

CSM Messages for Virtual Event and the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group Extraordinary Meeting on Covid19, Food Security and Nutrition – Responses of Advisory Group Members to Avert a new Global Food Crisis, 13 May 2020

Messages to Virtual Event:

Impacts: The virus itself does not discriminate, but its impacts do, as the UN Secretary General has pointed out. There is increasing evidence from all parts of the world that the most affected by this health, food and economic crisis are the very same people who have been the most at risk before. The virus opens the eyes of the whole world to the horrific structural inequalities, discrimination, exploitation, racism and sexism that already reigned before, inadequately contested by public policies, and that now exacerbate the effects of the crisis on the most vulnerable in real time.

This is true for Indigenous Peoples in North America and for migrant workers in India and Europe. It is true for domestic workers in Guatemala, milk producers in Pakistan and workers in meat plants in the US, most of whom are women. It is true for the people employed in the informal sectors in Nairobi, Sao Paolo or Manila, who live from what they earn on a daily basis. They face hunger and malnutrition today and don't know what they will put on the plates of their families tomorrow. If they need to choose between food and health, they go for food and risk their health. Often, they are also exposed to police brutality, corruption and criminalization. If Covid-19 has taught the world anything it is that food and health go together and are indivisible human rights.

Macroeconomic figures assessing current global food availability point to a potential future food crisis. These global appraisals are important but fall short in diagnosing the multifaceted situation that is already there: **the new food crisis that accompanies Covid-19 is a dramatic reality now for millions of people around the world** living under lockdowns, who were already at high risk before and are now losing their employment and income without social protection. This crisis aggravates the already alarming situation of subsequent years of increasing hunger and malnutrition, biodiversity losses, climate change. The Agenda 2030 and SDGs were heading for failure already before COVID-19. The more the virus advances in the Global South, the worse this reality becomes. The situation is even more dramatic for territories and countries affected by war, occupation, sanctions and conflicts.

The crisis is inevitably a human rights crisis, as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated. Human rights are at the center stage of these multiple crises, in all regions of the world. The more discriminated people have been before, the more likely they are to be affected by the new waves of crises. Respect for and violation of human rights will be an effective compass to measure impacts, identify discrimination and guide policy decisions in response to these crises.

Community responses: The main immediate responses of people, communities and constituencies can be framed in two words: solidarity and resilience. Solidarity and resilience actions are being carried out by communities all over the world. Their actions cover a range of initiatives: sharing food and caring for the elderly within communities and neighborhoods, shortening the distances from producer to consumers, defending school feeding and farmers and fish markets, standing up against domestic violence against women and girls, defending workers' and migrants' rights, setting up autonomous health controls in indigenous communities, establishing community food councils to ensure food provisioning to all. Most of these solidarity actions have not received much media attention, but, on a daily basis, they sustain people's lives, health - including mental and psychological health - and livelihoods more than any other measure.

Many of these actions are related to using and strengthening local food systems as the most resilient ones in times of crises. The well-known fact that smallholder family farmers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples and other small-scale food producers provide most of the food consumed globally is now, indeed, a central entry point for a coherent global response to the new food crisis. These producers continue to provide their produce for the local markets, but many have faced severe constraints in accessing them due to lockdown measures, including the closing of farmer's markets in a number of countries. On the other hand, we've heard from many countries, including Costa Rica and others, that have decided to keep these markets open, while establishing clear health protocols.

Priorities for Policy Responses: The following principle points which emerge from consultations on impacts and responses undertaken in the CSM over the past weeks are not comprehensive or exhaustive, but they draw key orientations from a huge diversity of realities on the ground.

- **Put people at the center of policy solutions:** Workers, especially migrant workers, women, smallholder food producers, Indigenous Peoples, the urban food insecure, refugees and displaced, the landless and communities in protracted crises are the most affected by these new crises. Their needs, rights, claims and participation must be at the center of any policy response. Some of these global constituencies have formulated their concrete demands and expectations, such as the food and agricultural workers. Governments and international institutions must take this into account.
- **Support local and resilient Food systems:** the immediate and most important response to this new food crisis is public support to local production, local food systems; support for smallholder farmers, fisherfolks to foster their food production and ensure their access to markets and the access of consumers to their products. Local food systems, agroecology and climate justice are intimately linked and an essential basis for resilience. Local and national governance structures play a fundamental role in acknowledging and acting on this reality. Parliaments and participative food councils were among the first to spell out the public actions needed in this moment, participative mapping tools for demands and action, continued school feeding and farmers' markets, public funding for community responses, fair prices, protection of workers' and women's rights, showing pathways to strengthening resilience through agroecological transformation, climate justice, solidarity economy and food sovereignty.
- **Fight Inequalities:** All national and international efforts to address the new crisis have to help to reduce the extreme inequalities within and among countries. The pre-existing structural inequalities now determine in many countries, including rich countries such as North America and Europe, who will be the most affected by these crises and who will be the pandemic profiteers. The people cannot longer accept the outrageous inequalities in income and wealth on this planet and within countries, when hundreds of millions of people go unemployed and whole countries, especially the Low-Income Food Deficit Countries, are facing economic, social and political catastrophes. Inequalities leading to daily and structural discrimination of women, workers, Indigenous Peoples, peasants, migrants, minorities, landless, homeless, pastoralist, fisherfolks, unemployed, informal labor and urban poor must be addressed now as matter of global emergency.
- **Privilege public systems and policies:** the strength or weakness of the public health sectors, together with political decisions of central governments, determine life and death outcomes in many countries. Health and food are public goods and human rights. If states and

governments do not protect and respect them, they lose their legitimacy among citizens, which may lead to social unrest and political instability.

- **Recognize that food systems are interconnected:** there is an urgent need for enhanced regional and global policy coordination, convergence and coherence and improved mutual accountability. The **CFS** as the foremost inclusive intergovernmental and international platform on food security and nutrition is best placed to contribute to mutual learning and collective analysis, and to develop a **Global Policy Response to the food crisis** that accompanies Covid-19.

Messages to AG-Bureau meeting: COVID-19, Food Security and Nutrition: Responses from the CFS.

On Process:

Before we share with you our proposals for the role of CFS in response to COVID-19 and the food crisis, we have a short comment on process facilitation in the CFS.

Organizing a public event in CFS always followed an inclusive process, with consultation of member and participants either through the AG/Bureau or through Open-Ended Working Groups. We kindly request the CFS Bureau to adopt the adequate measures to ensure that good process, including inclusive consultation and transparent decision procedures is duly ensured.

Just to be clear, the idea of using the CFS as a platform for learning and sharing analyses on COVID19 and its impact on FSN has our full support. We have ourselves said many times that the CFS should play this role. So, we believe that public events – public webinars – are important, to share the results of our work and to exchange with other actors. In that sense, lets plan any further CFS webinar or event together, with the participation and engagement of all, including gender balance and interpretation in other languages to allow a broad and inclusive participation.

On the new food crisis and the response of the CFS to it:

During the past weeks, several constituencies of the CSM organized consultations and webinars to learn from the experiences and analyses of their members, started data collection processes, produced preliminary monitoring reports and released statements with their concrete political demands to address the crisis. CSM organized a webinar with experts from FAO, WHO and academia and held two days of global consultations with representatives from all 11 global constituencies and 17 sub-regions.

The CSM Coordination Committee unanimously agreed that the response to the new food crisis is the first priority of the CSM in 2020, as this is the urgency that hundreds of organizations who participate in the CSM are facing on the ground in their daily work. In this sense, we strongly support the CFS Chair and all member countries in making the CFS responsive to this new food crisis.

In response to the COVID-19 induced food crisis, we see the following **Implications for the CFS:**

- First - the CFS should serve as a platform for exchange and learning. For further discussions in such process, it would be important to hear from governments and other UN agencies, such as ILO, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Women, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, or Special Procedures such as the Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food, Extreme Poverty and Human Rights or the Expert

Mechanism for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The format of these discussions should be commonly agreed in the CFS by the Bureau, with the consultation of the AG.

- Second - these discussions need to inform the policy guidance of the CFS. With all the inputs from its members and participants, the CFS should draft a global policy response to the food crisis that can support governments in their national responses to the crisis. This policy response could be developed building on the ongoing work of HLPE, it should include consultations and it could, with the support of a facilitator, lead to the adoption of a policy guidance document at the next CFS Plenary. We join the voices of countries – Iran and France who expressed in the webinar the need for the HLPE to update its note on Covid-19 crisis beyond June, with recommendations for the medium and long terms and on how to assess resilience and sustainability of food systems.
- Third - the learnings from this crisis need to feed the ongoing CFS processes on food systems and nutrition and agroecology and other innovative approaches, and the future workstreams on gender equality, youth, inequalities and data. Needless to stress that the topic of inequalities is now more urgent than ever when dealing with the causes of, and responses to, the old and new food crises.
- Forth – bringing Rome-home: the CFS has developed significant policy instruments that can and must be used now for the public policy responses to the crises. Essential parts of CFS policy guidance on social protection, smallholders to markets, water, land, protracted crisis, investment in smallholder agriculture, price volatility, forestry, livestock and sustainable agriculture are now applicable to many problems and challenges exacerbated by the crisis.
- Fifth - The CFS 47 Plenary Session, whenever it can take place, should devote special attention to the food crisis and include for example a two-day Extraordinary Session with ministerial attendance from capitals and full inclusion of the most affected constituencies to the Global Policy Response to the Food Crisis.