

FORUM ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Draft concept note

BACKGROUND

At its 42nd session, CFS endorsed the 2016-2017 Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) which included a *Forum on Women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition*:

Excerpt from CFS 2015/42/12 - CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work 2016-2017 (Paras 30-31)

According to the State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) released by FAO in 2010-2011, despite their crucial role in agriculture, women still "face gender-specific constraints that reduce their productivity and limit their contributions to agricultural production, economic growth and the well-being of their families, communities and countries". These result in a gender gap in terms of access to land and essential resources. According to FAO, if women were given the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent and raise agricultural outputs in developing countries by 2.5-4 percent which in theory could reduce the overall number of hungry people by 12-17 percent (SOFA 2010-2011, Women in Agriculture). Closing the gender gap and addressing women's nutritional challenges would have positive implications also on children's nutritional status given that when women have more influence over economic decisions, their families allocate more income to food, health, education, children's clothing and children's nutrition.

A CFS Forum will take place during or back-to-back to CFS 44 in October 2017 to discuss the challenges that remain in economic empowerment of women and help promote a shared understanding of how those issues are evolving in the agriculture and agri-food sector. Taking into account also the recommendations of the policy roundtable on "Gender, Food Security and Nutrition" held at CFS 37 in 2011, the discussion is expected to lead to identification of policy gaps and good practices which can be broadly disseminated with a view to informing future gender-sensitive policy and represent the basis for future stocktaking and sharing of lessons.

The following proposal takes into account the inputs provided by the Bureau and Advisory Group in their 29 November and 1 December 2016 meetings, as well as the views expressed by the Technical Task Team (TTT) on Women's Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition.

OBJECTIVES

The Forum will promote a shared understanding of how issues related to women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition are evolving. The Forum will also contribute to promoting mutual accountability towards the full realization of women's rights, leveraging gender equality and women's empowerment for the attainment of all Sustainable Development Goals - especially SDG1, SDG2 and SDG5 - and strengthening synergies among these goals in policy and programme frameworks for countries.

Specifically, the Forum's objectives will be:

- 1) **Raising awareness** on persisting barriers to women's empowerment and on legal and policy instruments to overcome them (including new ones like CEDAW General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women), reflecting on the conditions needed for their successful implementation;
- 2) **Sharing experiences and good practices** on the implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks, strategies and approaches, as well as practical initiatives, that address the gender gaps in agriculture and thereby contribute to women's empowerment and ultimately to food security and nutrition (e.g. CEDAW, VGGT);
- 3) **Identifying ways in which CFS can contribute to accelerating progress towards women's empowerment, leading to improved food security and nutrition.**

EXPECTED RESULTS

The Forum is expected to inform future gender-sensitive policy and will represent the basis for future stocktaking, sharing of lessons and reflecting on persistent challenges.

Specifically, taking into account also the recommendations of the policy roundtable on "Gender, Food Security and Nutrition" held at CFS 37 in 2011 among others, the Forum is expected to lead to the identification of:

- Policy gaps and barriers that slow down progress in empowering women;
- Good practices on the application of legal and policy instruments that succeeded in addressing persisting barriers to women's empowerment;
- Next steps for CFS to advance women's empowerment, women's rights and gender equality in the context of food security and nutrition.

The Forum will also contribute to:

- increased knowledge on the use and application of existing legal and policy frameworks with relevance to the women's empowerment and food security and nutrition nexus;
- Increased awareness on legal and policy instruments and enhanced national commitment to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through food security and nutrition.

TIMING

While the final decision on whether the Forum should be held during or back to back to CFS44 rests with the CFS Bureau, the Technical Task Team has highlighted participation, cost efficiency and visibility as some of the key advantages to scheduling the Forum as part of the Plenary week.

PROPOSED PROCESS

The Forum's preparations will be under the overall purview of the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group. To this end, a standing item will be included in the agenda of the Bureau and Advisory Group meetings during the 2016-2017 inter-sessional period.

The approach and outcome for the Forum will be discussed at the Joint Bureau and Advisory Group meeting on 6 February and decided upon by the Bureau on 10 February.

Between February and March, drawing from their organizations' respective expertise and professional networks, TTT members will be sharing and reviewing experiences and good practices as the basis for the preparation of the background document.

By 15 April 2017 - The TTT will support the CFS Secretariat in preparing:

- 1) an annotated outline of the background document, including the a summary of the selected case studies

The background document to the Forum will include:

- i) a review of the existing policy and legal frameworks with high relevance to empowering women involved in agriculture in the context of food security and nutrition;
- ii) an overview of the policy gaps and persisting barriers to women's empowerment;
- iii) a compendium of good practices and case studies on the application of legal and policy instruments that succeeded in addressing persisting barriers to women's empowerment identified by TTT members;
- iv) a synthesis of the findings.

- 2) the agenda and format of the Forum;

- 3) a list of proposed panelists.

The above material will be discussed in the 3 May Joint Bureau and Advisory Group meeting and decided upon in the 8 May Bureau meeting.

Between May and June the Secretariat will be inviting panelists and finalize the Forum's agenda.

By 23 June the Technical Task Team will submit the background document to the CFS Secretariat

The background document to the Forum will be circulated for feedback during the 11 July joint Bureau and Advisory Group meeting and 14 July Bureau meeting.