

CSM key messages to AG-Bureau meeting, 23 June 2020

Agenda item 1: Revised Plenary Contingency Plan:

- We welcome the proposal to hold the CFS 47 Plenary in February 2021.
- It must be ensured that the agenda of the postponed CFS 47 Plenary provides the due importance for the Global Thematic Event on the use and application of the Framework for Action on Protracted Crises.
- Listening carefully to the discussion today, and the large support to the need of a CFS Policy Response to Covid-19, the CFS must take a decision on starting this process the latest by October. If the CFS Bureau cannot take such decision, a Moment of Plenary would be needed to take this decision during World Food Week.
- We support holding Virtual CFS events on key topics in the World Food Week in October 2020, as long as their preparation and realization fully reflects the CFS standards of inclusiveness, participation and transparency.
- To this effect, draft concept notes for these events should be prepared with proposed objectives, guiding questions, a panel composition and methodology for a participative, interactive discussion for each of these events, for discussion at the next Bureau and Advisory Group meeting on 29 July, and decision by the Bureau. Bureau and AG member should be invited to submit proposals for these concept notes by 7 July.
- The proposed themes for the Virtual CFS Events are generally welcome, especially the importance given to the discussions on Policy responses to Covid-19. The title of the second Virtual Event should be refined: should refer to pandemics and global emergencies, not only zoonotic crises.

Agenda item 2: Potential roles of the CFS in responding to COVID-19

- We generally welcome the Proposal prepared by the Chair of the Informal Working Group. We emphasize that a response of CFS on this unprecedented crisis can only be effective if it is based on the interconnectedness of its three strategic objectives: to serve as a platform, for policy convergence, and uptake. A CFS that acts only as a platform for exchange, without producing policy guidance and ensuring their use and application, is not effective. The CFS would risk becoming a talk-shop once again, as before its reform.
- The key question is the date by which the CFS will decide about the format and process toward a policy process in response to the FSN crisis induced by Covid-19. In our view, this decision must be taken in October at the latest, by the CFS Bureau right after the World Food Week if it cannot be done before. If the CFS Bureau cannot take such decision, a Moment of Plenary would be needed to take this decision during World Food Week (see above).
- In any case, we would invite member states, UN agencies and all participants in the CFS to already start thinking and working toward a CFS policy response to COVID-19 which can be negotiated in the last months of this year and adopted by CFS 47 in February 2021.

Agenda item 3: Revised Proposal for CFS Negotiations in 2020

Regarding the revised proposal on CFS negotiations, we have some deep concern and practical suggestions.

Our first major concern is with the proposal of negotiations that suggests a so called “phased approach” to start negotiations in a purely virtual way in July. Many Member States and Advisory Group members have explicitly expressed and explained their doubts against such virtual negotiations in the last meetings. The revised proposal should not try to ignore these voices and push for purely virtual negotiations in July.

- So, our first proposal refers particularly to the Food Systems and Nutrition which is the most complicated negotiation process with very high implications. So, We suggest that the proposal of negotiations to further elaborate the conditions under which hybrid negotiations can be held in the CFS, and on proposals for what can be done to advance the content discussions in the Food Systems and Nutrition workstream before entering negotiations. Based on how the process took place so far, we are certain that the workstream on Food Systems and Nutrition is not ready to start negotiations in July. If we put pressure on this workstream to start negotiations in July, we risk producing a controversial outcome. The Chair of this workstream – Ambassador Hans Hoogeveen - announced at the last OEWG the possibility of a new OEWG to take place in July; we are still working on the right methodology particularly on how to deal with contentious issues and also how to build on common points that can help us transition towards negotiations. So, for July an OEWG would be more appropriate rather than starting abruptly with negotiations.
- By comparison with the other workstream, the experiences of the informal discussions on contentious issues in the field of agroecological and other innovative approaches were felt useful and they helped to explore divergences and identify convergences. A similar procedure could help the process on Food Systems and Nutrition, and this can be achieved through a virtual OEWG meeting in July that I just mentioned before.
- In addition, regarding participation: Hybrid negotiations with high in-person attendance and active virtual participation must be very well prepared in all aspect sand we agree with Ambassador Emadi here, we need to clearly define how these hybrid negotiations will take place, and as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food just suggested, we can use July to clarify the procedure of the hybrid negotiations. In particular, it should be made possible for remote participants to take the floor and actively engage in the negotiations. There is no reason why the restriction of physical attendance should restrict these remote voices from capitals and constituencies to actively engage in the sessions. For example, participants from certain areas and countries with less connectivity could be invited to join the CFS negotiations from a FAO or IFAD country office.
- To conclude the list of proposals from our first concern regarding the process and it's sequencing, the CFS needs to elaborate and agree on rules and proceedings for hybrid negotiations before entering them, based on its high standards that have been practiced in previous negotiations. As everybody says, the negotiations should be concluded be end of the year. We agree with that. There is no hurry to start in July, and hybrid negotiations can be conducted from September onwards.

Now, our second, deep concern is regarding the composition of the delegates who would be allowed to for in-person participation in the room in case of hybrid negotiations:

- While we do appreciate the fact that our demand for a higher in-person participation to hybrid negotiations was taken up, we are deeply irritated by the suggestion to reduce the in-person participation of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism to 1 person in the room! This is simply not acceptable, considering the huge diversity of constituencies and regions the CSM represents. We would like to remind you that CSM is composed of 11 constituencies, including farmers, workers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, consumer, women, youth, urban food insecure and 17 subregions ,including also social movements from countries who are not yet members of the CFS. The inclusiveness of the negotiations processes is key, it is the backbone of CFS, and it has to be put in practice.
- We also saw with concern that, among the UN bodies, six UN institutions are mentioned, but the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food is not. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur is key for the CFS and its Vision.