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The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE)

Key Elements

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Why the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) ?

Food insecurity is a global and persistent issue, recurrently highlighted by crises. It manifests itself in various ways in the different regions of the world and it has a vast variety of complex and interdependent underlying causes. It has many facets and is interlinked with many other problems and factors from local to international levels, from social security related issues to development issues. To address food insecurity requires an integrated approach. It requires interventions and strong policies from local to global levels.

The reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is a fundamental change in the international governance of food security and nutrition. The CFS is the central international and intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition, where policies can be designed, interventions can be coordinated, options can be shared and decisions at different levels can be prepared.

Decisions in the CFS are taken by Member States in co-construction with various stakeholders, in particular CSOs, NGOs and the private sector, to ensure that these decisions gain resonance and efficiency on the ground.

This comes with specific challenges.

First, decisions need often to be taken in spite of a vast field of uncertainties regarding both the knowledge base, and potential effects of policies on the ground.

Second, how to overcome the fact that at the discussion table, each stakeholder brings a different perspective, with often as many reports on the table that there are chairs for parties to the negotiation.

Third, how to overcome the fact that at the negotiation table, competing interest often confront different streams of information leading to acute controversies, with a difficulty to even understand the reasons why people disagree.

Finally, a last challenge is due to the fragmentation of expert debates by academic disciplines and by knowledge sources being often detrimental to strong and effective policy decisions when it comes to a field as wide as food security and nutrition.

This is why, in October 2009, the High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was created as an essential element of the reform of CFS, to provide a shared,

comprehensive, evidence-based and independent starting point for debates between parties having very different perspectives on often difficult issues. ..

The provision of shared and independent advice is generally a condition to reaching political consensus, and in turn, political decisions are more robust, and keener to be pursued in continuity, from the short term to the long term, if they are founded on comprehensive assessments. The HLPE therefore aims to improve the robustness of the policy making, which is essential for actions needing to be pursued in continuity on the ground.

Key functions of the HLPE as stated in the CFS reform document are

As directed by the CFS Plenary and Bureau, the HLPE will:

- 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.

What are the specificities of the HLPE with respect to other expert processes?

First, the HLPE is directly linked to the foremost international policy platform for food security and nutrition, the CFS. The design of the HLPE process, its rules and procedures, the composition of the Steering Committee and the topics of studies are decided by the CFS. The HLPE is therefore created and entrusted by the CFS, and reports to it. This ensures the legitimacy of the panel and relevance of its policy-oriented studies, and their insertion in a concrete political agenda at international level.

Second, in creating the HLPE, governments decided to let the Panel produce its analysis, recommendations and advice independently from governmental positions, in order to enrich discussions and debates at CFS. The process guarantees the independence of the HLPE and ensures a clear separation between on the one hand the generation of the evidence and related analysis and advice, which takes place in the HLPE, in a scientifically inclusive way, and on the other hand the confrontation of the interests of policy-makers, which takes place in CFS on the basis of the reports.

Third, the HLPE aims to help CFS to better understand the diversity of issues and rationales when dealing with food and nutrition insecurity. To do so, it strives to clarify contradictory information and knowledge, elicit the backgrounds and rationales of controversies, and identify emerging issues. This builds among others upon the diversity of disciplines, backgrounds and regional origins of the Steering Committee members and of Project Teams. It also builds on the dialogue with a wide range of knowledge holders by the means of open electronic consultations on a scoping proposal and on an advanced draft of the report, submitted electronically for comments and inputs.

Fourth, the HLPE is not mandated to conduct new research. The HLPE draws its studies based on existing research and knowledge already conducted by various expertise-providing institutions (universities, research institutes, international organizations etc), and adding value by global, multi-sectoral, multidisciplinary analysis and food security approach directed to the expectations of the CFS.

Fifth, HLPE recommendations and studies combine scientific knowledge with experiences from the ground, in a same rigorous process. The HLPE translates the richness and variety of forms of expert knowledge from many actors (knowledge of local implementation,

knowledge based on global research and knowledge of “best practice”) that draw on both local and global sources, into policy-related forms of knowledge. The scientific credibility of the reports is grounded on the whole process which includes the organization of a scientific dialogue between the Steering Committee and Project Teams, as well as an external peer-review.

Last, the HLPE works quickly, and is one of the shortest from the existing links from international researchers/knowledge holders to international policy-makers. The report elaboration process, from the request to the delivery, organizes within approximately 18 months a scientifically inclusive, collective, evidence-based, response of science and research, directly from the knowledge holders, to urgent requests for policy making.

The Rules and Procedures of the HLPE were specifically designed so that the whole process is undertaken in a credible, relevant and legitimate way.

What is the structure of the HLPE?

The HLPE has a two-tier structure (see Figure 1):

- A Steering Committee composed of 15 internationally recognized experts in a variety of food security and nutrition related fields.
- Project Teams acting on a project specific basis, selected and managed by the StC to analyze/report on specific issues.

Who serves in the HLPE Steering Committee?

15 world-renowned experts (8 women, 7 men) have been appointed by the Bureau of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to serve as members of the Steering Committee of the HLPE. Their term has started at the closure of CFS 40 Plenary (12 October 2013) and will end at the closure of the CFS 42 Plenary (October 2015). The members' profiles encompass a variety of backgrounds, disciplines and regions of the world.

HLPE Steering Committee members participate in their individual capacities, and not as representatives of their respective governments, institutions or organizations.

The Steering Committee Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson have been designated by the 15 members of the HLPE Steering Committee at their first meeting (8th StC meeting since inception), 28-30 October 2013.

Chairperson:

Per Pinstrup-Andersen (Denmark). World Food Prize Laureate (2001), former Director General of IFPRI and former Chairman of the Science Council of CGIAR.

Vice-Chairperson:

Maryam Rahmanian (Iran). Research associate at the Centre for Sustainable Development in Iran, former Executive Officer of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy.

Members:

Amadou Allahoury (Niger). High Commissioner (Minister) at Niger Presidential Office for the national strategy for Food Security and Agriculture.

Marion Guillou (France). President of Agreenium, the French institute in Agrosiences, as well as member of the CGIAR Consortium Board.

Sheryl Lee Hendriks (South Africa). Professor and researcher at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

Joanna Hewitt (Australia). Current Chair of the ACIAR Commission (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research), former Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for the Australian Government.

Masa Iwanaga (Japan). President of the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS).

Carol Kalafatic (USA). Associate Director at Cornell University (American Indian Program), Indigenous People's food and livelihood security expert.

Bernardo Kliksberg (Argentina). World recognized advisor, economist and social scientist, pioneer of development ethics, social capital and corporate social responsibility, founder of a new discipline, social management.

Renato Maluf (Brazil). Associate Professor at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro and former President of the National Council of Food and Nutrition Security in Brazil.

Sophia Murphy (Canada). Food security, agriculture, trade and international development expert at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) former policy officer for the Canadian Council for International Co-operation in Ottawa. .

Ruth Oniang'o (Kenya). Former member of the Kenyan parliament, Adjunct Professor at Tufts University in the USA.

Michel Pimbert (UK). Director of the Centre for Agroecology and Food Security at Coventry University in the UK.

Magdalena Sepúlveda (Chile). United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights since 2008.

Huajun Tang (China). Research Professor and Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

The 15 experts were appointed by the Bureau of the CFS, following an international call for nominations and the review of candidatures and a proposition by an ad-hoc technical selection committee comprised of members of FAO, WFP, IFAD, Bioversity International (CGIAR) and a representative of the CSO/NGO Community.

Who decides for topics of HLPE reports?

The HLPE operates "*as directed by the CFS*" (see Fig 1). It is the CFS who decides and requests the HLPE to undertake specific studies that will serve as starting point for subsequent debates at CFS on issues for policy coherence and convergence. This ensures the international and policy-relevance of the topics, and the insertion of the studies in a concrete political agenda at international level.

The HLPE can also propose issues of relevance to the CFS, notably as part of its mandate "*to identify emerging issues, and help CFS members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas*". In that regard, at the invitation of CFS, the HLPE prepared, at the request of the CFS, a note on Critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition (August 2014), for which a specific method was elaborated (in consultation with a range of experts), with a process including a very wide and organized Inquiry of academic and knowledge institutions worldwide.

How are HLPE reports prepared?

To ensure the scientific legitimacy and credibility of the process, as well as its transparency and openness to all forms of knowledge, the HLPE operates with very specific rules, agreed by the CFS.

The elaboration of the reports involve the work of time-bound and topic-bound Project Teams, selected and appointed by the Steering Committee, following its guidance and under its oversight.

The Project Teams are selected by the Steering Committee following an open call for interest of experts. While being compact for evident management and coordination issues, the Project Team has to embrace a variety of disciplines and background experiences.

The project cycle for the reports (see Fig 2), in spite of being extremely time constrained, includes clearly defined stages separating the elaboration of the political question and request by the CFS, its scientific formulation by the Steering Committee, the work of the time-bound and topic-bound Project Team, external open consultations to enrich the knowledge base, and an external scientific review.

The process promotes a scientific dialogue between the Steering Committee and the Project Team throughout the project cycle, with the experts in the HLPE Roster, and all concerned and interested knowledge-holders worldwide, thriving for the involvement of diverse scientific points of view.

This is why the HLPE runs two external consultations per report: first, on the scope of the study; second, on a first draft (V0) deliberately presented – with its range of imperfections – early enough in the process, at a work-in-progress stage when sufficient time remains to give proper consideration to the feedback received so that it can be really useful and play a real role in the elaboration of the report. It is a key part of the scientific dialogue between the HLPE Project Team and Steering Committee and the rest of the knowledge community, and opens the process to the input of all experts interested, towards the HLPE roster of experts (there are currently around 2000 of them), as well as to all concerned stakeholders. The contributions and input provided, including knowledge from a wide range of actors, brings a wide knowledge base to the HLPE and enables the panel to be receptive to critical input and suggestions at a cardinal stage of the report elaboration process.

A pre-final draft version of the report is then submitted to independent evidence-based peer-review. It is then finalized and approved by the Steering Committee during a face-to-face meeting.

The HLPE has a documented fully its internal working procedures and methodological guidelines (Internal Procedures and methodological guidelines for the Work of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, available at www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe).

How are HLPE reports approved?

Prior to their publication, HLPE reports, studies and recommendations are approved by the HLPE Steering Committee. Therefore, the views expressed in the reports are independent from the positions of member states and other stakeholders. In order for a report to be approved by the Steering Committee, it needs to appropriately tackle controversial issues, in the respect of the principle of sound, balanced and comprehensive assessments.

How do HLPE reports feed back into CFS?

HLPE reports are delivered to the CFS in order to inform CFS's policy debates, to suggest policy options and recommendations. They serve as a shared starting point for the preparation of the discussions at CFS.

Following the publication and launch of an HLPE report, the CFS Bureau, in consultation with the Advisory Group and Secretariat, determines the best ways to take forward, taken into account an HLPE report, the process of developing recommendations or options to be discussed at CFS on a specific policy issue.

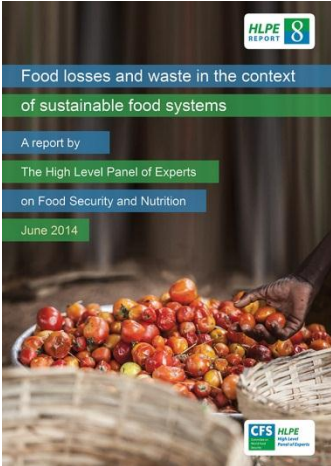
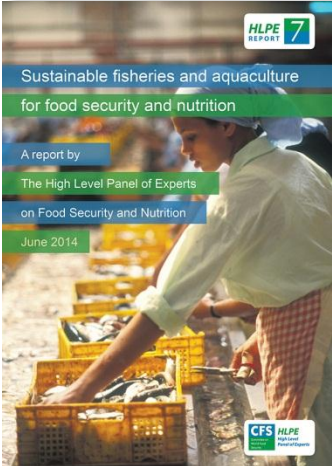
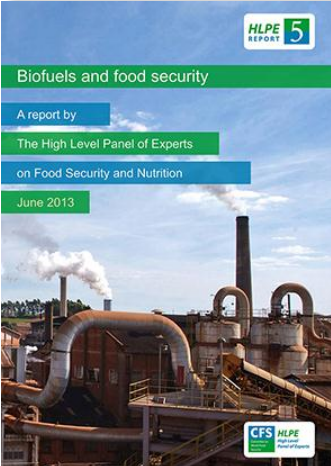
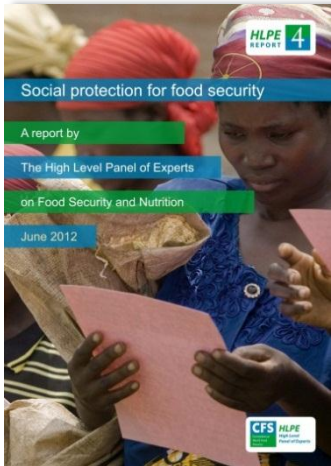
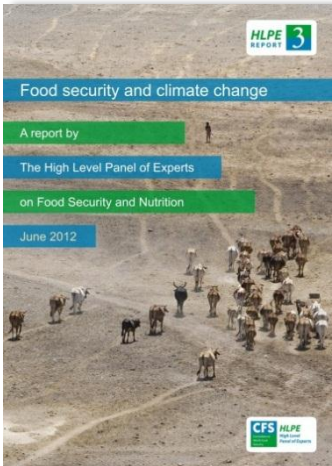
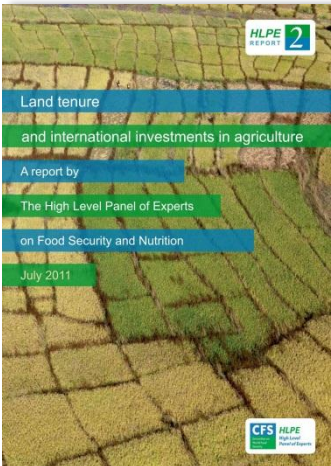
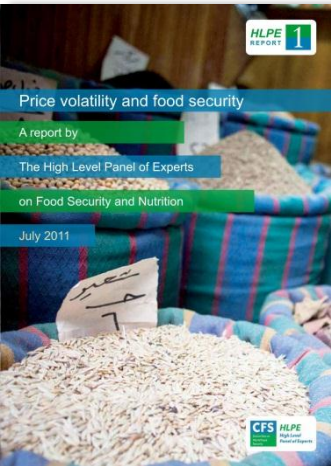
The HLPE is therefore a tool to provide state-of-the art, independent expertise and advice to the CFS to improve decision making at all levels.

Published HLPE reports

Since 2010, the CFS has requested a total of 11 reports to the HLPE, making it a wide series of reports on outstanding issues for the world’s food and nutrition security. All reports have fed related CFS debates with the adoption by CFS of relevant policy recommendations

- 1. **Price volatility and food security (published in 2011, debates at CFS 37)**
- 2. **Land tenure and international investments in agriculture (2011, CFS 37)**
- 3. **Climate change and food security (2012, CFS 39)**
- 4. **Social protection and food security (2012, CFS 39)**
- 5. **Biofuels and food security (2013, CFS 40)**
- 6. **Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security (2013, CFS 40)**
- 7. **The Role of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Security and Nutrition (2014, CFS 41)**
- 8. **Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems (2014, CFS 41)**

In addition, the HLPE has prepared a note on **Critical and emerging issues in the area of food security and nutrition**, published in August 2014.



HLPE Current Work Program

The following studies are ongoing (status in January 2015):

- **Water and Food Security (expected 2015, for CFS 42)**
- **Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition, including the role of livestock (expected 2016, for CFS 43)**
- **Sustainable forestry for food security and nutrition (expected 2017, for CFS 44)**

How is the HLPE supported?

The HLPE is exclusively funded through a voluntary trust fund based at FAO. This trust fund covers the costs of the preparation of reports, Steering Committee and Project Teams meetings, translation and publication of reports, and minimal Secretariat support.

HLPE Steering Committee members and experts involved in the process are not financially compensated for their time and salary, a standard practice in all international expert panels.

The HLPE Secretariat assists the work of the HLPE StC and its Chair. A senior staff, coordinator of the HLPE is responsible for the day-to-day management and oversight. Secretariat's functions include, though are not limited to:

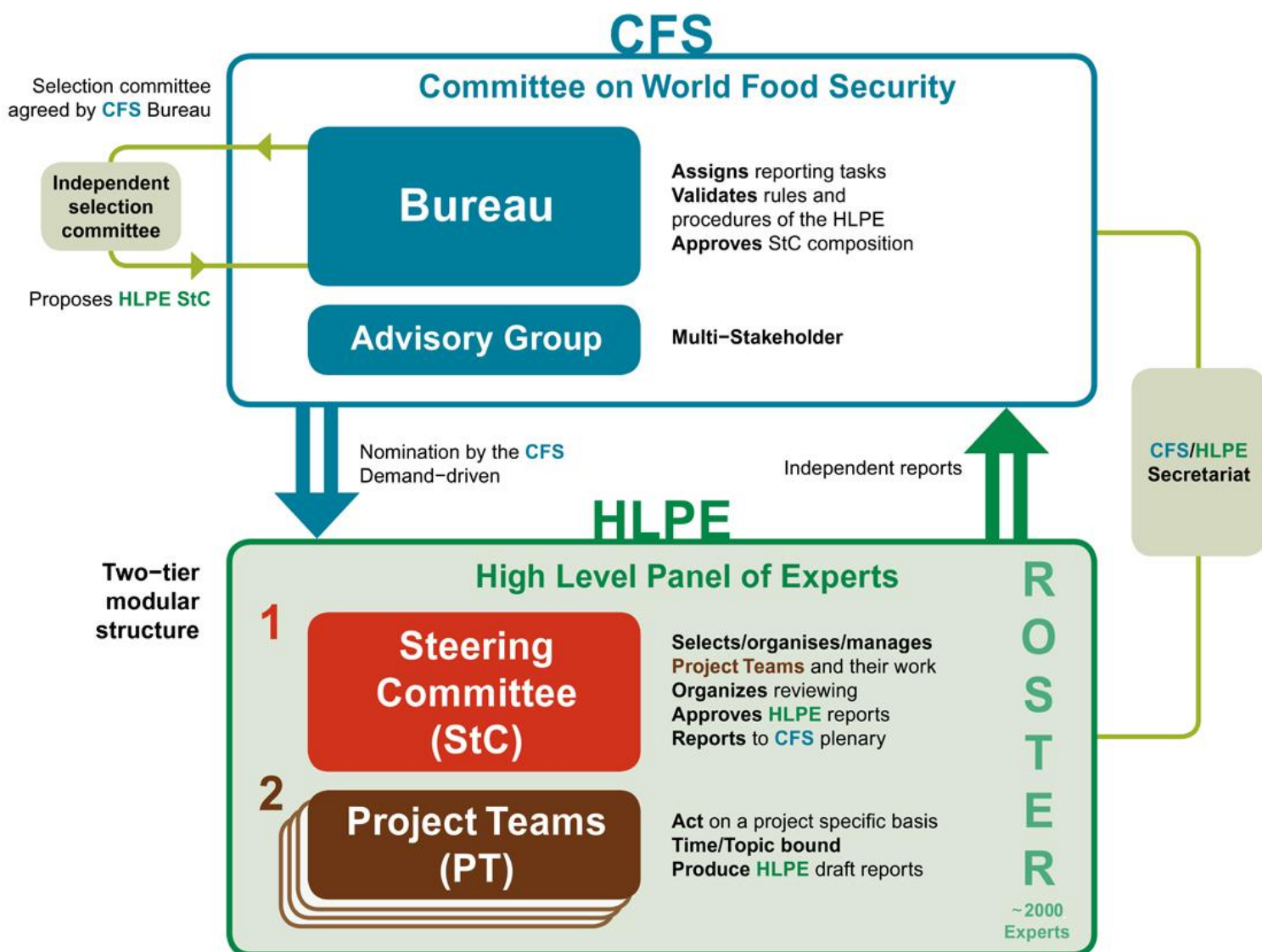
- i) assist with the preparation of working budget and establishment of trust funds,
- ii) maintain a roster of experts,
- iii) organize meetings of the HLPE StC and assist Project Teams, as needed,
- iv) assist with the preparation of other support documentation,
- v) liaise as appropriate between the CFS Bureau and the HLPE Steering Committee,
- vi) maintain a system of communications, including posting of relevant reports and analyses.

The annual budget for the HLPE is of approximately 1 Million USD. The HLPE Trust Fund has received so far contributions from Australia, the European Union, France, Ireland, Norway, the United Kingdom, Russia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

References

- CFS Reform document adopted at the 35th session of the CFS (2009)
- Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE (27 January 2010)
- Internal Procedures and methodological guidelines for the Work of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (October 2012, updated in October 2013 and November 2014)
- All these documents and other are available on the HLPE website www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe

Figure 1 Schematic Illustration of the HLPE Structure and its relationship to CFS



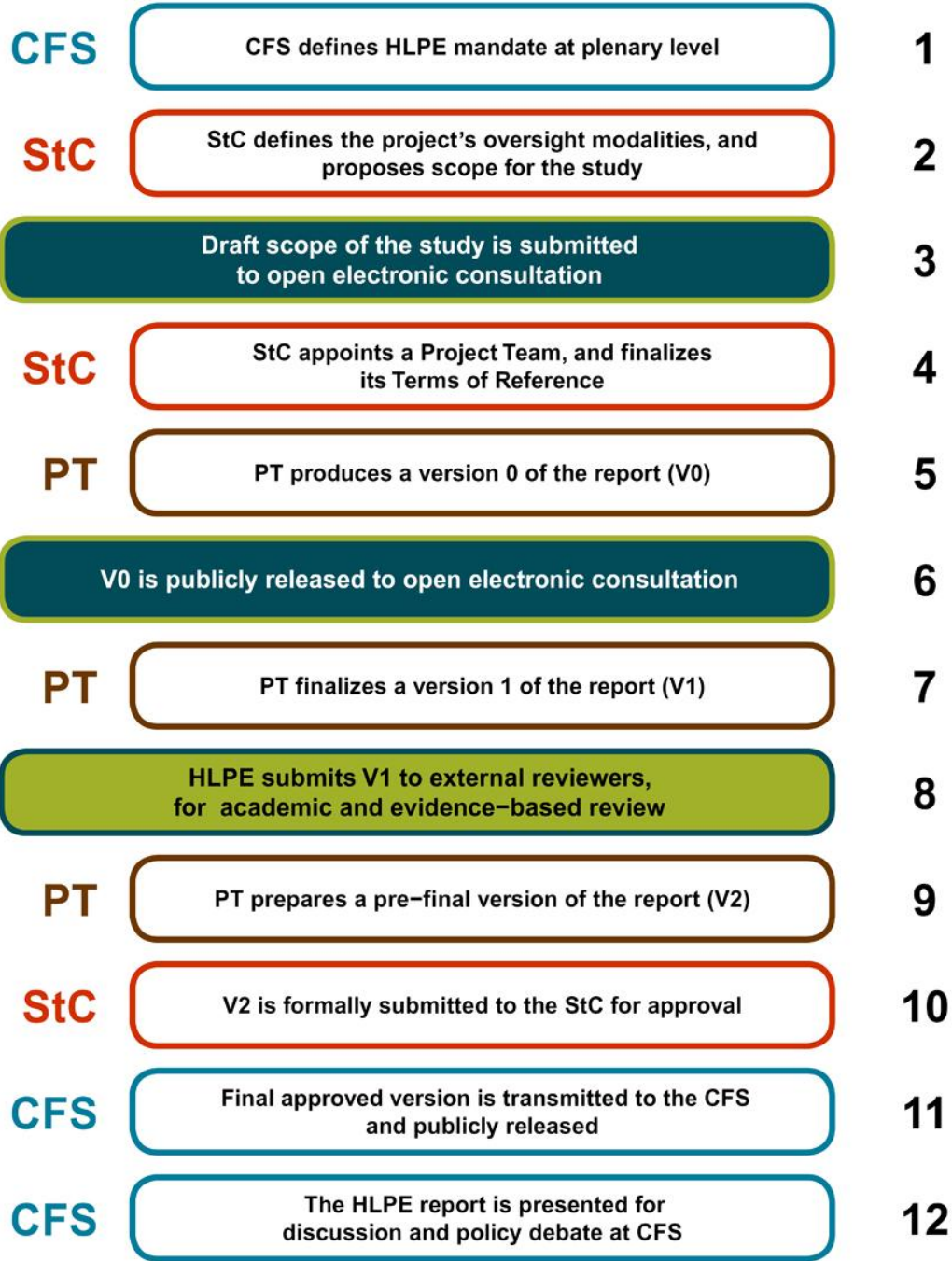
The High Level Panel of Experts on food security and nutrition (HLPE) works as the science-policy interface of the CFS and realizes demand driven thematic assessments in a short time frame to provide understanding and advice on urgent policy relevant questions.

The HLPE receives its mandate from CFS and reports to it. It produces its reports, recommendations and advice independently from the CFS or from governmental positions.

The HLPE operates with very specific rules, agreed by the CFS. HLPE reports are prepared by Project Teams appointed by the Steering Committee and working under the guidance and oversight of the Steering Committee.

Final reports are approved by the Steering Committee prior to publication.

Figure 2 HLPE Project Cycle



The HLPE features an organized project cycle to ensure the scientific legitimacy and credibility of the process, as well as its transparency and openness to all forms of knowledge.

The project cycle for the reports, in spite of its being extremely time constrained, includes clearly defined stages separating the political question by CFS (step 1), its scientific formulation by the Steering Committee (StC), the scientific work of a time bound and topic bound Project Team (PT) selected and appointed by the Steering Committee and working under its oversight, external consultations (steps 3 and 6) to enrich the knowledge base, an external scientific review (step 8). The HLPE takes care to closely involve a broad range of experts and to confront diverse scientific points of view at every stage of the process. This is why the process organizes a scientific dialogue between the two components of the HLPE, as well as, through open electronic consultations, a public scientific dialogue between the HLPE, the experts in the HLPE Roster, and all concerned stakeholders.