

CSM Position on WFO Petition

Regarding the recent petition of the World Farmers Organization (WFO), submitted to the CFS Bureau, to get a seat in the CFS Advisory Group, the CSM would like to share the following remarks:

- The UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is today the foremost inclusive intergovernmental and international platform on Food Security and nutrition, and clear rules for its structure, membership and participation have been agreed by the CFS Reform in 2009. All actors with relevance for food security and nutrition are welcome to participate in CFS deliberation processes. WFO is a relevant player and should be encouraged to join the CFS in accordance with the agreed structure and through the appropriate mechanism.
- The CSM is inclusive by its very constitution to all CSOs with relevant work in food security and nutrition, to join and participate in the CSM. All participating organizations have, of course, to comply with the principles, values and rules of the CSM, particularly the focus on the interests of those most affected by hunger and malnutrition, the full respect and support to human rights, women's rights and workers' rights, the support to small-scale food producers of all constituencies, and the participative and transparent articulation process, as laid down in the CSM Founding Document and following the rules of the CSM Internal Guidelines.
- The CSM is the largest global space of those constituencies that are the most important contributors to food security and nutrition, and the most affected by hunger and malnutrition. Among the participating organizations of the CSM are the most representative worldwide platforms of small-holder and family farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolks, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, women and consumers, with together more than 300 million organized members. It is certainly not correct, and not respectful, when the recent WFO letter to the CFS Bureau states: "Today none of the members of the CFS Advisory Group openly regards farmers, intended in its broadest sense (including fisher folks, pastoralists, crops, horticulture, feedstock, livestock, breeding, fisheries and forestry, modern and traditional agriculture)." Moreover, they do not have the needed legitimacy to claim that they "present the view of a community of 1.5 billion farmers", as the referred Letter unfortunately states.
- An important distinction in the set-up of the CFS is the fact that the interest of the commercial sector, agribusinesses and food industries is articulated through the PSM, while the organizations of small-scale family farms, food producers and consumers, as well as the public interest civil society organizations are articulated through the CSM. We understand that the WFO, being an organization that has affiliates from small- and medium-size farms to large commercial agribusinesses is in a dilemma situation. Some of the national members, or parts of the overall membership, would fully fit into the CSM, others in the PSM. In fact, WFO members have participated through the PSM in several CFS meetings in the recent years and have joined their positions in those occasions.
- A solution needs to be found that allows the WFO to participate in the CFS without breaking the rules or claiming a special treatment. If a special status was allowed to one single organization, by getting a fast-track access to the CFS Advisory as a permanent or ad-hoc participant, without going through one of the two mechanisms, this would create an enormous problem for the Mechanisms as such. Other civil society organizations or large

corporation would claim the same - with the same right. In the case of the CSM, the world largest platforms of family farmers, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, agricultural workers, women or consumers would claim the same: a permanent or ad-hoc seat for each of them in the CFS Advisory Group. This would increase the seats of civil society in the CFS Advisory Group from 4 to at least 12.

- If an exception is permitted for one, it would have to be admitted for the others as well. It is needless to say that this would severely undermine the two Mechanisms of the reformed CFS. The Members of the CFS Bureau should consider the possible consequences of any decision they might want to take on this aspect. They also should take into account that decisions which change the architecture and structure of the CFS cannot be taken by the CFS Bureau, but must be discussed and approved by the CFS Plenary.
- Each individual organization from civil society or the private sector who wants to join the CFS, needs to accept the rules and structure of the CFS and cannot expect that the structure will be adjusted to its individual interests.
- The global and continental platforms that have joined the CSM so far, have assessed positively and continue to work with the Mechanism, in spite of all differences and the huge diversities that are characterizing the CSM. In fact, we have learned to appreciate these diversities of constituencies, views, regions and cultures as a wealth of experiences and analysis which have allowed us to learn from each other, and to jointly develop and provide substantial and thoughtful CSM contributions to all CFS processes.