

## Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM)

Plenary Statement @CFS47 | 11 February 2021

**“Impacts of CFS Policy Products on Country-level Food Security and Nutrition and COVID Recovery”.**

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### Impacts of CFS and its policy outcomes

Nora McKeon, CSM, a proud veteran of the CFS reform and subsequent policy convergence initiatives.

Thanks to our Chair for recalling that the beauty of CFS is rooted in its inclusiveness. Particularly of the most vulnerable, who are also those who feed the world.

Yesterday he 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, I repeat, that they judge to be useful. This finding has been corroborated by the experience of the Tenure Guidelines of 2012 – 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, whose importance Ambassador Yaya emphasized. The external evaluation finding has further been corroborated by all of the global monitoring exercises the CFS has held: on the voluntary guidelines on applying the right to adequate food at national level, the recommendations supporting smallholder producers and, again, the FFA in this CFS Plenary. The CSM is always there when the CFS negotiates, and it is on the front line of implementation when the results are what we expect from this unique forum.

In 2017 the CSM had the pleasure of organizing a major event on 'Bringing Rome Home' with the support of Ambassador Amira Gornass, then Chair of the CFS, whose dedication to promoting the use and application of CFS outcomes was legendary. We are happy to take this occasion to pay tribute to her efforts. 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 this plenary, delegation after delegation has spoken to the extreme urgency of responding to the devastating impacts of Covid 19 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. Recommendations from 'Connecting Smallholders to Markets' are emblematic since they reveal that 80% of

food consumed in the world never gets near a global value chain but transits through local and domestic markets which are not adequately supported by policy decision-makers since official data collection ignores them. Covid 19 revealed the fragility of international supply chains and industrial processing that is dependent on 'essential but expendable' workers, among those most affected by the pandemic. On the contrary, local markets and food systems, embedded in territories, proved to be resilient and innovative and helped to make food available to those most in need and to keep local economies in developing countries moving. The many other CFS policy outcomes relevant to addressing Covid 19 include those on social protection, price volatility, water and – of course – the right to food.

The voices of African countries were particularly strong in the session on MYPOW, in which one government representative stated that it would be unthinkable for the CFS to close the discussion without adding to its work plan reference to the most urgent and critical food security issue that governments and people are facing today. As a result of this determination a bullet point was added to the decision box that requests the CFS for 'continued deliberation and due attention to the impacts of covid 19 on food systems, agriculture and nutrition in all stages of the implementation of the approved MYPOW workstreams'. We propose to draw on the outcomes of the many MYPOW workstreams of the past to feed the CFS' deliberation today by packaging them – along with reports from HLPE, RBAs and others, and the experience of CFS members and participants – to make them more accessible and applicable for national governments and help them address both the immediate emergencies and the structural changes that have to be made. We also intend to propose improvements in our monitoring mechanisms, drawing on the unique diversity of evidence that the CFS affords, that can help us adequately take into account the interconnected dimensions of the food crisis as documented in the HLPE issues note and the CSM synthesis report on Covid 19. The CFS' use and application and monitoring should consider how to shift from working IN a crisis to working ON it, as stated in the FFA.

In closing, let me emphasize that in order to use and apply the policy outcomes into which we have invested so much energy and passion, we have to ensure that they are relevant, ambitious and add value to previous discussions. During the just closed negotiations on Voluntary Guidelines on FS&N time and again we witnessed a refusal to incorporate already adopted and agreed CFS language from past negotiations, watering down past consensus to advance private over public interests. To the point that yesterday the CFS had its knuckles rapped on by prestigious UN bodies like the WHO and the UN High Commission of HR. This was a shameful and painful moment.

So – let us defend, use, apply and build on the excellent policy outcomes of the CFS – those that speak to the interests of the people and the planet - to address Covid19 and make the radical transformations needed for our food systems to become equitable, sustainable and resilient today and tomorrow.