



Options Paper

Introduction:

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a health and human crisis threatening the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world. Hundreds of millions of people were already suffering from hunger and malnutrition before the virus hit and, unless immediate action is taken, we could see a global food emergency. In the longer term, the combined effects of COVID-19 itself, as well as corresponding mitigation measures and the emerging global recession could, without large-scale coordinated action, disrupt the functioning of food systems. Such disruption can result in consequences for health and nutrition of a severity and scale unseen for more than half a century.”
UN SG’s policy brief the impact of COVID-19 on FSN (June 2020)

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS), as the foremost inclusive intergovernmental and international platform for food security and nutrition, is well placed to address this unprecedented crisis and promote the right to adequate food. The CFS has the mandate to initiate inclusive dialogues and facilitate mutual learning and collective analysis, to mobilize multi-stakeholder actions necessary to respond to the pandemic, end hunger, and improve the nutrition and well-being of people. This mandate includes promoting policy coherence and convergence with input and inclusion of all CFS stakeholders.

Actions from CFS in response to the effects of COVID-19 on FSN could be useful inputs for the preparation of the Food Systems Summit 2021, as well as implementation of the *UN Decade of Action on the SDGs*, the *UN Decade of Family Farming*, and the *UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Rights of Peasants and Other People Living in Rural Areas*.

Continuing a discussion from its 2 and 5 June meetings, the CFS Bureau along with its (ad hoc) Advisory Group agreed to set up an Informal Working Group to develop an Options Paper on the roles that CFS could play with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, in accordance with its vision and mandate. The present Options Paper reflects discussions at the meeting of the Informal Working Group held on 15 June, as well as previous discussions with CFS stakeholders on this topic. Several roles are identified below, based on the three strategic objectives agreed in the CFS 2020-23 Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPoW), for further discussion and deliberation at the 23 and 24 June meetings of the CFS Bureau.

(i) Roles in line with the first strategic objective (Platform) – Leverage the convening power of CFS as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform to discuss the global FSN situation and seek to coordinate collective action at all levels.

1. Use the convening power of CFS to **organize one/two open meetings during the remainder of 2020** to discuss situations of food insecurity and malnutrition caused by COVID-19, the impacts of policy measures on food security and nutrition, in particular on poor and vulnerable groups, and the responses implemented by various actors to ensure the right to adequate food. From these experiences, identify good practices and lessons, findings and recommendations, of global, regional and national policy responses to the pandemic to be summarized in documents for public consumption.

These inclusive open meetings will give an opportunity to hear from Members, CFS Advisory Group members, and other stakeholders - such as OiE, ILO, UN Women, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, or the relevant UN Special Rapporteurs. These could seek to involve speakers from various constituencies, including the most affected such as workers, women, indigenous peoples, youth, urban food insecure, small-scale food producers and family farmers, from all regions. They may also benefit from input by, and participation from, the CFS High Level Panel of Experts on this topic.

For example, **an open meeting** could be co-organized with the support of CSM and PSM specifically to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups and food producers, and seek to identify local/regional/global measures/interventions taken by communities, civil society and private sector organizations to respond to the crisis, start the recovery process, and enhance the resilience and sustainability of food systems against future pandemics. Such a meeting could include for instance focus on specific sectors, such as the meat processing industry, whose workers around the world have been among the hardest hit by COVID-19.

Another example could be organizing **an open meeting** to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for the thematic workstreams included in the CFS MYPoW 2020-2023, namely Gender, Youth, Data and Inequalities. Such an event could draw from the knowledge/experience of CFS Advisory Group members (e.g.; CGIAR COVID-19 Hub; RBAs; etc.) and other stakeholders, and it could represent a first effort to mainstream the issue of addressing pandemic preparation throughout the CFS MYPoW 2020-2023.

2. In addition to such open meetings, organize **a high-level special session on COVID-19 in October 2020** (during CFS 47 if it is held then, or another global event to be held during World Food Week), aiming at ministerial attendance and full inclusion of all CFS constituencies/stakeholders. This high-level session could be linked to the discussion on SOFI 2020 and the HLPE 2030 Synthesis Report, or GTE on FFA - if held during the same week-, and provide the high-level political engagement to address the food security crisis.

(ii) Roles in line with the second strategic objective (Policy) – Develop voluntary policy guidance for policy convergence and coherence to achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.

3. Include in the **two on-going policy convergence processes** (Food Systems and Nutrition; Agroecological and other innovative approaches) text to support the implementation of food security and nutrition policies that integrate important lessons learned from the pandemic.
4. Between July and October, the HLPE will **update its Interim Issue Paper on COVID-19** to reflect the latest information on the impacts of the pandemic on food security and nutrition.

5. The HLPE will include analysis, experience, and conclusions about the impacts of the pandemic on food security and nutrition into its **2030 Synthesis Report** scheduled for public release on 25 June.
6. Using HLPE evidence (updated Interim Issue Paper on COVID-19 and 2030 Synthesis Report) for **mainstreaming COVID-19** in all on-going and future CFS policy convergence processes agreed in 2020-23 CFS MYPoW. Ensure those policy outcomes reflect available analysis of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food systems and effective policy responses.
7. Building on the evidence provided by the HLPE, on the experience sharing events, and on the high-level special session on COVID-19 mentioned in paragraph (i).2, the CFS might decide on possible future steps that can be taken. These might include setting up a **policy convergence process** to develop policy guidance to support Members and other stakeholders in responding to the food security and nutrition crisis, guide the recovery process, and enhance the resilience and sustainability of food systems against future crises and pandemics.

(iii) Role in line with the third strategic objective (Uptake) – Foster the uptake, follow-up and review, and sharing of experiences and best practices on the use and application of CFS products at all levels.

8. **Identify CFS policy products and recommendations of immediate relevance to the COVID-19 response** (e.g.; social protection, connecting smallholders to markets, water, land, protracted crisis, investment in smallholder agriculture, price volatility, forestry, livestock and sustainable agriculture), and highlight them where appropriate. CFS could also consider holding a stocktaking event at CFS 48, informed by inputs from CFS stakeholders, documenting experiences and good practices in implementing those CFS policy outcomes in the context of responding to the COVID-19-induced food security crisis. Such an event could be organized similar to a CFS monitoring exercises (e.g.; call for inputs; preparation of a report with consolidated results; presentation of results by selected panelists; Chair's Summary).