

CFS Forum on Women's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition - Chair's Summary with Draft Outcomes

Gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment are central to achieving the CFS vision of fostering the progressive realization of the right to adequate food, achieving food security for all, by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of people in rural areas with full and equitable participation in decision-making. Without achieving gender equality, the full realisation of, women's rights and women's economic, social and political empowerment, especially for rural women, food security and nutrition will not be achieved.

The focus on gender equality and women's empowerment is explicit across all the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both as a stand-alone goal – SDG 5 - and throughout the Agenda 2030.

The objective of the CFS Forum on Women's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition (the 'Forum') was to discuss the challenges that remain in realizing women's empowerment, and to promote a shared understanding of how they are evolving in the context of food security and nutrition.

The morning session focused on identifying emerging challenges and persisting barriers to women's empowerment and on legal and policy instruments intended to overcome them.

The key messages that emerged from the discussions are synthesized in the following points:

- (a) The role of women as knowledge bearers and agents of transformation towards more sustainable production systems, including agroecology;*
- (b) The importance of self-association and the role of social movements to promote women's empowerment, gender equality and women's rights through women's leadership and equal participation in decision-making at all levels;*
- (c) The importance of eradicating gender stereotypes and structural discrimination as a pre-condition to address power imbalances;*
- (d) The need to expand the concept of gender disaggregated data beyond statistics and incorporate women's real life experiences;*
- (e) The importance of recognizing women's unpaid care and productive work;*
- (f) The importance of political will to foster a cultural change towards the full realization of women's rights;*
- (g) The need to implement, monitor and adequately resource through gender budgeting the existing normative frameworks as the major contribution to advancing women's empowerment, women's rights and gender equality and eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls;*
- (h) The importance of the active involvement of boys and men in the implementation of existing normative frameworks;*
- (i) The need to integrate nutritional aspects into the concept of the right to adequate food;*
- (j) The importance of gender equitable access to decent work and equal wages.*

The afternoon session was devoted to identifying ways in which the CFS can contribute to accelerating progress towards women's empowerment. To this end, three questions guided the group discussions:

- (i) How are CFS policy outcomes promoting women's empowerment, women's rights and gender equality as a pre-requisite for food security and nutrition?
- (ii) Taking into account its mandate, what concrete steps can CFS take to further advance women's empowerment, women's rights and gender equality in its work to produce a tangible shift towards gender equality and enhance the implementation of the UN General Recommendation 34 of CEDAW (2016) on the rights of rural women?
- (iii) What actions are required and by whom in order to strengthen the content and implementation of national and international normative frameworks for women's empowerment?

Key points emerging from the Rapporteurs' presentations included:

Regarding question (i):

- CFS policy products have taken into account the gender dimension of food security and nutrition. On the other hand, CFS outcomes are weak in terms of monitoring and accountability;
- Lack of knowledge on what is happening on the ground also makes it difficult to determine the level of uptake;
- There is a need to change discourse towards looking at food systems in their integrity was emphasized as well as the recognition of women's rights as a political issue;
- The importance of the role of women, especially those of rural women, as the subjects of rights was highlighted.

Regarding question (ii):

- CFS should: recognise that achieving food security and nutrition and the 2030 Agenda is not possible without the realisation of women's rights and empowerment; thoroughly mainstream women's empowerment and gender equality into all CFS work; continue to promote the participation of women and hear the voices of the most food insecure in CFS; consider how CFS can promote implementation of CEDAW and GR34 in its work;
- CFS should continue working on the basis of existing legal and policy frameworks and move forward by promoting their implementation and monitoring;
- CFS should include the feminist perspective at an early stage when producing documents that will result in policy outcomes including gender disaggregated data and considering the root causes of women's disempowerment and gender inequality.

Regarding question (iii):

- Recognition of the right to adequate food and the principle of food sovereignty; support to women's grass-root organizations and political will at the country level were mentioned as priority actions;
- Strong collaboration among the Rome Based Agencies was also mentioned.

Proposed draft outcomes for endorsement by CFS 44

The Committee:

- 1) Welcomes the Forum on Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss the challenges that remain in realizing women's empowerment and to promote a shared understanding of the need to achieve gender equality and the full realization of women's rights as prerequisites to achieving food security and nutrition goals;
- 2) Takes note of the Forum's outcomes, as outlined in document CFS 2017/44/7 (Chair's Summary), and particularly draws attention to the need for governments to stand behind their commitments to achieving gender equality, women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment by translating those commitments into national policies, programmes, investments and adequate human and financial resources;
- 3) Highlights the need to work towards the implementation and monitoring, by the appropriate bodies, of UN General Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), especially its General Recommendation 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women;
- 4) Emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming gender equality, women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment in all CFS work streams, products and documents;
- 5) Requests that measures to promote women's empowerment, women's and girls' rights and gender equality be included in the CFS Plan of Action in response to the CFS independent evaluation.