

CSM Input on the draft ToR for the Guidelines on Food systems & Nutrition

This submission is based on extensive consultation within the CSM Working Group on Nutrition and the most recent meetings of the Working Group which were held at FAO at the beginning of March.

Overall objective of the Guidelines

- The ambition of the guidelines should be to establish a coherent policy framework that allows the reconnection between food systems and nutrition policies, that have traditionally tended to be disconnected. This means offering clear pathways that can guide public policies and investments to transition current food systems to ensure healthy and sustainable diets in the context of the progressive realization of the Right to Adequate Food;
- In order to reach this ambition, the scope of the guidelines needs to embrace a systemic view, and therefore the full spectrum of the food systems and nutrition nexus, as clearly called by the CFS 44 mandate, rather than focusing exclusively on any one element of this nexus, no matter how important;
- The task of the guidelines is also to be coherent with - as well as systematize and further advance - existing CFS policy recommendations that are related to the scope (i.e. elements of the connecting smallholders to markets recommendations, food waste, tenure guidelines, small-scale sustainable fisheries, sustainable agriculture including livestock, etc.) in order to offer a comprehensive instrument that can support Member States in their efforts;
- The process needs to allow adequate consultation at national and regional levels and would therefore require adequate time and language support.

Critical considerations for the ToR of the Guidelines on Food Systems & Nutrition

The ToR need to embrace the following critical dimensions:

1. **Reaffirm a holistic understanding of nutrition:** It is our common understanding as CSM that food is the expression of values, cultures, social relations and people's self-determination, and that the act of feeding oneself and others embodies our sovereignty, ownership and empowerment. When nourishing oneself and eating with one's family, friends, and community, we reaffirm our cultural identities, our ownership over our life course and our human dignity;
2. **Need for systemic approach to counter fragmentation and promote policy coherence:** The call for the CFS to engage in nutrition was born from the strong ICN2 call to counter policy fragmentation and reconnect the food and health angles, among others. It is a call to firmly re-embed nutrition within food. It is therefore essential for the CFS, particularly for this first policy outcome, to promote a systemic approach that includes all dimensions of the nexus between food systems and nutrition. The CFS 44 outcome is quite clear in this respect as it states that "A holistic multisectoral approach to both policy and programmatic interventions is needed to move towards sustainable and healthy food systems";
3. **Unique opportunity for the CFS to generate a foundational outcome on the public policy pathways to reshape food systems in order to tackle malnutrition in all its forms:** The HLPE Report explores the full spectrum of the nexus between food systems and nutrition (the question whether it does it well or not is beyond the focus of this comment) in response for the call by the CFS for a "foundational report". The policy guidelines should outline transformative policy pathways that can support transitions of the current food systems as well as reshape and redirect the key drivers that impact on food systems. The ambitious call to the CFS is to establish a possible normative framework that can realign, if not help redesign, food systems policies and nutrition/health policies and interventions, in the context of the reclaiming of healthy and sustainable diets as a fundamental public good;

4. **The CFS vision and mandate imposes a focus on food security and small-scale food producers in the framework of the RTF:** This policy discussion does not take place in a neutral space but rather within one that has a very clear mandate towards food security and nutrition in the context of the progressive realization of the Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition. This requires a key attention to rights-holders (rather than consumers intended as individual with purchasing power) and to small-scale food producers as the primary contributors to food security while often being the first constituencies to suffer food insecurity. This means that the primary pathos of the process need to address the fundamental challenges of those affected by food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms. While recognising that this process embraces a more broader set of primary affected groups (because of obesity, overweight and NCDs), the concerns of rural populations and small-scale food producers should remain central, therefore avoiding any consumer- and urban-centrism in approach;
5. **The food-health nexus needs to be addressed in close conjunction with the livelihoods and ecological challenges:** It is essential to take into full consideration the environmental and livelihoods challenges which primarily materialize within the production sphere. Public policies to promote healthy and sustainable diets require full integration with the imperatives that spring from the need to secure/enhance the livelihoods of small-scale producers (often rural communities), ensure the environmental sustainability of production and protect/enhance biodiversity (as dietary diversity presupposes agro-biodiversity);
6. **Synergy with agroecology process:** Agroecology is the fundamental response to the combined livelihoods, climate and malnutrition challenge and generates new pathways to rebuild our societies, social relations and democratic governance. It offers critical pathways towards healthy and sustainable diets. It is therefore essential to ensure maximum synergy with the CFS workstream on Agroecology and ensure consistency in workstream schedules;
7. **The normative framework imposes to move beyond the HLPE “wheel”:** The HLPE wheel may offers an analytical framework to describe food systems, but it does not offer an equally adequate normative framework for policy interventions. For instance: (1) it excludes consumer behaviour; (2) some of its components are intrinsically connected and it is artificial to dissect policies interventions at that level; and, (3) the wheel excludes all the key drivers that shape food systems (as per the broader framework presented by the HLPE) that would still need to be addressed by this policy coherence exercise;
8. **A CSM proposal in between the overall HLPE framework (the one page graph) and the wheel:** The overall HLPE framework is comprehensive but far too complex as a normative framework. The CSM would therefore like to propose a simpler and more effective framework for the guidelines. Considering the organic cycle of food systems for food sovereignty and nutrition, the centrality of the HR framework (RtF, RtH, Women’s rights, etc.) calls for the CFS to establish public policy guidance in the following five key areas:

