

HLPE contribution to CFS for SDG 2 review by the HLPF

As the science-policy interface of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) has three key functions:

- (i) *Assess and analyze the current state of food security and nutrition and its underlying causes.*
- (ii) *Provide scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues, utilizing existing high quality research, data and technical studies.*
- (iii) *Identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas.*

As per its second function, the HLPE prepares, on CFS request, scientific reports on food security and nutrition (FSN) related issues, through an inclusive, evidence-based and collective process, involving experts with various regional origin, professional experience and scientific expertise.

This process continues to demonstrate that scientific communities can deliver useful and effective knowledge and evidence based reports to stimulate inclusive policy debates. These reports have provided a useful way to survey available evidence on complex and large topics, to pull out agreed conclusions, and to highlight areas of disagreement or uncertainty. They are consistently used as reference documents by academics, decision-makers and other stakeholders, not only to inform the CFS policy debates and negotiation regarding contested and controversial issues at the global level, but also to build capacities and elaborate strategies, policies and programmes at regional and national levels.

Ten reports for a consistent and holistic analysis of FSN

The HLPE has already published ten reports¹ as well as a first note identifying “*Critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition*” (2014)². In the vision consistently developed by the HLPE in those reports, the most important criteria to assess the sustainability of a food system is its capacity to ensure *food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition of future generations are not compromised* (HLPE report #8, 2014)³.

The ten published HLPE reports, considered together, provide a comprehensive analysis of FSN, by covering related complex issues, controversies and uncertainties. They suggest common definitions, tools, methodologies, pathways and policy recommendations to structure the political debates. They demonstrate, from different perspectives, the critical importance of improving FSN for all, as both a necessary condition and a cross-cutting challenge to achieve not only SDG2, but the Agenda 2030 as a whole.

¹ See: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/reports/en/>

² See: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/critical-and-emerging-issues/cei-2014/en/>

³ HLPE, 2014. *Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome 2014. See: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/reports/report-8-elaboration-process/en/>

When looking at FSN, sustainable development in its different dimensions has actually been central in the narrative of most of the HLPE reports. The reports on *Price volatility and food security* (2011), *Social protection for food security* (2012) and on *Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security* (2013) are more directly linked to the social and economic dimensions of sustainability, while climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources are central in the reports on *Land tenure and international investments in agriculture* (2011), *Food security and climate change* (2012), *Biofuels and food security* (2013), *Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems* (2014), and *Water for food security and nutrition* (2015).

Several HLPE reports, such as the one on *Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food security and nutrition* (2014), address FSN from a sectoral perspective. The report on *Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition: what roles for livestock?* (2016) highlights the need to improve resource efficiency, strengthen resilience and secure social equity and responsibility in an integrated way.

The *Summaries and Recommendations* of the ten reports that provide specific insights on FSN from different perspectives are available online.⁴ Nevertheless, all these reports consistently demonstrate the following findings:

1. The tight and complex interactions between sectors

Beyond a legitimate focus on FSN, all these reports have consistently evidenced the tight links between sectors (agriculture, food systems, environment health, climate change, welfare, social equity and justice, health, energy, and political stability), as well as the interlinkages between all the SDGs in the overall framework of the Agenda 2030. With the perspective of achieving the Agenda 2030, when addressing FSN, it is necessary to take into account causalities and consequences of actions across countries and sectors, whether direct and indirect, short and long distance, short and long term.

2. Beyond hunger, a new vision of FSN related challenges

FSN is not only about hunger and starvation, which still represent huge challenges despite progress made in some regions of the world. In addition to these unbearable concerns that affect the resilience, peace, gender unbalance and social injustice for the poorest and more vulnerable, especially in rural areas, the urgency of answers relate to the different aspects of the triple burden (i.e. (i) hunger; (ii) micronutrient deficiencies; (iii) overweight and obesity). This triple burden not only affects the developing countries, but all regions and countries.

3. The need for a radical transformation of agriculture and food systems as a whole to improve FSN and achieve the Agenda 2030

All these reports lead together to the conclusion that fundamental changes in agriculture and food systems are needed to address FSN and, more generally, sustainable development. Analyses highlight the need, when addressing FSN, to move beyond agricultural supply as an exclusive entry point and demographic transition as the main driver. The performance and implications of a transformation of the whole food system should rather be considered.

⁴ See: http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/HLPE_S_and_R/HLPE_Reports_1-10_Summaries_and_Recommendations.pdf

The transformation needed is not just incremental and is certainly of the same magnitude as the one called the “Green Revolution”, although with a completely different set of challenges. Such transformation may conversely be considered as a powerful lever to address most of the SDGs and respective targets and the whole 2030 Agenda.

4. Diverse situations, diverse solutions, global challenges

Whether local or national, each context is specific and calls for adapted pathways to be designed and solutions to be implemented. Even for cross-cutting issues, e.g. land use changes, market, capacity strengthening and resilience, there is no magic bullet nor “one size fits all” solution when addressing FSN. This assumption makes local initiatives and innovations essential to build upon and strengthen social capital and inclusive territory renaissance. Yet, the importance of embeddedness and interactions among micro, meso and macro drivers and processes require the alignment among levels, i.e. global frameworks, national policies, local governance and innovation.

Recommendations to address FSN

Each report has, as per CFS request, provided an opportunity to identify specific recommendations (see Appendix). These recommendations all insist on the following:

- The embeddedness of environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development calls for looking at interactions between the 3 following challenges when addressing FSN: (i) improve resource efficiency (ii) strengthen resilience and (iii) secure social equity and responsibility (HLPE report #10, 2016)⁵.
- Countries should elaborate strategies and plans of action at the country level, building on cross sectorial and inclusive consultative processes that make it possible to identify priorities, to address trade-offs and to organize effective and efficient implementation channels through specific institutional arrangements.
- In order to effectively transform the whole agriculture and food systems at a large scale, there is a need for consistent and specific actions and governance arrangements at different scales, from local to global; this is required to make national and local actions efficient, to boost learning processes and stimulate synergies, to address trade-offs and to implement risk prevention mechanisms.
- Huge investment at all levels is required to implement effectively the needed transformation.
- Science and technology should play an essential role in this transformation, which will be knowledge intensive and will require an involvement of research communities in multifaceted organizational and technical innovation processes and the monitoring of their effects and consequences vis-à-vis the SDGs.
- Data, metrics and indicators, including the provision of baselines, are essential for designing, implementing and monitoring adapted pathways and solutions at different scales; they should rely on and fuel specific and appropriate institutional arrangements for participatory decision making by diverse stakeholders.

⁵ HLPE, 2016. *Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition: what roles for livestock?* A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome 2016. See: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/reports/report-10-elaboration-process/en/>

The recommendations also highlight the need for:

- Implementing specific interventions to address gender issues and to give priority to disadvantaged and vulnerable people;
- A right based approach to look at sustainability and make sure that no one is left behind, in particular to guarantee the access to and use of resources and inputs;
- Inclusive multi-stakeholder processes to strengthen capacity and learning, building upon different sources of knowledge;
- Reviewing trade and market organization according to the SDGs;
- Science-policy interfaces to fuel policy decision-making.

Critical and Emerging Issues for FSN

Because of the pace, breadth and depth of current changes, new issues become critical for FSN and more broadly for the SDGs. This is why the HLPE has been asked by the CFS to identify Critical and Emerging Issues for FSN. In 2014, the HLPE highlighted five specific critical and emerging issues for FSN, complementing the issues already covered by previous reports. Some of them have been carefully looked at since then through specific HLPE reports.

In order to inform the future multi-year program of work of the CFS, the HLPE has recently been requested to produce by the end of 2017, a second note on *Critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition*. This second exercise will be inserted in the overall framework of the implementation of the Agenda 2030, with the perspective to contribute to the preparation of the Global Sustainable Development Report in 2019.