



### Summary of Feedback on the Zero Draft CFS Policy Recommendations Informal Discussion Document

#### Background and process

In October 2017, the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) requested the HLPE to produce a report on “*Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition*”. The report was launched in June 2019 and provided the basis for a policy convergence process which started with a discussion on the HLPE report at the CFS 46 Plenary Session in October 2019. As a next step the Rapporteur prepared a *Rapporteur’s Note* which was circulated on 12 November 2019; inputs were received in written format and during an open meeting held in Rome on 27 January 2020.

The Zero Draft of the policy recommendations was released on 19 February 2020. Written feedback on the Zero Draft was provided by 14 Member States and 16 other stakeholders. The full text of all stakeholder feedback is available at:  
<http://www.fao.org/cfs/workingspace/workstreams/agapp/en/>.

A second (virtual) open meeting will be held on April 14 to explore areas of agreement and disagreement based on the written comments with a view to moving toward the development of the First Draft. A brief summary of written feedback on the Zero Draft is provided below to guide discussions during the virtual open meeting.

Stakeholders provided a wide range of both general and specific comments. Stakeholder positions differed widely on a number of topics, which clearly require further discussion and concerted efforts by all sides to find compromises while still aiming at developing meaningful policies. The main issues that require attention during the policy convergence process are:

**1. Situation analysis.** There were a range of views on the nature and scale of sustainability challenges facing food systems and consequently, the degree of change needed to address them. Some felt that the Zero Draft did not focus consistently on the world’s most vulnerable populations and the need to work with and on their behalf. While some stakeholders called for a full reorientation of food systems to make them sustainable, others rejected the call to transform food systems or to embark on transition pathways.

**2. Agroecological and other innovative approaches.** Some stakeholders raised concerns that the Zero Draft diverged substantially from the intended topic of the policy processes by not focusing sufficiently on agroecological approaches. On the other hand, others maintained that

agroecology should not be given any priority over other innovative approaches, and that all approaches could potentially be useful.

**3. Digitalization.** Some stakeholders underlined the need for access to digital technologies by family farmers, the need for capacity building and, in particular, the need for a strong regulatory framework. Clarity was requested on the meaning of “appropriate safeguards” for digitalization.

**4. Assessments.** Some stakeholders felt that a return to the HLPE report findings and recommendations on assessments would be useful, in particular the proposed criteria (resilience, ecological footprint, resource efficiency and social equity/responsibility, and agency) to assess innovations. Some stakeholders underlined the need to reach agreement (multilaterally) on indicators and metrics to be used in any assessment.

**5. Stakeholders.** Some respondents raised the need to address recommendations to all stakeholders and not just states (e.g. private sector). In addition, several comments called for the more equal inclusion of all farmers and all enterprises (i.e. at all scales). At the same time several stakeholders called for the inclusion of social movements (representing hundreds of millions of smallholder food producers).

**6. Markets.** Views ranged from the importance of emphasizing local, national, regional and global markets to focusing more on local, national and regional markets.

**7. Right to food.** Some proposed to limit the references to the right to food while others sought to strengthen the integration of the right to food in the Zero Draft.

**8. Healthy diets.** Some stakeholders rejected the use of the term “sustainable healthy diets” as it is not agreed UN language, while some affirmed its inclusion and even strengthening by adding “food systems” and the social justice dimension.

**9. Incentives.** Views ranged from a call to reject all subsidies to a call to recognise that public incentives were essential for a number of countries. Some stakeholders suggested clarifying that “incentives” did not include subsidies.

**10. Agrochemicals.** Views on the use of agrochemicals ranged from recommending support for a sustainable and efficient use of agrochemical inputs, and the need to base political decisions on scientific evidence, to recommending replacing chemical pesticide use with comprehensive agroecological approaches for pest management, along with the immediate phaseout of highly hazardous pesticides and the elimination of subsidies that encourage their continued use.

**11. Gender.** Views ranged from a recommendation to remove most references to women’s issues and to “gender transformative policies” on the one hand, to a call for the document to recognize the centrality of women’s rights and the role of women in knowledge accumulation and agricultural production, as well as strengthen gender equality throughout the document.

**12. Agency.** Some stakeholders called for references to agency to be removed, while others supported its inclusion and another asked for clarification on its scope.