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Продовольственная и
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Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

Thirty-first Session

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23-27 March 2020

The Role of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on Food Systems and Nutrition: How Can We Promote Cross-Sector Policy Convergence?

Executive Summary

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was established in 1974 as a committee of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It was profoundly restructured in 2009 to become a multistakeholder platform for dialogue and debate on global food security and nutrition policy, jointly supported by FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), having an Advisory Group comprised of private sector, civil society, foundations and others, and reporting to the United Nations General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Since FAO's last regional conferences, two plenary sessions (CFS 45 and 46) have been held in Rome at FAO, host agency of CFS's Secretariat. This document highlights outcomes of these sessions, and describes future activities contained in the CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) endorsed at CFS 46 in October 2019. Two new policy products will be negotiated in 2020 and presented to Members for endorsement at CFS 47 in October 2020: Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN) and Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches.

The 2020-2023 CFS MYPoW contains four topics that Members agreed are vital for achieving global food security and nutrition. These are: gender equality and women's empowerment; promotion of youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems; data collection and analysis tools; and reduction of inequalities.

Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- recognize the unique multistakeholder nature of the CFS;
- commit to supporting national and regional implementation of CFS policy instruments;
- recognize the importance of the ongoing policy convergence process on *Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition* to be adopted at CFS 47 in October 2020;
- engage actively in the implementation of the CFS MYPoW 2020-2023.

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I. Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the CFS's history, and update the Regional Conference (RC) on outcomes of the CFS since the RC last met in 2018, as well as on the main activities the Committee will carry out during 2020-2023, per CFS's approved Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) endorsed at CFS 46 in October 2019.

II. The Committee on World Food Security

2. In 1974, CFS was established as a committee of the Council of FAO. For its first 35 years, CFS kept a close eye on supply/demand and food stock positions, disseminating timely updates to the global community – studying international food stock situations and promoting regular trade flows to meet the requirements of domestic and world markets, including food assistance where required. Its members recommended short- and long-term policy actions to help governments ensure minimal world food security. It was significantly reformed in 2009 as one of the global community's responses to the 2007-2008 global food crisis, mainly to strengthen efforts at global governance. CFS's vision and roles were redefined to focus on the key challenges of eradicating hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition; participation was broadened to include all three Rome-based UN agencies, civil society, private sector, foundations and researchers/academics. A High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) was created as part of the CFS to provide scientific evidence and knowledge to inform debate and decision-making. Rules and procedures were adapted to promote CFS as the key UN political platform for food security and nutrition, reporting to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) through the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

3. Since its reform, CFS has promulgated Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (CFS-RAI), a Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (CFS-FFA), and 13 sets of policy recommendations on a wide array of relevant topics. The HLPE, meanwhile, published 14 outstanding reports on everything from climate change to food system transformation.

III. Policy Convergence

4. CFS is developing Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN), in line with Terms of Reference endorsed at CFS 45 in October 2018, which will be presented for endorsement at CFS 47 in October 2020. These guidelines will provide guidance on policies, investments and institutional arrangements needed to address the key causes of malnutrition in all its forms. They are intended to contribute to the implementation of the Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025). Their preparation is informed by the scientific evidence provided by the CFS High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) Report (#13, 2017) on Nutrition and Food Systems, and by inputs received during consultations held during 2019.

A. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

5. CFS will develop Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition, for endorsement at CFS 49 in October 2022. These Guidelines will provide member countries and development partners with concrete practical guidance on how to advance gender equality, women's and girls' rights, and women's empowerment as part of their efforts to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

B. Policy Recommendations Based on the Reports of the HLPE

6. CFS will produce Policy Recommendations for endorsement at CFS 47 in October 2020 on “Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition”. Based largely upon a CFS HLPE report on the same topic (#14, 2019), these recommendations will contribute to the 2019-2028 UN Decade of Family Farming and aim to broaden understanding of policy actions that can enable and promote positive transformation toward sustainable agriculture and food systems.
7. Per the CFS 2020-2023 MYPoW, the Committee will also provide the following global policy guidance, based on the findings and recommendations of future HLPE reports:
 - a. Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems (endorsement foreseen at CFS 49, 2022): CFS will prepare recommendations on engaging, recruiting, and retaining youth in agriculture and food systems as a key means of achieving the CFS vision, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, and other SDGs (including SDGs 5, 8, 9 and 10). These recommendations are envisioned as a focused, action-oriented document that will promote policies that foster enabling environments capable of tapping into the energy/skills of youth to improve food systems.
 - b. Data collection and analysis (endorsement foreseen at CFS 50, 2023): CFS will develop actionable policy recommendations to strengthen the capacity of countries to collect, analyse and utilize quality data to improve critical decision-making around food security and nutrition policies. CFS will hold events in 2021 to develop common understanding of issues related to two CFS workstreams (data collection and analysis, and reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition).
 - c. Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition (discussion to start at the end of 2023): CFS will provide an analysis, based on an HLPE report, of the drivers of socio- economic inequalities between actors within agrifood systems that influence food security and nutrition outcomes. Gender inequalities and the need to create opportunities for youth will inform the analysis.
8. All HLPE reports, as well as the policy recommendations resulting from the discussions held at each Plenary session and endorsed by the Committee, can be accessed on the following dedicated page of the HLPE website: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/en/>.

IV. CFS Workstreams and Activities

C. Evaluation of CFS Effectiveness

9. A final report of the Independent Evaluation of CFS was issued in April 2017, comprised of 14 recommendations to improve the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the Committee. A report documenting the response to this evaluation was endorsed at CFS 45 in October 2018. Aiming to stimulate the potential of CFS and its products to drive action and uptake, the recommendations are expected to result in:
 - a. CFS work being more strategic, focused on the root causes of global food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. The duration of CFS MYPoWs was increased from two to four years, beginning in the 2020-2023 period;
 - b. CFS global policy work being more systematically based on independent scientific evidence from across the world through more sustained interaction between the HLPE Steering Committee and the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group;
 - c. Increased ownership and commitment of high-level representatives of member states

through more vibrant and substantive plenary sessions;

- d. Increased uptake of CFS products at national, regional and global level through active involvement of all CFS stakeholders in promoting CFS and its policy product.
- e. Adequate and sustainable funding for CFS through the development of a robust resource mobilization strategy.

D. Tracking (“Monitoring”) CFS Decisions and Recommendations

10. CFS decided in 2017 to hold a “global thematic event” every two years to monitor CFS’s major policy products. CFS also agreed to organize events on an ad hoc basis to monitor CFS policy recommendations, to debate their relevance and contributions to ending hunger and malnutrition.
11. CFS held a global thematic event at CFS 45 to take stock of the application of the “Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security” - endorsed by CFS and adopted by FAO Members in 2004. These Guidelines are a core part of the CFS vision, and have been widely applied at national and regional levels.
12. CFS will focus the next two global thematic events in 2020 and 2022 respectively on:
 - a. The Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises at CFS 47 in 2020 (CFS-FFA); and,
 - b. The Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems at CFS 49 in 2022 (CFS-RAI).
13. CFS held a monitoring event at CFS 46 in October 2019 to take stock of three thematically related CFS policy recommendations tied to smallholder agriculture. These recommendations are: “Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food Security and Nutrition” (endorsed by CFS in 2013); Connecting Smallholders to Markets (endorsed in 2016); and “Sustainable Agricultural Development for Food Security and Nutrition: What Role for Livestock?” (endorsed in 2016).
14. Stakeholders reported a number of good practices to support smallholder initiatives, including participation of all groups of stakeholders in decision-making processes. Governments at central and local levels, development agencies, civil society organizations, private sector, research institutions, academia and, above all, farmer organizations should be involved in these processes, encouraging collaboration and convergence of efforts.

E. Discussions Based on HLPE Reports

15. CFS holds inclusive discussions on food security and nutrition issues, based on HLPE reports:
 - a. A session was held during CFS 46 to share experiences on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) for food security and nutrition. The session drew upon a 2018 HLPE report on the same topic which argued that MSPs enable ambitious actions with large impacts on food security and nutrition via pooled resources. Experience showed that MSPs are challenging and require sustained effort with substantial transaction costs.
 - b. CFS requested the HLPE to produce a stocktaking analysis, articulating the findings of its previous publications in a coherent narrative around food security and nutrition and sustainable development. A report on “Food Security and Nutrition: Building a Global Narrative Towards 2030” will be released during June 2020, and should provide strategic guidance towards the achievement of SDG 2 and the 2030 Agenda.