CSM Contribution to CFS Advisory Group Reporting Exercise for 2020

1) Voices from the Ground in response to Covid-19: Contributions to CFS through strengthening the linkages between the Committee and CSM constituencies in all regions

COVID-19 has pushed millions of people into hunger and malnutrition in 2020, and its unprecedented implications will further aggravate food insecurity and malnutrition in 2021. The most affected are the poorest, the most vulnerable, everywhere.

The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples’ Mechanism stands in solidarity with all those whose lives have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The heavy toll on human life continues to be profoundly shocking. Several months after the start of the pandemic, it has become evident that the emergence, spread and devastating impacts of the pandemic exacerbate existing and avertable systemic injustices and inequalities, within and between countries. In March 2020, the CSM Coordination Committee adopted the response to the pandemic as its new priority for the Mechanism, given its unprecedented consequences for the rights to health and to adequate food of people and communities from all constituencies and regions, particularly women.

CSM welcomed and supported the CFS Chair’s immediate and continued efforts to ensure that the CFS performs its function as a central forum for assessing the impact of the pandemic on food security and nutrition and for discussing effective policy responses to avert the new food crisis. Responding to the call to collect experiences issued by the first HLPE Issues paper on the impact of Covid-19, the CSM engaged in a comprehensive process of gathering experiences, analyses and proposals from the ground. CSM contributed to the CFS activities on Covid-19 in March, April, May and July, with statements, webinars and contributions to the related CFS events and discussion, see http://www.csm4cfs.org/need-policy-response-covid-19/

All CSM Coordination Committee members were asked to reach out to the constituencies and regions they facilitate, responding to three questions: 1) What impacts is COVID-19 having on food systems, food security and the right to food? 2) How are communities, solidarity movements, constituencies reacting to these impacts? 3) What proposals are emerging for public policies building more equitable and resilient food systems? The Women’s and Youth Working Groups of the CSM made dedicated contributions from the viewpoints of their constituencies.

Hundreds of inputs were gathered from communities and organizations of women, youth, agricultural and food workers, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, peasants and small-scale family farmers, urban food insecure, consumers, landless, pastoralists, from Africa, Asia, Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America, and processed in three major reports: the Youth Declaration, the Women’s report, and the Global Synthesis Report.

These three reports share a joint message which was brought to the CFS Special Event in October 2020. The Covid-19 crisis is a wake-up call for a comprehensive and radical
transformation of food systems. The Covid-19-induced food crisis requires a global and coordinated policy response. The UN Committee on World Food Security should play a leading role in developing this response, building on the unparalleled diversified wealth of experiences, perspectives and contributions of its members and participants; the significant analyses of the HLPE; and the numerous pertinent existing CFS policy outcomes.

2) CSM contributions to the CFS regular processes in 2020

CSM contributed as usual to all CFS workstreams and activities as well as the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group:

- **Workstream on Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition**: The CSM Working Group on Food Systems and Nutrition (226 members) participated in and contributed to CFS OEWG Meetings in January, April and May, Formal Negotiations in September and December and informal Friends of the Chair meetings in October and November, and including through many written contributions throughout the year, as documented in detail here: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/nutrition/](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/nutrition/)

- **Workstream on agroecological and other innovative approaches**: The CSM Working Group on Agroecology (143 members) participated in and contributed to all CFS OEWG Meetings, informal consultations and through written contributions to the CFS process, as documented in detail here: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/agroecology/](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/agroecology/)

- **Gender equality and women’s empowerment**: The CSM Women’s Working Group (146 members) participated in and contributed to the development of the workplan and Terms of Reference of the CFS Gender Equality and women’s empowerment process through engagement with the Bureau and Advisory Group and the OEWG Meetings in fall 2020. In addition, the Working Group produced the Women’s Report on Covid-19 which was presented to the CFS Special Event in October. More detailed information can be found here: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/women/](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/women/)

- **Contributions to Youth Workstream**: In 2020, the CSM Youth Working group developed their [comment on the HLPE Youth Report Scope e-consultation](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/youth/) and produced the [Youth Declaration on Covid-19](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/youth/) which they presented to the CFS Special Event in October. More details can be found here: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/youth/](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/youth/)

- **Contributions to HLPE Global Narrative Report**: The CSM WG on Global Food Governance was responsible for developing the [CSM Written contributions to the zero draft consultation](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/youth/) on the HLPE Global Narrative Report and coordinated the CSM [Global Synthesis Report](http://www.csm4cfs.org/working-groups/youth/) on Covid-19 which was presented to the CFS Special Event in October.

- **Contributions to CFS Bureau and Advisory Group Meetings**: The CSM Advisory Group participated in and contributed to all CFS Bureau and Advisory Group meetings in 2020, see for the detailed contributions the dedicated page: [http://www.csm4cfs.org/csm-contributions-to-the-cfs-agbureau-meeting/](http://www.csm4cfs.org/csm-contributions-to-the-cfs-agbureau-meeting/)
3) Use, application, and dissemination of CFS outcomes

In preparation for the CFS 47 Global Thematic Event on the Framework for Action in Protracted Crises, the CSM Working Group on Monitoring and Protracted Crises produced the CSM Report on Monitoring the use and application of the CFS Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises which was then presented to CFS 47 in February 2021.

This report aims to complement the CFS-led assessment of the implementation of the FFA by providing reflections from civil society organisations on: a) the implementation of and alignment with the FFA (or lack thereof) in policy decisions and actions taken in their home countries experiencing protracted crises; b) key barriers and challenges to use and implementation of the FFA; c) CSO experiences in advocating for the implementation of the FFA; d) coherence between the FFA and pre-existing (binding and non-binding) obligations and commitments of states, to help guide advocacy for the FFA and monitor its implementation; e) recommendations for the creation of a monitoring tool for the FFA; f) recommendations to CFS and its members and participants, along with other actors, in advancing the use of the FFA; g) resources that may help advance the implementation of the FFA.

4) Reflection about how the use and application of CFS policy instruments is linked to its capacity to listen to the voices from the ground

As the CFS Chair recalled during the recent Plenary, the beauty of CFS is rooted in its inclusiveness. Particularly of the most vulnerable, who are also those who feed the world. He also noted that the real work on CFS policy outcomes starts once they are adopted. The use, application, and monitoring of CFS policy outcomes is absolutely critical to the legitimacy of the CFS. This is especially true for our 11 constituencies and communities in all regions, for whom global forums are not a natural habitat.

There would be no motivation for peasants, fisherfolk, agricultural workers, pastoralists, urban food insecure, consumers, Indigenous Peoples, landless, women and youth to take the time necessary and to overcome the many barriers of language, time zone and format to engage in the CFS negotiations if they don’t produce global norms that help them to defend their rights, their livelihoods, their territories, on the ground.

This is exactly why they participated so strongly in the reform of the CFS, following 2007-2008 food crisis, and helped to give it the inclusive, human rights-based form that distinguishes it among global fora, recognizing the autonomy and right to self-organization of civil society. The external CFS evaluation 2017 noted that CSM constituencies are in the front line of use and application of CFS outcomes in the field–those outcomes that they judge to be useful. This finding has been corroborated by the experience of the Tenure Guidelines (VGGT)–which has been blessed by a legitimate process leading to quality content that supports communities’ defense of their territories, excellent support by the RBAs, adequate funding, and the efforts made by CSM movements to transform the dry UN language into tools that people can use to support themselves in their struggles on the grassroots level. The external evaluation finding has further been confirmed by all of the global monitoring exercises the CFS has held: on the Tenure Guidelines, the Right to Food Guidelines or the CFS recommendations supporting smallholder producers.
However, the gap between the close of a negotiation with positive policy outcomes and the use and uptake at national and regional levels remains significant. In addition, the normative guidance provided by the CFS—in general—contrasts with what is existing on the ground today. The dominant paradigm and powerful economic interests promote industrial modes of food production and agri-business led value chains which are detrimental to smallholders’ livelihoods and their rights.

Throughout the last year, the CFS Special event in October 2020 and now in the CFS 47 Plenary, delegation after delegation spoke to the extreme urgency of responding to the devastating impacts of Covid19 on food security and nutrition and of turning this challenge into an opportunity to correct the deficiencies of food systems that are exacerbating inequalities within and among countries. Covid 19 has highlighted the extreme relevance of many CFS policy outputs to addressing both the immediate impacts of the pandemic and contributing to necessary radical transformation of our food systems.

If the CFS truly wishes to advance the use and application of its policy outcomes, it is necessary to strengthen the linkages to pressing realities in affected constituencies and territories. Some actors in the CFS have closed their eyes and ears to the voices from the ground. The most recent and problematic case has been the experience of the last months of negotiations of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition.

If the CFS, as a collective of members and participants, does not pay special attention to the voices who represent the most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, and who are at the same time the most important food producers and providers to humanity, it will not only lose its beauty, it will fail its mission, including the effective use and application of its outcomes. Such a CFS risks losing its relevance, its unique legitimacy, its beating heart, its appeal for constituencies that have faced and fought structural discrimination for generations. A CFS that ignores the people runs the risk of being ignored by the people.

There is an alternative, but only if there is a change in attitude towards the urgent realities of millions who face hunger and malnutrition, death and extreme poverty now; the multiple and growing crises that require bold steps of transformation; and the consciousness that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”, upholding human rights as the basis of the UN, including the CFS.