Food security and nutrition: Building a global narrative towards 2030

e-consultation on the scope proposed by the HLPE Steering Committee

From 3 December 2018 to 28 January 2019

Synthesis by the HLPE Secretariat

The electronic consultation on the scope of the HLPE report #14 on *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030* attracted 44 unique contributions, from 23 different countries, totalling 74 pages and approximately 29 000 words. 7 contributions come from national governments, 5 from organizations within the UN system, 12 from civil society and NGOs, 4 from the private sector, and 15 from academic or research institutes. 54 percent of the contributions come from developing countries. In terms of regional distribution: 38 percent of the contributions come from Europe, 6 percent from North America, 12 percent from Latin America and the Caribbean, 23 percent from Asia, 15 percent from Africa, 2 percent from Near East, and 4 percent from South-West Pacific.

This note proposes a synthesis of the comments received during this e-consultation. Written by the HLPE Secretariat, this synthesis does not represent the position of the HLPE Steering Committee. Being a short document, it is not meant to reflect with precision the richness and diversity of all the contributions received, but should only serve as a guide to ease the reading of the full proceedings of this consultation (reference is made here to the numbered contributions). The full proceedings are available to see online.[1] They will be examined by the HLPE Steering Committee and used as a background document to develop the report.

Some contributions suggested useful references and interesting case-studies; not all have been mentioned in this synthesis, but the entirety of proposed references and case-studies will be carefully considered by the HLPE in the course of elaboration of the report. Finally, beyond the comments on the proposed scope, several contributions also called for a process as inclusive and transparent as possible.

This note is organised in 4 sections. The first one discusses the scope and structure of the report, the second focuses on concepts and definitions, the third and fourth respectively on the obstacles to and enabling conditions for “agroecology and other innovations”.

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1) Scope and structure of the report

Scope:

We welcome (17, 18), support (23) this CFS request to build a global narrative on FSN. We appreciate that the HLPE will focus on the 2030 Agenda at such a critical point in time (16), 10 years before 2030 (16) and 10 years after CFS reform (23). It is time now to make an evaluation of the **impact** of the CFS-HLPE policy guidelines on countries, rural communities, and on the actors most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, including farmers (23). This stocktaking analysis of the HLPE work in

[1] See: http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/cfs-hlpe/discussions/global_FSN_narrative

the past ten years should be linked to a self-evaluation by CFS Member States of the implementation at country-level of the CFS policy recommendations so that the HLPE report also shows the concrete results and achievements of CFS (23).

It would be essential that the new HLPE report fully integrates the new global nutrition narrative (UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, ICN2) (17, 23), as well as the other main international frameworks (e.g. the Paris Agreement…) (23). "Healthy diet" (WHO, 2018) should be a constitutive element of food security in this global narrative (17).

The report needs to adopt a holistic, systemic, multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, integrated, "food system" approach (12, 13, 15, 17, 20, 23, 25). The report focuses on the post-harvest part of food systems but should not overlook production (18). It should articulate the three components of SDG2 (food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture); show how CFS recommendations and HLPE reports can contribute to achieve SDG2 outcome and process targets; and analyse the synergies and trade-offs between SDG2 and other SDGs (12). The report should highlight the linkages between elements (environment, people, infrastructures, institutions, etc.), activities (production, processing, distribution, preparation, consumption, food waste) and outputs/outcomes (socio-economic, environmental) (12).The report should not only provide a general picture but also consider country-specificity and local conditions (13, 25) and analyse the **ongoing processes and dynamics** in agro-food systems and their implications, referring to the "**sustainability transitions**" literature (12).

Structure:

This short report will have to be a holistic and documented overview of: (i) the current state of global FSN; (ii) the current efforts underway to achieve SDG-2 and other related goals; (iii) their effectiveness in achieving the intended objectives, as well as the challenges ahead; and finally, what revisions and new actions are to be undertaken to reach our goal (19).

Impacts of CFS work.

We believe that HLPE reports and CFS recommendations have great potential for raising awareness and highlighting approaches and tools to deal with them (16). German experience of CFS VGGT and VGRtF is attached to this contribution (16).

Moreover up-take of issues by CFS serves as a catalyzer for other actors picking them up and carrying them on in other arena (16). For example the HLPE report and corresponding CFS recommendations on Water for FSN in 2015 guided us in making water a topic of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in 2017 convening the ministers for agriculture of 83 countries and thus reinforcing efforts for sustainable stewardship for water (16). The HLPE Report 8 on Food Losses and Waste provided a valuable definition of sustainable food systems, referred to for example in a European policy brief ("Roadmap towards a healthy and sustainable European food system") circulated to member States under the Austrian Council Presidency (16).

Other case studies and references:

Some contributions (e.g. 24) suggested recent references that should be considered in this study because they describe important evolutions of the knowledge on FSN since the publication of a given HLPE thematic report.

This report should consider: the Brazilian National Food and Nutrition Security System (SISAN), aligned with the CFS VGRtF(13); the 2013 Indian National Food Security Act and public distribution system (22); the document "Zero Hunger India: policies and perspectives" which summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to a world free from hunger (1, 22); the new Burundian National Development Program 2018-2027 covering all sectors including FSN (8). A global narrative on FSN would be incomplete without a strong voice from Africa: please consider the attached policy declaration entitled*"Changing food systems in Africa: Agroecology and Food Sovereignty and their role in Nutrition and Health"* (Addis Ababa Conference, organized in November 2016 by four key civil society networks) (20).

FAO and WHO will be holding an expert consultation in the first quarter of this year that will examine the different definitions of "healthy diets", and indicators of sustainable healthy diets: the outcomes of this consultation will certainly be of relevance to the new HLPE report (17).

2) Food security and nutrition (FSN): a multi-faceted issue:

The right to food

Social, ecological, cultural and spiritual dimensions, and rights are ignored by the dominant narrative on food systems which follows a short-term economic logic (20). Human rights should provide the framework [for this report] and guide public policies formulation (13, 25). Policymakers should endorse the right of people, communities and countries to define their own food systems, which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique contexts, and to empower producers and consumers to make better decisions and choices (20).

The 2030 Agenda as a whole depends on the guarantee of the Human Right to Adequate and Healthy Food in accordance with the following principles: universality and equity, autonomy, social participation, transparency and accountability (13, 25). The transition to fairer and more sustainable food systems implies the consideration and governance of food as a commons and public good, instead of a priced commodity to be distributed by markets (11).

In line with the CFS vision in advancing nutrition, this report should address the key causes of vulnerability to all forms of malnutrition in different types of food systems in both rural and urban areas with special attention to the poorest and the most nutritionally vulnerable (17).

Among the structural aspects of food insecurity and right to food violations stand out the **deep inequalities** in terms of power, income, gender, race, access to natural resources and services, present in all countries (13, 25). Identifying food insecure populations in all countries can help reveal the underlying forces that perpetuate food insecurity and malnutrition in rich and poor countries alike (25).

Intellectual property rights legislation continues to weaken farmers' seed systems - which are the basis of diverse, nutritious and healthy diets, and of farmers' resilience to climate change - undermining social justice and good governance (20). [The report should recognize the] primacy of traditional and agroecological forms of agricultural production respecting the rights of men and women to cultivate, conserve, use, exchange and sell creole seeds, preserve native foods, medicinal plants and the planet's biodiversity (13, 25).

Main drivers of change in consumption patterns

The following drivers have led to a shift in dietary patterns: increased production of processed foods (17), rapid urbanization (17), changing lifestyles (17). These new dietary patterns include overconsumption of animal protein and energy-dense food leading to obesity (27).

Main challenges faced by agriculture and food systems

[FSN is a complex and multifaceted issue] impacted by the following factors/issues, to be covered in the report:

- **Soil:** degraded soil fertility (20); integrated nutrient management, soil organic carbon management (impacts: resistance to soil erosion, soil water retention, soil fertility, soil biodiversity) (2, 3); green manure (5, 6); soil pollution due to chemical inputs (9);
- **Climate change** (2, 9, 17, 27)**:** so called "climate-smart" agriculture (9)
- **Animal production** (9)**:** resource efficiency and environmental foot print (land, water, carbon footprint) of animal production (7); feed/food competition between men and animals (7);
- **Water:** water availability, in quantity and quality (9); groundwater depletion due to irrigation (9), watershed programmes (9); water pollution due to chemical inputs (9);

3) Sustainable food systems (SFSs) for enhanced FSN: pathways towards 2030

Invest in knowledge and technology

[Integration of different forms of knowledge]. Forefathers developed, based on their hundreds of years of experience, agricultural and horticultural systems that fit into the soil and climate systems (9). In the "milpa" system, the dialogue among different forms of knowledge, between peasant and modern technologies, is predominant (4). Governments should encourage joint farmer-scientist research (20).

[Access to technologies:] peasant technologies are more accessible/used than modern technologies (4).

Improve efficiency and reduce the ecological footprint

Increase inputs use efficiency, reduce the dependence to external/chemical/expensive/inorganic inputs and foster integrated resource management (2, 3, 10).

Reduce food losses and waste (FLW)

The report should examine how high FLW impacts access to nutritious foods and how to reduce FLW, e.g. by improving post-harvest handling, cold chain management, and food processing (30). Governments must plan to reduce FLW (9).

Invest in small-scale agriculture

Small-scale farmers already produce 70 percent of the world's food (20). In India, farm size has drastically decreased from an average of 2.28 ha in 1970-71 to 1.08 ha in 2015-16 with population growth and diversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes (9).

Promote diversified and resilient agro-ecosystems

Family and peasant agriculture produces healthy and diversified foods, necessary to cope with obesity (13). The report should not overlook the important potential of indigenous food species domestication to diversify farming systems and kick start the restoration of degraded agroecosystems (15).

Secure access and tenure rights

Develop comprehensive social protection systems

Insurance (9).

Support women empowerment

In some communities, because of cultural barriers, women have inadequate access to land, ownership of livestock, and are excluded of decision-making (27). Only when we change the beliefs and values of the current narrative can we place women producers in the centre, and shift our food systems towards effective production, nutrition and health (20).

Create decent jobs in agriculture and food systems.

This report should explore labour-intensive production methods offering decent wages (19), as well as regionally differentiated labour-intensive production investments and technological capacities for economic, social and ecological sustainability (21).

A new governance model for SFS

Current governance structures are not suited to working across sectors and addressing the dynamics between food systems, health systems, nutrition and environment (17). Powerful actors set the terms of debate (17). More democratic, integrated and participatory governance approaches and organizational structures are needed (17, 28). Greater policy coherence is required through collaboration across sectors – agriculture, food, trade, employment, education, nutrition and health, land security - and institutions at the local, national and international levels (17, 19, 20).

[Public incentives] Intensive mono-cropping systems in India encouraged by subsidized chemical inputs and heavily subsidized public distribution system (PDS) (9).

Enhance stakeholder involvement

Political dialogue and advocacy to enhance social participation are important, and the engagement of a wide range of actors – including environmental groups, consumer and health advocates, healthcare providers, farmers and farmworkers, large and small private sector entities and citizens – will be needed (17). Pretty *et al.* (1994) suggested a typology of people's engagement from passive engagement to pro-active self-mobilisation: High long-term productivity and efficiency can only be possible when people are given the power to make decisions and their knowledge is valued (29).

[Farmers' organizations] Cooperative farming mechanisms (9).

Civil society plays a critical role in the social construction process to reduce hunger and poverty and promote the right to adequate food (13, 25). Multilateral spaces of governance with effective engagement of governments and guarantees for civil society participation should be strengthened (13, 25).

Family and peasant agriculture, women, indigenous people and traditional communities should be seen as leading actors for food and nutrition sovereignty and security (13, 25). We urge policymakers to engage women, youth and communities as active partners in sustainable food systems (20).

There is a simple and intelligent way to achieve most SDGs quickly, involving all citizens/institutions in changing the global food system: a new world currency that would be issued by the International Monetary Fund at the request of the UN General Assembly (26).

Strengthen transparency and accountability

Improve **data/information collection** and develop adequate **metrics** at different scales to assess dietary quality, FSN and sustainable food consumption patterns, such as: the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (25). Governance should integrate measuring and monitoring activities: a major challenge is to build the statistical capacities of national institutions and to develop metrics that are comparable across countries (25).

4) Forward looking: critical issues for the future

Decisive and urgent action is needed to change the dominant narrative on food systems and to promote agroecology/ecological organic agriculture in Africa (20) and regenerative agriculture – based on agroecology, agroforestry and permaculture principles- (26).

It is of pivotal importance for this report to look at future CFS actions focusing on areas where CFS can contribute most effectively to the advancement of FSN and the SDGs (16, 18). The report should describe the transformative actions urgently needed for sustainable food and agriculture and to eradicate hunger (see for instance FAO, 2018) (18)

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5) To be put somewhere

To implement the central concept of green development, demonstration and propaganda should be strengthened, the way of financial support should be actively widen, multisectoral cooperation mechanisms should be built, the entire social service tone should be strengthened, … built by local conditions (5).