finally informed that the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly will take place in February 2021 bringing together world’s Ministers of Environment: “governments need to acknowledge that environment is a critical pillar for food systems transformation”, he said.
- **France:** Her Excellency Celine Jurgensen, French Permanent Representative to the Rome-based Agencies emphasized France’s support to the transformation of food systems and the adoption of ambitious CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition. She also stressed that both the CFS and the HLPE have a key role to play in the lead-up to the UN Food Systems Summit.
- **Mexico:** Mr. Victor Suarez Carrera, Undersecretary of Food and Competitiveness, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development expressed Mexico’s support to CFS and its two ongoing policy processes on food systems and nutrition and agroecology. He highlighted that the government has implemented the setting up of a new agri-food and nutritional system and, in order to steer the transformation of food systems in the country, has set up an inter-institutional group made up of experts, representatives of Ministries (Science and Technology, Environment, Agriculture), research institutes, civil society bodies, FAO, WHO and UNICEF. Among the key recommendations made by this group: repurposing subsidies and redirecting them to small scale farmers.

Part 6: CFS and the 2021 Food Systems Summit

- **Mr. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF** stated that the historic progress made over the past 20 years by the global community to improve children's nutrition and food security is now facing serious headwinds, namely 2/3 of the world's children are not getting a diverse and healthy diet that they need to grow well, and COVID-19 pandemic is quickly accelerating a child nutrition crisis. Ms. Fore outlined the following key finding from the [2019 UNICEF State of the World's Children report](#): 1) when healthy options are available, convenient and affordable, children and families make better food choices; 2) when governments invest in good nutrition and the systems that support it - i.e. food, health, water, sanitation, education, and social protection programmes, children's nutrition dramatically improves. She also recalled that, earlier this year, [UNICEF, FAO, WFP and WHO issued a joint call to action to protect maternal and child nutrition in the face of COVID-19](#). She finally stressed that next year's Food Systems Summit will be a unique opportunity to begin the work of transforming global food systems to be more secure and sustainable.
- **Mr. Michael Fakhri, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food**, in his [remarks](#), underscored that "the CFS not only has the ability to transform food systems, but also the legitimacy to do so because of its multilateralism and commitment to human rights". Mr. Fakhri outlined the following three aspects that are considered crucial for a successful Food System Summit: 1) clear commitments and timelines from governments to implement CFS' policy tools and FAO's Right to Food Guidelines; 2) clear commitments and timelines from governments to transition or enhance agroecological practices that respond to smallholders' demands; 3) affirmation from all stakeholders that no food system can be transformed without attending to peoples' right to adequate food, peoples' sovereignty, and every individual's inherent human dignity.
- **Dr. Agnes Kalibata, UN Food Systems Summit Special Envoy** echoed the UN Deputy Secretary-General's words around the importance of CFS and this Special Event, as well as the centrality of women to achieve global food security and nutrition. In response to a comment made by the representative of CSM on "the Food Systems Summit's preparatory process being top-down and not engaging", Dr. Kalibata said: "we want you to be part of this process, please engage us and be part of what we are doing". She noted the importance of finding concrete solutions to rethink food systems and deliver against the SDGs, and informed that country-level Food Systems Dialogues have just been launched. She emphasized that "we must build on CFS and what the CFS is doing as this is not about reinventing the wheel, it is about looking at what is working and building on it". In this regard, she underlined the relevance of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition and the Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches. She highlighted that the Summit's preparatory process is embracing this policy work of the CFS while expressing her hope for the Committee to take the work of the Summit forward. Dr. Kalibata concluded her intervention by saying: "what I need from all of you is to engage in the Summit, be part of this conversation and help us find new solutions".

Part 7: Event Closing Ceremony

- Following a **closing video** ("[Good Food for All](#)") prepared by the [SDG2 Advocacy Hub](#), **the Special Event was brought to a close by the CFS Chairperson, Mr. Thanawat Tiensin**. "It is timely that we call for food systems transformation in the interest of all, and we need long-term strategies and commitment for this to happen". Mr. Tiensin pointed out that, with everyone's commitment and support, CFS policy products can be translated into policy options, strategies and actions at local and national level. Following the Special Event, a "CFS Chair's summary report" was prepared and published on the [Special Event's website](#). He finally reminded all delegates that the CFS will gather for its 47th Plenary Session on 8-12 February 2021.

Partner event “Transformative Approaches to Advance Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture”

[[Event recording](#), password: CFSPE2020+]

Organizers: European Union (EU); Spain; FAO; IFAD; WFP; International Development Research Organization (IDRC).

Objectives: 1) Raise awareness on the importance, relevance and benefits of gender transformative approaches (GTAs) for the achievement of SDG 2 and SDG 5; 2) share concrete cases where GTAs have been successful in transforming the social, economic, and/or political structures, institutions and norms that are preventing women, men, girls and boys from realizing their full human potential for a world free of hunger and malnutrition; and 3) learn about ongoing work under the ‘EU-RBA Joint Programme on Taking Gender Transformative Approaches to Scale for impact on Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture’, implemented by FAO, IFAD and WFP with the EU’s financial support.

- In closing the event, **Ms. Kawinzi Muiu, Director, WFP Gender Office** underscored that achieving gender equality is a prerequisite for achieving Zero Hunger worldwide. She emphasized that WFP truly believes that a world with Zero Hunger can only be attained if women, boys, girls and men have equal opportunities and access to resources. Ms. Muiu highlighted that it is crucial that development and humanitarian projects do not erode gender equality and women’s empowerment but rather increase it. In this regard, she mentioned the following two WFP’s operations where gender equality and women’s empowerment is significantly relevant: 1) Syria, being the first country where WFP used gender transformative approaches by working with rural women to increase their capacity to generate income, and providing them with technical assistance and cash-based transfers; and 2) in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, where WFP uses cash-based transfers to increase women’s financial self-sufficiency, reduce gender-based violence and build resilience. According to Ms. Muiu, this shows that gender transformative approaches can be used in both humanitarian and development settings. She also informed that WFP is currently performing an assessment in Yemen to see to what extent gender transformative approaches are being integrated in the operation. Recognizing the importance of men’s involvement to achieve gender equality, Ms. Muiu noted that, in Cameroon, WFP runs the so-called “husband schools” where men are taught about good nutrition, and the entire community can discuss girls’ education and ways to reduce gender violence. In conclusion, she emphasized the importance of partnerships by acknowledging the key role played by FAO, IFAD and the European Union in the context of the “EU-RBA Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches”, as well as Spain, which supported the RBAs in ensuring the workstream on gender equality and women’s empowerment was included in the CFS programme of work for 2020-2023.