



Outcomes of the extended Bureau retreat on the follow-up to the Evaluation 8 June 2017, Casa San Bernardo, Rome

A series of meetings were held to discuss the follow-up to the Independent Evaluation of CFS, starting with two global discussions on 1 and 5 June 2017, followed by an extended Bureau and Advisory Group meeting on 7 June 2017. The outcomes of these meetings fed into the extended Bureau retreat held on 8 June 2017. The objectives of the retreat were to discuss the roadmap for the preparation of the Plan of Action in response to the CFS Evaluation, as well as action-oriented suggestions for improvements to CFS that respond to evaluation recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6. The retreat was co-facilitated by Egypt and Iceland. The list of participating countries is provided in Annex.

The morning was devoted to global discussions on the roadmap, the evaluation in general and Recommendation 1. Three groups were formed in the afternoon to discuss Recommendations 2, 3 and 5&6. The results of these group discussions were then reported and discussed in the subsequent global discussions.

1. Roadmap

Participants agreed with the matrix proposed for the Plan of Action and looked forward to the development of the matrix, which will take into consideration the linkages between recommendations and look at synergies for implementation, with savings in time and resources.

2. General discussion on the evaluation

Reacting to the evaluation finding that CFS and its products were not known at country level, several participants insisted on the need to adopt a demand-driven approach, better responding to countries' priorities. Plenary could play a central role in setting up the agenda. Plenary should attract high-level participants, Ministers and top-level executives from CSM and PSM. Effective communication, advocacy and outreach were essential. Ensuring visibility required addressing Recommendations 5 (CFS Plenary), 11 (communication and outreach) and 12 (dissemination of HLPE reports) although each recommendation could potentially make CFS more attractive.

Some participants stressed the need for CFS to be relevant and to clarify the demand. At global level, more could be done to increase CFS visibility in the UN system, considering how CFS products can contribute to the global agenda. CFS could help countries situate and position the importance of FSN for sustainable development, including SDG2. CFS should look at being more relevant to countries' needs in order to have an impact on the ground. Attention was attracted on the importance of promoting the concept of food security together with CFS and CFS products.

There was a general convergence towards revisiting and clarifying Roles 3 and 4 of CFS and assess their feasibility with a view of deciding if CFS should continue with these roles or refocus efforts on other roles. It was underlined that CFS was not a development organization and should not expect to replace or have a role that is being covered by many strong and focused development organizations operating in different parts of the world. The responsibilities of member states for reporting back to capitals and

mobilizing them to use CFS products, including HLPE reports, were mentioned as well as RBAs' essential role in disseminating and promoting CFS products in their programmes. The interest of promoting voluntary CFS-like platforms in countries was mentioned.

3. Recommendation 1: Development of a Strategic Framework/Plan

Several participants drew attention to the fact that CFS was not an organization but a platform and thus there was no need for a separate strategic framework. There was however agreement on the need to give CFS more strategic direction, developing medium-to-long term strategic objectives that would be incorporated into a longer-term MYPoW supported by a secured budget. The strategic objectives should link with global priorities (2030 Agenda), issues raised in HLPE Critical and Emerging Issues Note and RBAs strategic objectives, and be guided by the CFS vision. It could clarify CFS roles. There were suggestions on the timeframe of the MYPoW which could be 4-6 years, for instance with two MYPoW by 2030, one from 2019-2023 and the other from 2024-2030, which would link to progress on the 2030 Agenda. MYPoW could include a standing section with all the strategic elements and a rolling section with current activities that would be regularly updated, taking into account resource availability.

4. Results of working groups discussions

Recommendation 2: Revising the MYPoW process and structure

A key problem was the lack of clear picture of expected outcomes when selecting the workstreams. An in-depth discussion on the expected achievements, the objectives, the added value of CFS and expected impact was needed. There was a tendency to argue about the issues without discussing the issues. Work undertaken by CFS potentially duplicates the work of other bodies. The definition of medium to long term strategic objectives would help. Strategic direction should consider emerging FSN issues that are relevant to RBAs work at country level, global priorities (2030 Agenda), and issues raised in HLPE C&E note to which CFS can contribute considering each of its six roles. There should be a more comprehensive planning phase (incubation phase) for each workstream at the end of which a decision would be taken on the adoption or not of the workstream, based on a strong rationale for CFS engagement, the definition of clear objectives/ outcomes, explicit CFS added value, roles and responsibilities post endorsement and monitoring activities.

There is a need for an overall picture of the full budget requirements of CFS (Plenary and workstreams, HLPE, CSM, PSM), including resources for coordination and communication. The MYPoW OEWG has not been able to limit work or prepare a MYPoW based on resource availability. The political decision on MYPoW should consider global needs and global resources and make decisions on that basis. We are missing regional and sub-regional priorities. The FAO regional conferences should provide inputs on CFS priorities that, together with the HLPE C&E note, would lead to better choices. There is a need for clearer selection criteria that lead to easier selection of what matters most, not what meets everyone's interests. Maximum participation in the process is important.

History has led to two tracks of work with HLPE reports being developed separately and with limited CFS ownership. Some questioned the value of the policy recommendations/'minor products'. The division between major workstreams and 'others' has never made sense. The nutrition report is a good example of synergy where an HLPE report is requested because CFS is giving priority to the work, where there are clear connections to the global agenda (ICN2, Decade of Action and Agenda 2030), good access to other

reports and results from CFS discussions, and is expected to lead to more effective policy convergence work.

Recommendation 3: Securing a sustainable CFS budget

There was a consensus on the need for developing a resource mobilization strategy and a decision might be presented to plenary to develop such a strategy by 2018. More transparency in CFS in terms of resource requirements and availability and a more attractive and demand-based approach together with concrete results and outputs were expected to incentivize donors to increase contributions to CFS. CFS donor base should be broadened to include all stakeholders. Donations from the private sector and philanthropic foundation could be accepted, with a caveat that safeguards should be put in place to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

While it may not be feasible to expect an increase in contributions from the RBAs in the short term, most participants highlighted the importance of RBAs contribution and the need for increasing their contributions in the medium term to cover at least the core budget with priority workstreams. This increase should be requested through interventions by Members during governing bodies' meetings. RBAs should formalize their contribution and clarify the principles for cash versus in-kind contributions. Some underlined that CFS budget has never been very predictable and that it might not be realistic to expect predictability but others said that the number of donors had decreased over the years and this was threatening for CFS.

The CFS Chair can play a useful role in encouraging resource mobilization. The Secretariat has a mandate for resource mobilization, which has tended to be ad hoc and opportunistic. It was underlined that there was no dedicated resources for a Secretariat staff to provide adequate support on a daily basis.

There were suggestions to have an induction for newcomers to CFS to familiarize them with CFS. Interested parties and stakeholders could participate and brief new comers on how they participate in CFS (e.g. CSM, PSM) present their work.

Recommendation 5: Making Plenary more vibrant

Participants agreed that plenary needs to be made more vibrant and interactive, avoiding for instance the past practice of having a number of long country statements. Suggestions on how to do so included having a theme or topic that was linked to an HLPE report or policy product and using different plenary formats that promote more interactive discussion between panelists, ministers and the audience (e.g. high-level roundtables, forums). The platform function of the Plenary was important and it was emphasized that CFS was about having a real dialogue on FSN.

Retreat participants did not think Plenary was a suitable place for detailed technical negotiations, and suggestions on how to attract Ministers and top-level representatives to plenary included having a one page forward-looking and directive ministerial communique that would be discussed and prepared by senior officials and finalized in plenary with ministerial endorsement in the presence of media. While Ministers are encouraged to attend CFS Plenary every year, participants recognized that it would be more feasible for them to attend on alternate years when there are no FAO Conferences.

There were suggestions to have introductory sessions for high-level delegates and asking Member States to provide information on the demand for CFS products i.e. the kind of policies they need from CFS. The agenda-setting task would then come from the participants at Plenary.

There was agreement on the importance of side events. Some called to streamline their number to keep them manageable, especially for smaller delegations. Others thought there should be a higher number of side events, including events held outside FAO to maximize the convening power of CFS week.

Recommendation 6: Streamlining OEWGs

There was strong consensus among retreat participants that the number of OEWGs with related functions should be streamlined. It was proposed to have an organizational OEWG that would deal with strategy, MYPoW, budget and monitoring as these functions are interrelated and there are synergies in grouping them. Criteria should be established with specific conditions enabling a decision on whether an OEWG is needed. There are too many workstreams and they are too costly and time consuming. There should however be some flexibility to establish an OEWG to address emerging issues when needed. Regarding monitoring, some participants proposed to incorporate activities within each workstream (lessons sharing, best practices, what works and does not work and learning points).

Clear Terms of Reference should be drawn up before establishing other OEWGs. Plenary should give more direct and clear instructions on the Terms of Reference of the OEWGs. The Terms of Reference should be time-bound and any extension should be a deliberate decision. Apart from OEWGs, alternative working arrangements such as specific task forces (e.g. for CFS contribution to HLPF) and technical task teams or other ad hoc arrangements should be explored. All workstreams should be linked to the CFS budget and should not start unless funding is secured.

Way forward

It was suggested that the draft responses to recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 would be developed based on the discussions during the retreat and the previous meetings, including the written suggestions that have been requested from the Advisory Group. The draft response will be circulated in advance of the meetings of 11 and 14 July. The responses will be classified into three categories, as discussed in the meeting of 5 June 2017:

- for endorsement at CFS 44;
- for delegation to the Bureau during the intersessional period between CFS 44 and CFS 45; and
- for endorsement at CFS 45.

The co-facilitators asked that those interested in early progress on other recommendations take the initiative to convene informal consultations to agree on a draft response that can be then submitted to the co-facilitators.

The agenda for the global discussions on 11 and 14 July will be mainly focused on discussing and finalizing the responses to recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, and if time permits, preliminary views on other recommendations.

Annex: List of participating countries

- Afghanistan
- Argentina
- Bangladesh
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- Costa Rica
- Cote d'Ivoire
- Cuba
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Iceland
- Iraq
- Italy
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Sudan
- Switzerland
- Thailand
- USA