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CFS 54 Side Events: process and criteria for selection

As in previous Plenary sessions, CFS 54 will host a programme of side events designed to provide space for diverse actors to showcase their work and to foster dialogue on emerging issues across the global food security and nutrition landscape. Side events contribute to the overall impact of CFS by creating spaces for multi-stakeholder exchange and deepening engagement in CFS policy processes.

The process and criteria for the organization and selection of side events build on established CFS practice and previously agreed procedural refinements, including earlier planning and clearer thematic guidance.

Based on guidance from the Bureau and Advisory Group, greater emphasis will be placed on ensuring a manageable number of parallel events, strengthening alignment with plenary themes, and promoting enhanced regional balance across the side event programme. At the same time, while the merging of proposals will remain a possible tool to facilitate inclusive participation on shared topics, its use will be approached more selectively.

Considering CFS 54 tentative agenda, the final number of CFS 54 Side events shall be assessed against the submitted applications and considerations related to ensuring adequate attendance to all side events in the most equitable manner.

As a consequence, the selection process is expected to be more selective, with greater emphasis placed on thematic relevance, coherence, and regional balance across the programme as a whole.

To complement this approach and support evidence-informed adjustments in future sessions, the Secretariat will pilot, for CFS 54, a simple participant feedback mechanism (i.e. online survey), to inform continuous improvement of side event design and delivery.

1. **Selection process**

Thematic focus: CFS side event proposals must take into consideration as priority the topics on the CFS 54 agenda and the MYPoW 2024-2027, and the uptake of CFS policy products, with the purpose of contributing to the ongoing discussions, sharing relevant knowledge and experiences.

Side events may also feature the launch of major studies or reports related to the CFS mandate and vision, or contribute to the ongoing efforts aimed at coordinating global policy responses to the food crisis while advancing long-term food system transformation.

Criteria and conditions for selection: The criteria for shortlisting and selecting CFS 54 side events are as follows:

- Consistency with the vision and mandate of the CFS, aligning with the main topics and issues in the CFS 54 Plenary Agenda, in the current Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPoW) 2024-2027or in policy products relevant to the SDGs and 2030 Agenda.

- Reflecting the CFS multi-stakeholder model, including a variety of constituencies, and considering issues such as gender parity among speakers, diverse geographic representation and youth presence.
- Promoting regional representation.
- Maximizing interactivity, with at least 30%-50% of the total time allocated for audience interaction. A maximum of four speakers, including co-chairs, is recommended.
- Applications should be kept concise and avoid redundancy.
- If multiple side event applications are received on similar or complementary topics, organizers may be invited to merge their proposals. While merging is optional, it may increase the likelihood of selection.
- While interpretation in the official languages of the UN system is not mandatory and involves a fixed cost to be charged by FAO and borne by the side event organizers, its use may have a positive impact on the final selection of applications.
- Organizers are responsible for promoting their side event, although a basic communications package and support for dissemination through CFS channels will be provided.
- Organizers are encouraged to arrange for catering services, as previous years have shown that offering a small snack or coffee increases participation.
- Organizers must submit a 500-word summary of their side event outcomes and key observations within one month of CFS 54, for posting on the CFS 54 Side Event website.
- In cases where side event requests exceed available slots, final decisions will be taken by the CFS Chairperson..

2. Timetable

CFS 54 side events will take place during the Plenary week, from Tuesday to Friday, within two main time slots:

- Morning, from 08:30 to 09:45; and
- Afternoon, from 13:30 to 14:45.
- Additional slots may be considered on Friday.

An additional time slot may be considered if the CFS 54 agenda allows and provided that it does not interfere with Plenary discussions.

3. Participation and access modalities

CFS has traditionally encouraged inclusive participation in side events, including by individuals not formally registered for the Plenary; however, both in-person and virtual participation are subject to FAO security requirements, which require organizers to clear and validate participants. While this has created increasing operational challenges in recent sessions, CFS will continue to support access through hybrid modalities, including Zoom webinars and, subject to technical feasibility and organizers' consent, post-event publication of selected recordings on the CFS YouTube channel. Early registration for in-person participation will be encouraged for external participants not registered for the CFS Plenary Session.

4. Timeline

- Call for CFS 54 Side Events: application period from **15 March to 1 May 2026**
- Selection of side events: complete applications received by the deadline will be reviewed, and selections made by the CFS Chairperson in consultation with the Secretariat
- Communication of results: **early July 2026**.