

# CFS Roundtable on gender: food security and nutrition

## CSM Position paper

In response to the document prepared for the Policy Roundtable on Gender, Food Security and Nutrition, we would like to commend the CFS for the proposals that they have put forward in the policy document. However, we would like to strengthen the proposals with the following recommendations:

### Economic Empowerment of Women

1. We would like to strongly reiterate the important role of women as small food producers<sup>1</sup>, i.e. farmers, fishers, agricultural workers, pastoralists, and indigenous women in food and nutrition security, despite the systematic discrimination and marginalization they face. Women's human rights must be at the center of global efforts to achieve food and nutrition security. **Given that gender will be an important issue in 2012 with the Commission of Status of Women focusing on women as farmers, and the new report by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to food focusing on gender, we ask gender to be at in the agenda of the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the CFS.**

#### Women's right and access to productive resources:

As highlighted in the latest SOFA report, women suffer from a gender gap with regard to access to natural resources, including good quality land, and opportunities. Foreign land acquisition deals that are initiated to establish large-scale plantations are threatening the customary and communal land systems upon which communities depend for livelihood, worsening women's already tenuous land holding rights and the food security of both them and their families.

2. **We call on and urge governments and international institutions to not only promote equitable access to productive resources but also to implement land reform that redistributes land to those who actually cultivate the land, with a specific focus on ensuring women's access to secure land.**
3. **We urge governments to support genuine agrarian, fisheries, forestry and pastureland reform, as well as recognition and protection of ancestral domains, waters and territories to serve the needs for food security and nutrition, health and well-being of women.**
4. We welcome the negotiations of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and other Natural Resources and call for a quick conclusion of the negotiations and for its effective implementation.
5. Women in the global value chain are often exploited, with low wages, long hours, working in harsh and unsafe conditions. We urge governments to ensure that companies sourcing agricultural goods and services from the global value chains comply with local and international laws including ILO Conventions and Human Rights Laws to ensure that these women get fair wages, better working conditions and enjoy full labour rights.
6. Urge governments to support measures that address women's unique needs, constraints and multiple roles in child care, nutritional well being, agricultural production, food preparation, post-harvest, processing infrastructure and effective development of local markets. These should include: providing adequate public financing and financial services; guaranteeing secure access, use and control over good quality agricultural land and other productive resources, including appropriate seeds of nutritionally dense and diverse foods; providing women-targeted agricultural research and extension services; capacity building and appropriate technology and the development of local markets and infrastructure in order to realize their potential.
7. **To further enhance women's potential in ensuring social economic development especially food and nutrition security we need to focus on education for women, removal of all discriminatory laws and practices regarding property rights, inheritance, and access to financial services and information, lack of adequate social services in rural communities, nutritional status and pervasive violence against women. National governments and the international community need to work to create a more enabling environment and a rural fund for women in order for them to actively participate in, and shape, the rural economy.**

### MODELS OF FOOD PRODUCTION – AGROECOLOGICAL APPROACH

<sup>1</sup> Women small food producers includes small holder farmers, fishers, agricultural workers, pastoralists, and indigenous women

- 1. We would like to urge governments and international institutions to provide support for an independent, ecological based food production<sup>2</sup> that not only protects human health and the environment but is also economically feasible.**
- 2. We urge governments to adopt food sovereignty policies and strategies by ensuring that women food producers can decide what to produce and how to produce it, have access to productive resources to produce quality, nutritious and safe food.**

Women have been promoting ecological approaches in agriculture, the use of indigenous seed varieties and crops grown to ensure local food security provide nutritious food for women and their families and communities, and primarily producing the right types of food, foods that contribute to dietary requirements.

In contrast, high value agriculture tends to be associated with high input and high costs (such as chemical fertilizers, genetically modified patented seeds and export-oriented cash crops). This high value agriculture creates barriers for women's access to the inputs (i.e. seeds and fertilizers) due to increased costs; in addition, certain pesticides currently in use in agriculture negatively impacts women's health (e.g. leading to chronic ill health, reproductive problems, birth defects and irreversible intergenerational impacts); and creates further problems for the health of their households due to the contamination and declined nutrient levels in the food, and poisoning of surrounding water and agro-ecosystem. Ultimately, the ill health of women often leads to an inability to work and therefore receiving lower wages and a real lack of job security.

## **NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY**

- 1. Urge Governments and International Institutions to ensure that programmes increase women's opportunities in sustainable food production that takes a nutrition sensitive approaches and that ensures quality and safe food. The achievement of food and nutrition security requires multiple stakeholders and involvement of sectors such as agriculture, education, social protection and health, working together in order to address the social determinants of malnutrition. Governments and international institutions must also support the adoption and implementation of maternity protection legislation and related measures that allow women to perform their caregiver role and protect their own health, whilst also protecting their employment and/or income security**

The nutritional needs of women and adolescent girls must be ensured since they are nurturers of the future generation given the link between maternal nutrition and birth weight.

Ensure a supportive and conducive environment for sustainable consumption and optimal feeding practices, including communication to address behavioral change, cultural taboos and adequate complementary feeding.

Gender analysis and nutrition impact assessments should be conducted to inform food and nutrition security policy(s), programmes and project designs at the early planning stages, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including appropriate nutrition and gender targets and funding.

We welcome the positive approaches in the discussion paper and decision box and urge that food and nutrition security should be in all contexts at all times.

Urge that the nutritional status of women and children must be protected and considered in all emergencies, areas of protracted crises and as well as development initiatives, through monitoring rates of malnutrition to ensure early response and where possible, take action to mitigate food crises. Consideration should also be given to the type, quality, appropriateness of food and sustainability of the emergency interventions such as food transfers and modalities of interventions (vouchers/cash/direct food, reserves) to ensure a focus on nutritional outcomes. Special consideration should be given to the nutrition of women and children affected by HIV and AIDS and anti retroviral treatment (ARVs).

We would like to also standardize the terminology to read, Food and Nutrition Security.

## **POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

- 1. We urge governments, international institutions and development partners to take affirmative action to ensure women's rights and their equal participation in all social, economic and political aspects. Women should be full active participants in development, implementation and monitoring of decision**

---

<sup>2</sup> Food production includes agriculture, fisheries, pastoralism and forestry as sectors equally contributing to food production. A system that allies agriculture, forestry and pastoralist affects best opportunities in nutrition.

**processes, governance and programmes and receive adequate training to do that.**

- 2. We urge governments to expedite policy, legal and regulatory framework protecting women against domestic, cultural and structural violence.**

There is also a need to take into consideration the different realities of women in agriculture who come from diverse sectors and backgrounds (caste, class and ethnicities) who have distinct and particular needs and concerns with food security and nutrition.

- 3. Call upon Governments to implement the Beijing Platform for Action**, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and to report back on progress made, in particular its recommendations for advancing women's food security under the Strategic Objectives on macroeconomic and development policies (A1), vocational training and continuing education (B3), health (C1), access to resources, employment, markets and trade (F2) and sustainable development (K2). States should include specific information on progress made towards improving women's food security when reporting to the United Nations on national implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The CFS could work closely with UN Women to develop a system to monitor government action, as well as develop specific targets and timetable on women's food security under Beijing, the lack of which are impeding implementation.

**We urge governments to expedite translation of their policy intentions into action in order to have the benefits reflected at the individual women's level.** Progress made need to be monitored through a set of indicators and Governments should report back on their progress.

- 4. We call on Governments to facilitate women's participation in all relevant decision processes through mandatory quotas of at least 40%, continuously leadership training and visibility.** The formation of independent groups and women's committees in mixed (male and female) organizations should be encouraged through budgetary and technical support. They should promote labor-savings devices and time efficient technologies that will free more time for women's to participate adequately to political processes.

Political decision makers and various development partners must take into account and ensure participation of indigenous and pastoralist women in all processes of food and nutrition security and take into account the DANA Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the 169 Convention of ILO.

## GENDER CROSS CUTTING ISSUE

- 1. While it is necessary to address women's food and nutrition security as a specific standalone issue in the Policy Roundtable on Gender, Food and Nutrition Security, a focus on gender equality should be integrated transversally throughout all the issues discussed at the CFS, to ensure that women's rights, priorities and specific needs are not marginalized or addressed in isolation.**

Policy Roundtable on Gender, Food Security and Nutrition should focus on issues that are specific to women, as well as on how all actions to be agreed at the CFS (to tackle food price volatility, the lack of access to and control over land and natural resources by vulnerable communities, and the need to invest in small-scale sustainable and resilient food production) can contribute to breaking down barriers to women's empowerment and achieving gender equality. Furthermore, in order for the CFS to achieve policy agreements that advance women's equal right to food, a focus on gender equality should be meaningfully integrated throughout the session, in particular in the two other policy roundtables on smallholder agriculture and food price volatility.

**Urge national and international action on food price volatility to be responsive to the specific needs and experiences of women and girls who are struggling disproportionately despite the huge contribution they make to agriculture.** The background paper and Decision Box for the Policy Roundtable on Food Price Volatility fails to address the gender dimensions of food price volatility. At the very least, the CFS should focus on ensuring that social protection schemes actually reach the most marginalized women and girls, help cushion them from rising food prices and bolster their resilience. The CFS should also look into the role food reserves can play in supporting women's smallholder farming and resilience in the context of price volatility.

There is the need for a **stronger reference to the gender and nutritional impacts of global challenges** such as those relating to trade and investment, price volatility, climate change, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and increasing commercial pressure on land. The discussion should look at structural causes of women's inequality (including patriarchy) and into the overall context of the trends in agriculture and of how women in particular are being impacted by the multiple crises. It is also crucial to address hunger, poverty and malnutrition that especially burden women's food security and health and reproductive rights of women.