

CSM Contributions to the Joint Meeting with the new HLPE Steering Committee – 22 November

Agenda item 1: Introduction of the new HLPE Steering Committee

The CSM would like to **welcome the new HLPE Steering Committee** and wish you a fruitful and productive two-year mandate in this role.

The **CSM** is the largest space of civil society organizations working on food security and nutrition worldwide, and has a very specific mandate: the CSM has the mandate to facilitate civil society and social movements' interactions with the CFS. The CSM is composed by 11 constituencies: small-scale and family farmers, Fisherfolk, Agricultural workers, Consumers, Indigenous Peoples, Urban Food Insecure, Landless, Women, Pastoralists, Youth, and NGO. The participating organizations of the CSM represent far more than 380 million people from all these constituencies.

The **HLPE** is a cornerstone of the innovative character of the reformed CFS, by bringing into the policy-making process the contribution of the many different forms of knowledge. The HLPE is expected to bridge formally recognized expertise with field experience, high-level academic research with traditional and indigenous knowledge and science, recognizing that experts on food security and nutrition are found in universities, territories and communities, bringing together the diversity of perspectives.

This is part of the HLPE vision, mandate and role in the CFS, and should always inform the way of working of this Steering Committee. The **CSM highly values the HLPE contributions to the CFS**. The policy convergence processes within the CFS have benefitted enormously from the HLPE reports by providing comprehensive and in-depth analyses to complex policy deliberations on often controversial issues.

The HLPE faces a **number of challenges**:

- The lack of a reliable and adequate budget is one of them. CSM joins those voices among Members States and Rome-based Agencies who believe that a reliable and secure funding structure is absolutely necessary for the whole CFS, and particularly the HLPE. We also have observed with concern that not all members and participants of the CFS have understood the necessity of maintaining the independence and autonomy of the HLPE;
- The HLPE needs to be cognizant of several systemic biases in its process, namely the voluntary nature of the project team assignment, the English-led proceedings and the significant reliance on published formal research/knowledge. These biases are perfectly understandable but call for explicit and deliberate efforts by the SC and project teams to overcome them. One key dimension in this respect is to improve the consultation methodologies of the HLPE. The inclusion of grassroots expertise has not worked as well as it should. E-consultations are not enough, even though the CSM has made efforts to collect feedback from different constituencies to contribute to consultations. The HLPE should develop and test more participative consultation methodologies that do not significantly increase the costs of producing HLPE reports, and we are willing to support you in this effort, if you wish;
- Finally, we would like to emphasize that, in our view, the HLPE reports should not seek to frame issues in manners that decrease tensions and contradictions. They should rather highlight these tensions and the gaps and incoherencies that require policy convergence efforts from the CFS.

The CSM is very much looking forward to continuing the fruitful and productive collaboration with the HLPE in the years to come.

Agenda item 2: Informal exchange of views on ongoing HLPE reports (Multistakeholder partnerships, Agroecology and other innovations)

On the Multistakeholder Partnerships for Financing FSN in the context of the Agenda 2030, the CSM would like to ask how the HLPE project team has addressed the following issues that were brought up during the HLPE consultations on the scope of the report:

- 1) How does the report address the difficult relationships between Rights-holders vs. Stakeholders?** The term multi-stakeholder partnership often fails to differentiate between those actors operating in the public interest and those working for private corporate interests. The term multi-stakeholder places all actors in equal standing and suggests they have equal legitimacy to participate in decision making and/or assume certain roles and functions. How does the project team address this issue and particularly the essential distinction between stakeholders and rights holders, particularly those rights holders affected by hunger and malnutrition and whose human rights must be respected and guaranteed by the State?
- 2) How will the report assess the impact of MSP on public decision-making spaces that relate to human rights obligations?** To be able to adequately inform policy deliberations within the CFS, the report must place its assessment of the (potential) impact of MSP for food and nutrition security within the framework of the right to food. In how far does the Project team look into the question on how partnerships with different actors might affect States'/public institutions' capacity to decide on and implement measures that promote FSN within the progressive realization of the right to food? Will the report **highlight** the possible displacement and/or undermining of public policy spaces in consequence of MSPs?
- 3) How does the report address power asymmetries?** There are often great power asymmetries between the actors in a multi-stakeholder partnership, especially between those groups most affected by malnutrition and hunger, often called "beneficiaries" in this context, and the actors representing corporate interests. How does the upcoming report address these power differentials and the associated risk that the decision-making that takes place within these partnerships is not unduly influenced by those actors that wield the most power?
- 4) A related question is that of how the report deals with the very heterogeneous nature of categories** referred to in discourse about multi-stakeholder partnerships. 'Private sector' is one of these categories: ranging from small-scale processors and traders in the Global South to multinationals – categories that have very different business logics and interests. 'Civil society' is another, ranging from representative organizations of small-scale food producers of various kinds to NGOs, the latter not directly mandated by food insecure sectors of the population;
- 5) How will the report address the discussion on the actual need for Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and possible conflicts of interest?** Will the report discuss whether certain partnerships are really needed in the first place, what possible alternative options there

could be, and what safeguards are needed to avoid potential risks and conflicts of interest within different forms of collaboration?

- 6) Lastly, the CSM would like to be reassured that the report would not refer to the CFS as a MSP, since decision-making in the CFS is exclusively exercised by Member States.

Regarding the ongoing e-consultation on the scope of the HLPE report on agroecological approaches and other innovations for sustainable agriculture and food security and nutrition: the CSM has submitted a detailed comment, but also understands that the consultation period has been extended. If appropriate, the CSM can briefly present some key aspects of its submission to this discussion:

- First, the report should not attempt to redefine agroecology but rather expose the way movements have shaped it as a result of their struggles and solutions;
- Secondly, the report should articulate the way agroecology contributes to multiple public objectives, exposing the transformational potential that it carries with respect a number of critical development challenges that all countries are confronted with, in the global South and North;
- Thirdly, the report should generate the knowledge basis to support and articulate clear recommendations for public policies and investments that can strengthen agroecology as a science, as a practice, and as a movement.

Agenda item 3: Expectations on the contribution of the HLPE to the work of CFS and follow-up to the CFS Evaluation

The CFS will discuss on 23 and 27 November three of the recommendations related to the HLPE. The **CSM would like to suggest that in this exchange with the HLPE Steering Committee, we hear from the HLPE what are their suggestions with regards to the three specific recommendations.** These suggestions can then inform the discussion among CFS members and participants in the upcoming meetings on 23 and 27 November.

The key questions are:

- Recommendation 12: how to foster the dissemination and use of HLPE Reports? What are the suggestions of the HLPE for that?
- Recommendation 13: how to strengthen the interaction between HLPE and CFS, while keeping clear the distinct roles? What are the suggestions of the HLPE for that?
- Recommendation 14: how does the HLPE conduct the selection process for the Project teams, and how does the HLPE assess this process based on the experience so far?