

Draft Speaking Points for CFS Informal Working Group Meeting, 15 June: CFS and COVID 19

We welcome the establishment of this Informal Working Group and wish to congratulate Mr Rafael Osorio from Spain for being appointed as the Chair of this very important initiative.

We already presented a process proposal for a CFS response to the COVID-19 related food security and nutrition crisis at the last AG-Bureau meeting on 2 June. We also shared this proposal in written form, together with a CSM working paper from mid-April that outlines a rationale for a Global Policy response to the new food crisis. We thank the CFS Secretariat for having uploaded both documents to the CFS Workspace.

Let me just touch on key considerations regarding the reason and the logic behind our proposal and share with you our most recent reflections on how to translate the proposal into a practical process and feasible timeline in the context of evolving circumstances.

- 1) **The reason: why a CFS policy response to this crisis?** In the working paper on the rationale for a global policy response that we drafted in the first half of April, we assessed the upcoming food crisis, the necessity and urgency of a global response, and the need to involve all relevant actors. We also considered the special legitimacy and mandate of the CFS as the foremost multilateral food-security policy space, to respond to the crisis. Now, two months later, we see that all these elements have become even more pressing, more evident, more urgent than before.

The COVID-19 crisis, having had terrible impacts in East Asia, Middle East, Europe and North America, is now developing growing epicenters in Latin America, South Asia and Africa, with dramatic consequences for people affected by simultaneous health, economic, food and human rights crises. The peak of these crises has not been reached worldwide. The health crisis continues to expand, with worldwide daily infections becoming the highest numbers since the beginning of the pandemic, and is increasingly affecting countries without robust public health systems.

Addressing this crisis is now the number 1 priority of the world, for all of us, for communities and people's constituencies, local and national governments, economic actors, regional organizations and the whole United Nations' system. Its impact on food security and nutrition, on the right to adequate food, is now dramatically felt in many millions of households, increasing day by day. The political response to this situation must be the top priority for the CFS, as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform on food security and nutrition.

The main aim of the CFS Policy Response to Covid-19 is to provide guidance to support countries and regions in responding to the food security and nutrition crisis it has induced, guide the recovery process, and enhance the resilience and sustainability of food systems against future crises and pandemics. It is essential that the CFS respond with its full power and legitimacy to this crisis, in line with its mandate and its strategic objectives. This is not a distraction from our already planned work. There is no way we can effectively deal with the issues under examination in ongoing and future work streams without a full, collective understanding of how all aspects of food and nutrition security are affected by this crisis.

- 2) **Regarding the logic behind our proposal:** the three CFS strategic objectives for this period need to be seen in an interconnected way in response to this crisis, they mutually support each other:
- The platform function meets the immediate need to learn from CFS members and participants about impacts, responses and lessons learned;
 - the policy convergence builds on this shared knowledge and the evidence provided by the HLPE and develops policy guidance for the Members and participants for the mid- and long term.
 - The uptake function provides an important contribution to the policy response, because many previously adopted CFS policy instruments are highly relevant and must be used now to address this crisis. The uptake function could also lead to the development of a framework for monitoring the emergence of future crises, drawing on the complementary evidence contributed by CFS Members and participants, and policy guidance on how to seek to prevent them.

In a nutshell, the CFS response to the crisis should be fully in line with its three strategic objectives, based on a logical, efficient and synergetic interplay of the three functions.

3) **A practical process and feasible timeline:**

June/July:

- The HLPE 'Global Narrative' report, which will draw lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic, and the updated Covid-19 issues paper will provide a solid basis of analysis and recommendations for a policy convergence process in the CFS.
- A virtual event in the second half of July will provide the opportunity to hear from Member States about their responses to the food security and nutrition challenges posed by COVID-19 (The previous CFS virtual meeting on COVID-19 did not provide much space to hear from governments).
- A Technical Task Team with participants from the Advisory Group and other UN agencies is set up and prepares an Open meeting in September, under the guidance of the Chair of the Informal Working Group,.

September/October:

- An Open meeting of the CFS Informal Working Group in September discusses the key elements of a policy guidance document in response to Covid-19, on the basis of the HLPE narrative report and the updated issues paper on Covid-19.
- Two days of the CFS discussions in the "World Food Week" in October should generate a High-Level Engagement and Guidance debate, including through Ministers' participation from capitals, on the CFS policy response to the Covid-19 food security and nutrition crisis.

November/December:

- Four days of policy negotiations, in the format of high in-person attendance and additional virtual participation, enable finalization of a CFS policy guidance document for adoption by the CFS Plenary 47

January/February 2021:

- CFS Plenary 47 adopts the Policy guidance document and discusses and agrees on the uptake strategy.

Additional remarks for the discussion:

The CSM speakers during the meeting of the Informal Working Group should also be able to present key aspects of the proposal submitted, respond to specific questions that may arise, and amplify the proposals in different dimensions, as required in the discussion:

- The **platform function**: referring to some concrete suggestions CSM has already made in other occasions:
 - involving 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 the combined efforts of the UN Special Rapporteurs, including the rapporteurs on the Right to Food, the Rights Of Indigenous Peoples, or on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights;
 - involving speakers from the most affected constituencies, such as workers, women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, urban food insecure, small-scale food producers, from all region but specially the most affected countries.

- The **policy convergence function**: pointing to the interrelation and non-duplication that this proposal for a CFS policy response to the pandemic has with the other ongoing and future CFS workstreams:
 - The incorporation of key implications of Covid-19 crises into discussions on food systems and nutrition and agroecological and other innovation approaches will be facilitated by – and cannot substitute for - adoption of a CFS policy response to the pandemic.
 - Future policy workstreams on gender equality, youth engagement, inequalities and data will need to take into account the COVID-19 consequences. They too will benefit from, and build on, the CFS response to Covid-19.

- The **uptake function**:
 - So many CFS policy instruments need to be applied now in response to the crisis: Right to Food Guidelines, Framework for Action in protracted crises, Policy Recommendations on social protection, smallholder to markets, investing in smallholder agriculture, Land Tenure Guidelines, etc;
 - The innovative monitoring mechanism of the CFS can be enhanced by developing a framework/tool for monitoring food systems and nutrition crises that incorporates lessons learned from the COVID pandemic and acknowledges the need to guard against future crisis of this nature. This important task can build on the Global Thematic Event on the Framework for Action on Protracted Crises and the HLPE notes on critical emerging issues as well as the CFS policy response to COVID-19.
 - Promote the use, application and monitoring of the policy guidance response to Covid-19, along with other relevant CFS policy outcomes (SO3).

- **On feasibility**:
 - Possible sequence of negotiations: assuming that highly attended in-person negotiations with additional virtual participation might be possible in the last quarter of 2020, and that the CFS 47 Plenary takes place in January or February 2021, we could envisage that.

- The first week of negotiations on Food Systems and Nutrition be held in the second half of October;
 - The 3-days of negotiations on agroecological and other innovative approaches and the 4-days of negotiations of the CFS response to the pandemic be scheduled for different moments in November
 - The second week of negotiations on Food Systems and Nutrition be held in the first half of December.
 - If conditions allowed initiating such negotiations already at the end of September, the first round could already be conducted then.
 - If the CFS Plenary was only held in March 2021, negotiations could also be conducted in January 2021.
- **On roles and relations between UN agencies and CFS:**
 If we want to challenge the explicit reluctance of FAO, WFP or WHO to give a strong role to CFS in relation to COVID-19, we could emphasize:
- Roles of UN agencies in response to the crisis are different. Each of them has its own mandate to urgently respond to the crisis. In fact, all of the members and participants in the CFS are currently responding to the challenges of the crisis, be they governments, civil society, private sector, academia, or UN.
 - The CFS cannot replace these actions, it is not an implementing body. But where do we all come together to discuss lessons learned, and build policy convergence for better coordination and convergence? It's the CFS and its unique inclusiveness and mandate. This is precisely why the CFS is the best platform for elaborating the proposed policy response.
 - To be very frank here: there is no reason to see the CFS in competition with other UN agencies which are protagonists in their fields. The CFS is a facilitation space for policy convergence which seeks synergy and coherence, not competition, and therefore does not present any risk for the profile of others. On the contrary, it provides them with inclusive evidence on which all the agencies can draw to do their jobs better.