

## Informal discussion on problem statement – background note

Thursday 7 May 2020, 15:00-17:00

Zoom link: <https://fao.zoom.us/j/7164861700>

**Meeting ID: 716 486 1700**

**Password: CFSmeeting**

### *Overview*

1. CFS stakeholders have expressed a range of views on the nature and scale of sustainability challenges facing food systems (see [Summary of Feedback on the Zero Draft CFS Policy Recommendations](#)) and the need to transform food systems. During the Open Meeting (April 14), several stakeholders upheld the view that COVID-19 had brought into focus the need for real transformational change in food systems.

### *HLPE report evidence base*

2. Pointing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the HLPE report [Agroecological and other innovative approaches](#) asserts that transformations in food systems are needed. The report refers to several scientific publications as evidence (see paragraphs 3 to 6 below for summary of the main references) and provides an extensive definition of the concepts of “transformation” and “transition” (see page 26 of the HLPE report).
3. The HLPE report [Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition: what roles for livestock?](#) points out that the last 50 years has seen a radical transformation of food and agricultural production systems, driven by globalization, trade liberalization, urbanization, increase in incomes and changes in lifestyles. It proposes that food systems need to further transform to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by adopting the following principles: i) improving resource efficiency, ii) strengthening resilience, and iii) securing social equity/responsibility.
4. The HLPE report [Nutrition and food systems](#) also points to the profound transformation of food systems in recent decades and points to innovation as a major driver of these transformations.
5. The HLPE [2nd Note on Critical and Emerging Issues for Food Security and Nutrition](#) provides a mapping of SDGs to the four pillars of food security.
6. [Caron et. al. \(2018\)](#) assess the contributions of food systems to the SDGs and propose a framework for assessing the capacity of food systems to transform to address the 2030 Agenda focusing on: coping with climate change (SDG 13), healthy and sustainable food consumption patterns (SDGs 2, 3, and 12), viability and

sustainability of ecosystems (SDGs 6 and 15) and renaissance of rural territories (SDGs 1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16).

#### *Details of written stakeholder feedback on the Zero Draft*

7. A large number of stakeholders called for a full reorientation of food systems to make them sustainable in all three dimensions. An issue of particular concern is rising food insecurity over the last five years, which is compounded by serious concerns over climate change and environmental degradation documented in the [State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019](#) and the [2019 IPCC special report on climate change and land](#). However, other stakeholders questioned the need to transform (all) food systems or whether to embark upon transition pathways.
8. According to most stakeholders, the urgency of transformative change is now widely recognized by the scientific community and has been written into the frameworks of numerous national and inter-governmental bodies and programs, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development itself. They propose that it would be useful for these Policy Recommendations and the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition be aligned with each other and to describe how numerous food system challenges are inter-linked, leading to a comprehensive vision of the need to transform food systems for food security and nutrition.
9. Several stakeholders pointed out that the Zero Draft did not focus consistently on the world's most vulnerable populations. As such, they proposed that food system transformation should be shaped with the needs and expectations of small-scale family farmers and indigenous peoples at their core.

#### *Questions to guide discussion to explore convergences*

Food systems are dynamic and have been marked by transformations over time. All stakeholders agree that food systems should be sustainable and deliver food security and nutrition for current and future generations, yet no food system achieves top marks in all relevant aspects of performance. Therefore, some degree of transformation is relevant to all food systems, but transition pathways must be appropriate and adapted to specific contexts. FAO has developed guidance on transforming food and agriculture systems to achieve the SDGs.<sup>1</sup> Given the overview of where we are, the following questions aim to explore relevant issues with the aim of identifying possible convergences among the different points of view:

1. In terms of transitions, are the principles mentioned above (and contained in the Zero Draft) helpful? e.g., i) improving resource efficiency, ii) strengthening resilience, and iii) securing social equity/responsibility. Should they be modified in any way?

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<sup>1</sup> FAO (2018). Transforming food and agriculture to achieve the SDGs. Rome. <http://www.fao.org/3/I9900EN/i9900en.pdf> (a full-length version, the Technical Reference Document, is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/CA1647EN/ca1647en.pdf>)

2. How could the most appropriate transition pathways for each context be identified?
3. Based on today's discussions, what points do you think the First Draft of the Policy Recommendations should cover?