



Members' Update

FAO renewal



CFS reform is taking shape

Reform of the FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is moving ahead with a raft of changes implemented over the past year.

[Committee members agreed on wide-ranging reform](#) during their 35th session in Rome last October, in response to calls in the Independent External Evaluation for greater coherence and coordination to tackle world hunger and poverty.

Among the foremost changes recommended was increased openness to all stakeholders, to ensure all voices were heard in coordinating a global approach to food security. The need to make the committee an ongoing process between the yearly meetings was also recognized – with a number of intersessional events in order to implement the committee's decisions.

“Change was necessary to improve global coordination of approaches to food security and nutrition, including policy-making, and to open the CFS to representatives of civil society, the private sector and other multilateral organizations,” said Hafez Ghanem, Assistant Director-General in economic and social development.

Main steps taken over the past year include setting up a 12-member CFS Bureau, to represent the broader membership of the committee between plenary sessions and ensure coordination in planning for the annual meeting. The Bureau has met 17 times over the past year and also held four joint meetings with the Advisory Group, which comprises further CFS stakeholders including other UN bodies, CSOs and NGOs and the private sector.

The Bureau and the Advisory Group have also met with a [newly formed steering committee](#) of the CFS's High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE). This committee comprises 15 world-class experts on food security.

Among other steps taken, the CFS Secretariat now includes staff from the other Rome-based UN agencies – IFAD and WFP – to aid the drive for better coordination in the committee's work.

The committee held discussions with experts attending FAO's Latin American and African Regional Conferences, and is planning a side event at the upcoming Asian Regional Conference. CFS Chair Noel De Luna attended all of the Regional Conferences, along with the General Segment of the 2010 ECOSOC Substantive Session in New York, which received a report on the CFS reform.

"It's clear that the reform of CFS is well under way but more remains to be done over the next year. I am confident that this renewed committee has the potential to truly make a difference in combating hunger and food insecurity in the world," said Ghanem. "This is a true example of FAO renewal in action. Member countries and other stakeholders have been the main architects of the process, demonstrated by their dedicated involvement in the Bureau and keenness to contribute to national and regional initiatives to be addressed during the 36th Session. It's now up to all of us to move the process further forward and show tangible results in the longer-term."

The [36th Session of the CFS](#) in mid-October was planned by the Bureau with support from the enlarged Secretariat, with sessions including the topics "Food security in protracted crisis", "Land tenure and international investment in agriculture" and "Managing vulnerability and risk". Sessions on regional and national initiatives aimed to share experiences and identify best practices. *For more details on the CFS reform, please click [here](#).*

Network improvements boost decentralization efforts

Work to improve online connections across FAO field offices is boosting efforts towards greater decentralization, as part of FAO renewal.

Since 2009, improvement to the Wide Area Network – a telecommunications system that connects FAO offices worldwide – has seen more than 50 percent of countries receiving four times more bandwidth, thereby increasing connection speeds and reliability. Several other countries have seen an eight-fold increase in speeds. Only a handful of offices remain to be upgraded. Meanwhile further upgrades are planned for large offices and those that process a greater number of financial transactions.

"These improvements are necessary to support the Organizational goal to decentralize more of FAO's operations and relocate technical staff to field locations," said Omar Hajjar, chief of the decentralized offices IT branch, CIO division.

In addition, over this biennium improved connectivity will provide most decentralized offices with greater access to a wide range of FAO corporate applications as well as voice-over-IP telephony while reserving additional bandwidth for future web-based applications such as a new field accounting system, under IPSAS. All the work has been done using IPA funding.