



# COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

**Forty-fifth Session**  
***"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"***

**Rome, Italy, 15-19 October 2018**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE CFS  
VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION**

## I. CFS STRATEGY ON NUTRITION

1. In 2016 the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) adopted a strategy concerning its engagement in advancing nutrition<sup>1</sup>. CFS recognizes the need for a holistic, interdisciplinary and inclusive approach to nutrition that bridges all relevant sectors – in particular the food, agriculture and health sectors – in line with the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.
2. The vision for CFS work in advancing nutrition is *"a world free from malnutrition in all its forms, where all people at all stages of life and at all times have access to adequate food and enjoy diversified, balanced and healthy diets for an active and healthy life"*.
3. The focus of the strategy is on malnutrition in all its forms, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, its multidimensional causes and consequences. Malnutrition in one or several forms affects every country and requires integrated approaches that address a multiplicity of burdens and that target their causes across the entire food system.
4. The strategy indicates that CFS work is expected to identify policy changes needed for reshaping food systems to improve nutrition and enable healthy diets. The purpose is to address the key causes of vulnerability to all forms of malnutrition in different types of food systems in both rural and urban areas with special attention to the poorest and the most nutritionally vulnerable.
5. At its 44th Session in October 2017 CFS "mandated the Open Ended Working Group on Nutrition, in the context of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), to develop as per the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) 2018-19, using voluntary resources and re-prioritizing

<sup>1</sup> CFS 2016/43/9 - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mr186e.pdf>

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;  
an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.  
Other documents can be consulted at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)*



existing ones, terms of reference for the policy convergence process leading to voluntary guidelines for food systems and nutrition for submission to Plenary in CFS 45. These would be informed by the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) Report on Nutrition and Food Systems and benefit from the outcomes of the CFS 2016-2017 intersessional activities and of nutrition-related discussions held at CFS 44<sup>2</sup>.

6. CFS Plenary also “recommended that subsequent policy convergence in CFS on nutrition is supported by the scientific evidence provided in the HLPE report”<sup>3</sup>.

## II. CFS POLICY CONVERGENCE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE

7. The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition are intended to be a reference document that provides guidance mainly to governments, as well as to their partners and other stakeholders, on appropriate policies, investments and institutional arrangements needed to address the key causes of malnutrition in all its forms for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2.

8. The objective is to present a set of guidelines that contribute to improving food systems and make them more sustainable to ensure that the diets needed for optimal nutrition are available, affordable, acceptable, safe and of adequate quantity and quality which conform with the beliefs, culture and tradition of individuals<sup>4</sup>.

9. The Voluntary Guidelines will follow a comprehensive and systemic approach with a view to countering the existing policy fragmentation between all relevant sectors with special emphasis on the fragmentation between the food, agriculture and health sectors, while also addressing livelihood and sustainability challenges. Policies that are intended to promote healthy diets should also aim to enhance the livelihoods of the most vulnerable segments of the population and ensure the sustainability of food production as well as the protection of biodiversity<sup>5</sup>.

10. The policy recommendations will aim to contribute to making food systems nutrition-sensitive and promoting secure access to safe, diverse and high-quality diets for everyone. In this regard, it is key to explore possible pathways and directions towards more sustainable food systems and identify and engage possible areas where governments and other actors can intervene with a view to improving diets and nutrition outcomes.

11. The Voluntary Guidelines are intended to present a set of recommendations which are global in scope and will provide guidance to policy makers and relevant stakeholders for the design of context-specific policies and programmes. In addition, it is of paramount relevance to offer policy-makers at national and subnational levels tools to analyze the food systems in which they operate. This exercise will be developed taking in due consideration country diversities, the different typologies of food systems as well as the many endogenous and exogenous drivers impacting their functionality.

12. The CFS work will also ensure adequate focus on the most vulnerable to malnutrition in all its forms that typically include those with increased nutrient requirements and those who have less control over their choice of diet. This implies particular attention to young and school aged children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, “indigenous peoples and local

---

<sup>2</sup> CFS 44 Final Report, paragraph 19.c - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mv030e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> CFS 44 Final Report, paragraph 15.b - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mv030e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> FAO/WHO. 2014. ICN 2, Rome Declaration on Nutrition. Paragraph 5.b. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Attention will be paid to recommendations 8-16 on sustainable food systems promoting healthy diets of the ICN2 Framework for Action. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>

communities and smallholders”<sup>6</sup> and rural and urban poor also in consideration of the different types of food systems they live in.

13. Another priority is “the promotion of gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment respecting their rights”<sup>7</sup> and considering the importance to “create the conditions for women’s strong engagement in shaping food systems that can ensure improved nutrition”<sup>8</sup> as a cross-cutting issue.

14. The Voluntary Guidelines are expected to provide guidance to help countries operationalize the recommendations of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) under the umbrella of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. Particular attention will be paid to the identification of policies and interventions that contribute to the achievement of the six Global Nutrition Targets (2025) endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2012 and the diet-related non-communicable disease targets.

### III. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

16. In 2016, 815 million people are still undernourished, 155 million children under five years of age remain stunted, and 52 million are wasted. In addition, overweight and obesity are rising quickly and affect all countries. Worldwide obesity has more than doubled since 1980 with a staggering 1.9 billion adults who are overweight, of which 600 million are obese. The latter represents a key risk factor related to the rise of diet-related non-communicable diseases. An estimated 41 million children under five were overweight, a quarter living in Africa and almost half in Asia. Approximately 2 billion people has some type of micronutrient deficiency. Unhealthy diets are now one of the top risk factors globally for death and disability<sup>9</sup>.

17. In order to address and revert this negative trend, it is key to adopt a holistic approach that looks at the multidimensional causes of malnutrition, including the lack of stable access to healthy, balanced, diversified and safe diets and safe drinking water, inadequate infant and young child caring and feeding practices, poor sanitation and hygiene, insufficient access to education and health services, income poverty, poor agricultural practices, inequalities due to gender and other factors in access to resources, imbalanced power relations, and limited economic opportunities. This would strengthen the coherence between sectoral policies and programmes and the contribution of food systems, bearing in mind the importance of improving their economic, social and environmental sustainability. Science-based data and evidence on environmental and social externalities of various food systems will be considered.

18. “Food systems gather all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes”<sup>10</sup>. In fact, they are shaped and moved by the people and institutions that initiate or inhibit

---

<sup>6</sup> CFS. 2017. Policy recommendations on Sustainable Forestry for Food Security and Nutrition”. <http://www.fao.org/3/I8877EN/i8877en.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem

<sup>8</sup> CFS 44 Final Report, paragraph 18.d - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mv030e.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2017. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017. Building resilience for peace and food security. Rome, FAO. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7695e.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> HLPE. 2014. Food Losses and Waste in the context of Sustainable Food Systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3901e.pdf>

changes in food systems. The HLPE identified three broad categories of food systems, namely traditional, mixed and modern food systems<sup>11</sup>.

19. In line with the HLPE report on Nutrition and Food Systems, three constituent elements of food systems have been identified to serve as policy entry points for nutrition: food supply chains, food environments and consumer behaviour.

20. **Food supply chains** encompass all the activities that move from production to consumption, including production, storage, distribution, processing, packaging, retailing and marketing. The decisions made by the actors at any stage of the chain have implications for the other stages. Activities along the food supply chains can increase the nutritional value of food by increasing availability and access to macronutrients and micronutrients or by reducing the levels of substances associated with diet-related non-communicable diseases. Interventions across food supply chains can improve the availability, affordability, accessibility and acceptability of nutritious food.

21. **Food environments** consist of the physical, economic and policy and socio-cultural conditions that shape people's dietary choices and nutritional status. It is in the food environments where consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food. They consist of food entry points, namely the physical spaces where food is made available and accessible and the infrastructures that allow access to these spaces; the affordability and price of foods; the advertising, marketing, and positioning of foods; and the quality and safety of foods as well as branding and labeling. Food environments are the interface between food supply and demand, a space of convergence where all actors involved in food systems can bring together transformative changes towards greater availability and affordability of nutritious food and ultimately healthier food consumption for improved diets and nutrition.

22. **Consumer behaviour** reflects the choices made by consumers on what food to acquire, store, prepare and eat, and on the allocation of food within the household. Consumer behaviour is influenced by personal preferences determined by taste, convenience, nutrition knowledge, values, traditions, culture and beliefs. However, consumer behaviour is also shaped by the existing food supply chains and food environments so that collective changes in consumer behaviour can open pathways to more sustainable food systems that enhance food security and nutrition and health.

23. Different drivers of change that impact and are impacted by the functioning of food systems and their ability to deliver healthy diets are important elements to contextualize the recommendations provided in the guidelines. They will be considered in the policy convergence process. The five main categories and related drivers that were identified in the HLPE report will be taken into account, namely: biophysical and environmental (natural resource and ecosystem services, climate change); innovation, technology and infrastructure; political and economic (leadership, globalization, foreign investment, trade, food policies, land tenure, food prices and volatility, conflicts and humanitarian crises); socio-cultural (culture, religion, rituals, social traditions and women's empowerment); and demographic drivers (population growth, changing age distribution, urbanization, migration and forced displacement). The impact of these drivers depends on the type of food systems, of actors involved, and of policies and interventions that are designed.

#### **IV. PROPOSED SCOPE OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION**

24. The following section includes the proposed scope of areas to be addressed in the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition. In line with the conceptual framework introduced in the HLPE report, the Voluntary Guidelines will use the three constituent elements of food systems – food

---

<sup>11</sup> HLPE. 2017. Nutrition and Food Systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7846e.pdf>

supply chains, food environments, and consumer behaviour – as policy entry points for food system transformation towards the CFS vision on nutrition<sup>12</sup>.

25. The Voluntary Guidelines, for each of the three constituent elements of food systems, will consider the different typologies of food systems, with particular attention to those defined by the HLPE. This will be done taking into account the challenges and opportunities that specific food systems face along with the actors engaged, and the related power dynamics, as well as multidimensional gender analyses, with a view to assisting policy-makers in the design of policies and interventions which are adapted to a given context.

26. The recommendations are expected to build upon and complement related guidance previously provided in other CFS policy guidelines and recommendations and consider the work and mandate of other relevant international bodies.

27. A working document will be prepared to present references to relevant international guidance that already exists in the field of food systems and nutrition, and with particular attention to the thematic areas addressed in this section. This will support the preparation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

## **A. Food supply chains**

### Production systems

28. Agriculture and food production systems affect food availability, accessibility and affordability as well as dietary quality and diversity. The impact of agriculture and food production systems on nutrition should be considered in related with the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

### Storage and distribution

29. Storage and distribution have an impact on diets and health. Lack of appropriate facilities create many opportunities for contamination and food quality losses and waste while proper storage and distribution contribute to making nutritious food available and accessible to a wider number of consumers.

### Processing and packaging

30. Food processing and packaging contribute to preventing food quantity and quality losses and waste and to extending shelf-life while they may influence the degree to which nutrients and other substances/agents enter or exit the supply chain.

### Retail and markets

31. Interactions in retail and markets shape the food systems, and the food environment in which consumers make purchasing decisions, influencing consumer behaviour and food consumption patterns.

## **B. Food environments**

### Availability and physical access (proximity)

32. Unfavorable climatic, geographic and seasonality-related conditions, particularly with low density of food entry points or limited access to foods for healthy diets, are an important factor increasing the risk of malnutrition. Furthermore, lack of appropriate infrastructure, food losses and waste, all forms of conflict and humanitarian crises, migration and forced displacement can limit

---

<sup>12</sup> The policy recommendations that will be elaborated within the context of CFS will take into consideration the related set of policy and programme options that were recommended in the ICN 2 Framework for Action. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>

access to and distribution of diversified food, especially fresh and other perishable foods, with negative consequences on what can be purchased and consumed.

#### Economic access (affordability)

33. For several segments of the population, affording adequate diversity of nutrient-rich foods represents a significant challenge.

#### Promotion, advertising and information

34. Promotion, advertising and information have a direct influence on consumer preferences, purchasing behaviour, consumption patterns, and the nutrition knowledge of the population.

#### Food quality and safety

35. Food quality and safety influence consumer health and preferences. Insufficient efforts in promoting food quality and safety negatively influence consumption patterns through changes either in consumer preferences or in food affordability.

### **C. Consumer behaviour**

#### Food and nutrition education

36. Food and nutrition education and information, including on food origin, in the context of food systems is intended to stimulate critical analysis and practical skills for food choices leading to healthy diets.

#### Food acceptability

37. Acceptability can be influenced by the promotion of specific foods and diets as well as by consumer preferences.

#### Social norms, values and traditions

38. Food affordability, convenience and desirability are influenced not only by the quality of and the marketing around food but also by the social norms and the cultural values associated with food.

## **V. TYPE OF INSTRUMENT**

39. The Voluntary Guidelines will be voluntary and non-binding and should be interpreted and applied consistent with existing obligations under national and international law, and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments. These guidelines are to be interpreted and applied in accordance with national legal systems and their institutions. They should be endorsed by CFS.

40. Notwithstanding the voluntary nature of CFS products, the dissemination, use and application by all stakeholders of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition will be encouraged at all levels, as appropriate, to support to countries in achieving nutrition objectives in the context of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

41. Relevant UN organizations may support, as appropriate, the national efforts in the dissemination, use and application of the Voluntary Guidelines.

42. Within the framework of the CFS monitoring mechanism, the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition will include guidance on the evaluation of their use and application.

43. The Voluntary Guidelines are complementary to and support national, regional and international initiatives which aim at addressing all forms of malnutrition by ensuring that the diets needed for optimal nutrition are available, affordable, acceptable, safe and of adequate quantity and

quality, based on sustainable and diverse production. In particular, CFS guidance should build on and integrate existing instruments adopted on these topics within the context of the UN system.

## **VI. INTENDED USERS OF GUIDELINES**

44. The Voluntary Guidelines speak to all stakeholders that are involved in addressing, or are affected by, malnutrition in all its forms. The primary aim is to provide concrete instruments to build policy coherence between and across public sector policies at national level as well as between international and national public policies. They should therefore primarily address governments at all levels to help design public policies, although they will be used by all relevant actors in policy discussions and policy implementation processes. These stakeholders are:

- a) Governmental actors, including relevant ministries and national, sub-national, local institutions;
- b) Intergovernmental and regional organizations, including the specialized agencies of the UN;
- c) Civil society organizations;
- d) Private sector;
- e) Research organizations and universities;
- f) Development agencies, including international financial institutions;
- g) Philanthropic foundations.

## **VII. PROPOSED PROCESS, TENTATIVE TIMEFRAME AND BUDGET ESTIMATE**

45. The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition will result from an inclusive consultative process open to all relevant and interested stakeholders. In addition to Member States, adequate participation should be ensured of participants from UN agencies and bodies with a specific mandate in the field of food security and nutrition, civil society and non-governmental organizations, international agricultural research institutions, international and regional financial institutions, private sector associations and philanthropic foundations.

46. The CFS Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Nutrition will provide the guidance for the consultation process which will be facilitated and implemented by the CFS Secretariat, which is tasked with drafting the different versions of the guidelines, with the assistance of the Technical Task Team on Nutrition. Regular updates on the status of the consultation process will be provided to the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group.

47. OEWG meetings will be held regularly to provide inputs to advance the preparation of the guidelines. Regional consultations<sup>13</sup> are planned to get inputs, comments and suggestions on how to best align the guidelines with regional and national priorities and needs. Additional opportunities, such as e-consultations and calls for written inputs, will be given to interested stakeholders to contribute to this process. Intersessional events could take place to inform the ongoing CFS policy convergence process.

48. The various versions of the guidelines at the different stages of the process (Zero Draft, Draft One and Final Version for negotiation) will be made available well in advance in the six official UN

---

<sup>13</sup> Depending on the availability of funding.

languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Russian). Interpretation in those languages will be provided during the negotiation of the final version of the Voluntary Guidelines.

49. Adequate financial and human resources should be secured in advance to enable the policy convergence process<sup>14</sup>.

50. The following tentative schedule and budget are proposed:

<b>Task</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
Terms of Reference for Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition endorsed at CFS 45	October 2018
OEWG meeting to discuss preliminary work on the Zero Draft	February/March 2019
OEWG meeting to discuss the Zero Draft	May/June 2019
Regional multistakeholder consultations and e-consultations on the Zero Draft	June-October 2019
Update on the status of the process at CFS 46 Plenary	October 2019
OEWG meeting to discuss Draft One	December 2019
Negotiation of final version	March/July 2020
Guidelines submitted to CFS 47 Plenary for endorsement	October 2020

#### Budget estimate (USD)

	Planned costs 2019	Planned costs 2020	Total Costs
CFS Staff and technical resources*	225,000	225,000	<b>450,000</b>
Translation of background documents**	25,000	25,000	<b>50,000</b>
Translation/interpretation negotiation process***	0	80,000	<b>80,000</b>
E-consultation****	30,000	0	<b>30,000</b>
Regional multistakeholder consultations*****	500,000	0	<b>500,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<i>780,000</i>	<i>330,000</i>	<b>1,110,000</b>

<sup>14</sup> Creative means to decrease the costs of regional consultations will be explored by CFS stakeholders, if needed.

\* Staff time (50% and 70% respectively of 2 officers); \*\*Translation of a document of approximately 10,000 words; \*\*\*Interpretation of one-week negotiation; \*\*\*\* 3 consultations through the FSN Forum; \*\*\*\*\* Travel to five regional consultations and interpretation