



**CSM Proposal for a an HLPE report on
"The impact of Trade Agreements on Food Security and Nutrition"
as part of the CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work
(MYPOW) 2018-2019**

Background, Relevance and Global Impact

International trade agreements have been acknowledged to have a significant and complex impact on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN). Those in favour of trade liberalisation have long argued that trade agreements in removing barriers to food trade increase food system efficiency and encourage greater productivity and use of resources, and allow food to flow where it is most in demand.

Critics of trade agreements point to the fact that while trade agreements have helped the spread of particularly high-yield refined carbohydrates that have increased food security, the spread and reliance on such food crops as wheat and sugar has simplified diets and undermined nutrition. Crucially, trade agreements in the main do not cover or consider the impact on small-scale food producers, including pastoralists, fishersfolk and family farms, yet they are argued to be often the most adversely impacted by such agreements, while providing more than 70% of global food supply and thus being critical to food security and nutrition.

A recent trend in trade negotiations has been the Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) including 'mega' RTAs such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement & TTIP currently under negotiation, as well as bilateral trade agreements. Unlike previous trade agreements that largely focus on removing tariff barriers, RTAs instead focus on creating agreed single standards overriding internal state policy and legal frameworks for issues including safety and health standards, rules for foreign investment and intellectual property, essential services such as telecommunications, and labour and environmental protections. RTAs also then contain clauses that allow state laws and regulation that impede foreign investment, access to market and profit-making to be challenged and fines or compensation enforced. These include public good laws and have direct implications for FSN. For example states have been ordered to pay compensation and desist from legal measures that protect water catchments from mining; or cease local procurement as a means of stimulating resilient and robust internal economies.

Therefore there are longstanding issues regarding traditional bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, and multi-lateral negotiations through the WTO with regard to the impact on FSN; and potential new impacts from RTAs which are increasingly used since the collapse of global trade negotiations. In both instances these impacts will be global given the comprehensiveness of these trade agreements.

The reliance on international trade as a means for countries with limited or no domestic food security was also shown to be problematic during the global food crisis of 2008-09. Some major food exporters simply stopped and social unrest and disruption due to high food prices and scarcity was widespread in more than 40 countries. It is clear that many countries are now acting to effectively bypass trade as the sole means of ensuring their own food security. These measures include the creation of public stock-holdings for food security, operational at the national level and proposed in the regional level, in line with the recommendations of successive UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Food.

It is therefore timely and critical to consider the impact of traditional trade agreements on FSN; and to consider likely impacts from RTAs, in order to provide advice to governments and other actors regarding appropriate mechanisms and pitfalls in both styles multi-lateral, regional and bilateral trade agreements that may be having an adverse impact on the desired goals of achieving global food security and adequate nutrition. It is particularly timely given that the role of small-scale food producers is increasingly recognised as the key to global FSN, focusing on building resilience and adaptability in world confronted with the challenge of climate change. The potential imposed and extended rigidity of trade agreements on local responses by state actors to FSN is a timely topic.

CFS Added Value

The CFS is uniquely placed to consider the impact of trade agreements on FSN. No other body in the international system is charged with undertaking the required complex synthesis of information and evidence to assess the impact of major global trends and policies on food security and nutrition, and discuss more specifically the impact of trade agreements on the attainment of food security and nutrition and the ways to promote coherence with the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.

The High-Level Panel of experts of the CFS is best placed and equipped to provide a sound analytic basis for an in-depth discussion among all relevant actors working on food security, present in the CFS. In such context, the CFS can play its role to promote policy convergence on an issue that is sensitive and contentious, but certainly highly relevant to food security and nutrition on the national, regional and global level.



Further, the work of the CFS demonstrably touches on the role of trade and the needs of state actors to respond to achieving aspects of FSN, which in turn are influenced by trade agreements. In this sense, this proposal is strongly linked to, and following-up on past and ongoing CFS workstreams, such as on responsible governance of tenure rights, investment in smallholder agriculture, responsible agricultural investment or connecting smallholders to markets.

Duplication

Currently, there is no equivalent analysis undertaken within international trade legal frameworks. By focusing the assessment on food security and nutrition as the core mandate of the CFS, there will be no duplication with the processes and negotiations conducted under the auspices of multilateral or regional trade institutions. The analysis would be entirely complementary to the discussions being currently held in trade bodies and inform the negotiations better, especially with regard to the impact of FSN. The Nairobi Ministerial Declaration of the Tenth WTO ministerial with regard to the future of the Doha Development Round (DDR), has opened up the space for this discussion in other forums including the CFS.

Knowledge and evidence

There is a considerable body of knowledge to draw upon regarding the implications of trade agreements for global and regional food security and nutrition, both in terms of documenting positive and negative outcomes for FSN. In addition to the data and information collected by the international institutions including the Rome-Based Agencies, there is a considerable amount of literature and analysis of existing bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and their impact on food security and nutrition by academic, civil society and state actors.

Rome-Based Agencies Support

The Rome-based agencies are well placed to provide technical support. The FAO's work in collecting trade data, the work of the WFP on issues such as trade for aid, and IFAD's work on rural development and resilience mean they are well-placed to inform this proposed report of the HLPE and the subsequent assessment process within the CFS.