

# Ending hunger and achieving food security for all

## HLPF Consultation: Responses to Guiding Questions by Martin Wolpold-Bosien

### 1. *Which areas and socio-economic groups are especially vulnerable to poor nutrition and food insecurity and what are ways to ensure that food systems transformations leave no one behind?*

The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism<sup>1</sup> for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is an open space that facilitates the participation of hundreds of organizations to the reformed CFS. Our participating organizations are from 11 global constituencies: **smallholder and family farmers, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, pastoralists, fisherfolks, agricultural and food workers, landless, consumers, urban food insecure, and NGOs.**

Worldwide, most people affected by food insecurity and malnutrition are part of these constituencies, while at the same time it is broadly acknowledged that small-scale food producers are the most important contributors to food security and nutrition worldwide.

Last year, when the SOFI Report 2019 was published, its results were shocking: Hunger continued to be on the rise, with almost as many people undernourished as ten years ago, when the CFS was reformed. Since 2015, the number of people going hungry is growing. It highlighted the prevailing and increasing inequalities and marginalization as a major cause for food insecurity. If nothing happens, this will only get worse for the years to come. The 2019 IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land showed that land is under increasing pressure, and the current food system is a key driver of the climate crisis, severely impacting food security and nutrition, generating an unprecedented loss of biodiversity. The CSM Youth asks: What will be left for us as youth and future generations?

What are ways to ensure that food transformations leave no one behind? Once you ask this question to those social groups who are currently and traditionally left behind, they start speaking about their struggles for their rights and livelihoods, their battles against the structural barriers: discrimination, exclusion, land and natural resource-grabbing, market concentration, widening inequalities, gender discrimination and violence against women and girls, and increasing criminalization of human rights and environmental defenders.

The COVID-19-induced multiple crises are currently both highlighting and exacerbating the effects of these structural causes of poverty, hunger and malnutrition. There is increasing evidence that the most affected by this ongoing health, food and economic crises are the very same people who have been the most at risk before: workers, women, refugees, displaced, migrants, urban food insecure, smallholders, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and especially the elderly in each of these groups.

With COVID-19, the need for a radical transformation of food systems is even more urgent than before. The best way to ensure that transformations are not leaving people behind is to listen to the experiences, analyses and proposals of the organizations of the constituencies most affected and ensure their effective inclusion and participation into the political deliberation and governance spaces on all levels, to provide coordinated, comprehensive and coherent policy responses based on human rights.

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<sup>1</sup> The CSM is the largest global platform of civil society and Indigenous Peoples' organizations working on food security and nutrition and relates only to CFS. Participating organizations in the CSM have more than 380 million affiliated members from all constituencies and regions. Many of our organizations are also engaged through other platforms with different UN bodies, including FAO, IFAD, WFP or UN bodies based in New York, Nairobi, Geneva or Bonn.

2. ***What fundamental changes are needed*** to make our food systems an engine for inclusive growth and contribute to accelerating progress towards ending hunger and achieving food security for all in the Decade of Action?
- a) *How could they be designed and implemented to generate synergies and strengthen existing ones with other Goals and Targets?*
  - b) *What are some of the possible trade-offs from these changes and how can they be mitigated?*

The constituencies of the smallholder and family farmers, Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, pastoralists, fisherfolks, agricultural and food workers, landless, consumers, urban food insecure and NGOs have developed their visions and positions for the fundamental changes needed during the past decades, including during the past 11 years in the reformed CFS.

Even before Covid-19 and its unprecedented consequences, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were failing to adopt the actions and policies to enable their realization, especially for the most marginalized Peoples and sectors of society. This is especially evident in the case of SDG2 which is fundamental for the achievement of all the other goals. Given this situation, acceleration along the current path is not the right answer – we need to change track. If a train is going the wrong way, speeding up is no solution.

The overall demand is that global and national policies with direct and indirect impact on food security and nutrition must take a new direction. These policies need to be people-centered, human rights based, ensure sustainable ecosystems and lead to a profound agroecological transformation of food systems toward food sovereignty, climate justice, cultural diversity and the full realization of the right to adequate food for all.

In this context, CSM has stressed that food systems serve and support multiple public objectives within all domains of sustainable development, from livelihoods to health, and from socio-cultural to ecological aspects. The understanding of the challenge of malnutrition in all its forms requires a holistic and multidisciplinary analysis; one that recognizes the need for justice, the appreciation for diversity and the values of human dignity, equity, sustainability and sovereignty.

The current prevalent hegemonic food system based on agro-industrial production models are not only unable to respond to the existing malnutrition crisis but have actually led to various forms of malnutrition, to less diverse and poorer quality diets, as well as to further environmental destruction, climate crisis and biodiversity loss. The negative health impacts and diseases caused by the various forms of malnutrition, coupled with the impacts of environmental contamination and imposed development, have contributed to vulnerabilities for Indigenous Peoples and marginalized communities in all regions.

The HLPE Report on "Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems" (2019) provides evidence on the impacts of different models of production, providing a basis on which to assess the steps that are imperative for a real transformation of food systems.

Agroecology as a science, practice and movement offers solutions available to address the multiple crises we are facing. It presents us with a holistic vision that embeds agronomic practices, ecological principles, social, economic, cultural and human rights dimensions. Agroecology allows small-scale producers a dignified life, producing affordable food for healthy and sustainable diets. It eliminates dependence on costly inputs and adopts practices which regenerate seeds and soils while mitigating and adapting to the effects of the climate crisis.

The recognition, realization and protection of women's human rights, through the implementation of international legal instruments, is a key element in the deconstruction of gender-blind agricultural policies, asymmetric power relations and discriminatory division of labor. Agroecology promotes

women as equal subjects in decision-making process at all levels and builds upon their autonomy, knowledge and self-determination.

The **proposal for a human rights-based agroecological transformation of food systems reflects the intersectionality of communities' struggles and speaks to the interconnectedness and synergies across the SDGs**. The human rights approach towards the SDGs applies the indivisibility, interdependence, interrelatedness and universality of all human rights to all goals and targets. This approach also implies early warning and safeguards against potential non-sustainable trade-offs. Human rights coherence, monitoring and accountability, as well as full and effective participation, if implemented, identify and prevent possible negative effects on vulnerable groups, and Peoples, and ensure remedies in case of deprivation and rights violations.

3. ***How might COVID-19 facilitate or complicate the implementation of needed food systems changes?***

- a) *Will it aggravate and/or reduce vulnerabilities?*
- b) *What are the changes in design and implementation of policies affecting food systems which are necessary to prevent and better deal with food security and nutrition impacts of infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics in the future?*
- c) *What of the current immediate actions we are seeing will contribute to the long-term resilience of food systems?*

The virus itself does not discriminate, but its impacts do, as the UN Secretary General stated. Undoubtedly, the virus aggravates and highlights vulnerabilities and opens the eyes of the whole world for the horrific structural inequalities, discrimination, exploitation, racism and sexism that dominated many societies and now exacerbate the effects of the crisis on the most vulnerable in real time, also within food systems.

Macroeconomic figures that point to a potential future food crisis are important but fall short to diagnose the situation of today: the **new food crisis at global scale that comes along with Covid-19 is a dramatic reality now** for hundreds of millions of people under lockdowns who were already at high risk losing employment and income without social protection. The COVID-19 crisis further contributes to already-elevated levels of food insecurity caused by climate change. Many small-scale producers face huge difficulties to reach their markets. This crisis increases the more the economic crisis advances globally and the more the virus spreads in the Southern Hemisphere. The crisis has become a *human rights crisis*, as also the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated, affecting severely a range of economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights.

In terms of *redesign and implementation of policies affecting food systems*, recent CSM consultations have highlighted the following four:

- **People-centered, environmentally sustainable policy solutions:** Workers, especially migrant workers, women, smallholder food producers, Indigenous Peoples, the urban food insecure, the refugees and displaced, the landless and communities in protracted crises are the most affected of these new crises. Their needs, rights, knowledge, claims and participation must be at the center of any policy response.
- **Local, Small-scale and Resilient Food systems:** the immediate and most important answer to this new food crisis is public support to local production, local food systems, to support smallholder farmers, fisherfolks and Indigenous Peoples to foster, defend and sustain their food production and ensure their access to markets and the access of consumers to their products. Local food systems, agroecology, climate justice, human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples are intimately linked and essential for resilience.

- **Fighting Inequalities:** All national and international efforts to address the new crises must aim at reducing the extreme inequalities within and among countries. The pre-existence of structural inequalities determines to a large extent who will be the most affected by these kinds of crisis, and who will be the pandemic profiteers. People, especially young people, increasingly challenge the outrageous inequalities in income and wealth, especially now when hundreds of millions go unemployed and when entire countries, especially the Low-Income Food Deficit Countries are at the brink of economic, social and political catastrophes.
- **Public systems and policies:** the strength or weakness of the public health sectors, together with political decisions of central governments decide now about life and death in many countries. Health and food are public goods and human rights. If states and governments do not protect and respect them, they lose their legitimacy among citizens which may lead to social unrest and political instability. Because food systems are interconnected, there is an urgent need for enhanced regional and global policy coordination, convergence and coherence and improved mutual accountability.

*Regarding immediate actions that can lead to a long-term resilience of food systems:* The main responses of people, communities and constituencies can be framed in two words: solidarity and resilience. Solidarity and resilience action are carried out by communities and Peoples all over the world, they range from sharing food to caring for the elderly within communities and neighborhoods; from shortening the paths from producer to consumers to defending school feeding and farmers markets; from standing up against domestic violence against women and girls to defending workers' and migrants' rights; from recognizing that respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including to their traditional lands, territories and resources, as well as their time-tested knowledge and practices, contributes to collective resiliency. Most of these solidarity actions are not spectacular and have not received much media attention, but they sustain, at a daily basis, people's lives, health, including mental, spiritual and psychological health, environmental sustainability and human livelihoods.

Many of these actions are related to using and strengthening the local food systems as the most resilient ones in times of crises. In fact, smallholder family farmers from several countries report about huge increases of demand for their local products and specifically agroecological produce, as well as rapid expansion of community supported agriculture and urban gardening. Fresh and healthy foods seem to be higher valued by societies in times of this crisis.

The well-known **fact that smallholder family farmers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, food and agricultural workers and other small-scale food producers provide most of the food consumed globally, is now indeed a central entry point for a coherent global response to the new food crisis and for policies aiming at long-term resilience of food systems into the future, as we look toward to a post-COVID world.**

#### **4. *What knowledge and data gaps need to be filled for better analyzing current successes and failures in food systems and the trade-offs and synergies, across SDGs, in implementing food systems changes to fix these failures?***

Certainly, there is enough knowledge available to assess the successes and failures of the current food systems and to shape their agroecological transformation towards more sustainability and resilience.

However, the unprecedented crises of this year also require new, fully participatory, multi-cultural efforts to closely monitor and assess what we are learning about the strengths and vulnerabilities of the different food systems in times of crisis, and what we want in the future, based on what we are learning now. Some of the questions before us include:

- What can we learn about inequalities, vulnerabilities and risks carried by the globalized industrial food system when it gets under stress?
- What are the risks of hyper-globalization, and how can we measure the cost of long-term food dependency and related trade measures for national food, health and social protection systems, especially in LIFDC?
- Which are the food systems that are most sustainable, just and resilient in times of these crises? What are the success factors that make a food system more sustainable, just and resilient than others?
- How resilient, just and sustainable are different types of local food systems, and what are the factors that influence their performance?
- What can we learn from traditional, time tested methods and ways of knowing? How can we learn respectfully with the holders of this knowledge?

Important data gaps which need higher attention, although certain efforts have been made during the past years to address these needs:

- The contribution of local and territorial markets to food provisioning in communities, countries and regions;
- The potential contribution of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' knowledge, practices and ways of knowing for the transformation/return to sustainable food systems;
- Systematic data collection about violations of workers' rights, particularly migrant workers' rights, in current national food systems;
- Systematic data collection about violations of the right to adequate food in all countries;
- The true internal and extraterritorial cost and benefit of different food systems taking into account the economic, social, ecological, cultural and health externalities, including the cost of risks, shocks, conflicts and protracted crises;
- Need to design data collection systems that recognize local knowledges and experiences of the most affected and of-small scale food producers.

5. ***What partnerships and initiatives are needed to harness synergies and/or reduce trade-offs in food systems?***

- What are the most critical interventions and partnerships needed over next 2 years, 5 years, 10 years?*
- Can these be scaled up or adjusted to fit other contexts?*
- How can private sector support investments for sustainable agriculture production and supply reduce food insecurity?*

The **most important and strategic partnership** that national governments, regional institutions, the United Nations and academia can take to contribute to ending hunger and malnutrition is working in a more inclusive, participative and collaborative way **with the most critical constituencies** on the ground: the organizations of the constituencies of the smallholder and family farmers, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolks, agricultural and food workers, landless, consumers, urban food insecure and NGOs.

These organizations represent the rights holders most at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition, and the food producers are the most important contributors to food security and nutrition worldwide. All critical interventions on food security and nutrition from the local to the global level should take into account the needs, rights, agency and participation of the people most concerned, in the spirit of the reformed CFS: "nothing about us without us".

The **CFS** was reformed in 2009 as a response to the food crisis and it must prove useful in this new food crisis 2020 which might become much larger and more dangerous than the one in 2008. Due to its experience of multi-actor dialogue and negotiated outcomes over the past decade, its nature as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform on food security and nutrition, its vision and its inclusiveness that allows engagement with all the constituencies affected by hunger and food insecurity, the CFS has a unique added value, legitimacy and mandate to discuss and agree on policy solutions to face the 2020 food crisis.

In line with its roles and its Strategic Plan 2020-2023, the **CFS can serve as a platform to learn about the impacts of the crisis on food security and nutrition, to share experiences and analysis about effective responses, and to draft and agree on a Global Policy Response to the new food crisis.** This response should be built upon the many actions already under way by all of us, governments, international institutions and societal actors, and should aim to ensure convergence, coherence and coordination among them.

The **role of the private sector** on food security and nutrition is relevant and object of increasing concern among civil society, academia, member states and the broader public. First, public interest comes before private or corporate interest. Governments and UN must pursue the public interest and establish robust safeguards against conflict of interest, to protect public interest vs. private/corporate interest when it comes to investment in agriculture. Second: While it is important to hear from the private/corporate sector about their positions and to have a possibility for transparent discussions, it is also important to ensure that decisions are taken by national governments and parliaments accountable to their citizens.

Thirdly, on the UN level, no privileged or leadership position for the private, corporate or agrobusiness sector is admissible as this clearly undermines the public interest mandate and legitimacy of the UN. The UN multilateralism must not be undermined by multi-stakeholder partnerships that allow corporate entities to be on the same level as states, confusing roles, interests and responsibilities and exercising undue influence through financial resources or other means.

Earlier this year, more than 500 organizations from civil society and Indigenous Peoples' organizations have called upon the UN Secretary General to undo the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the World Economic Forum, and to profoundly rethink the process of the Food Systems Summit, ensuring that the constituencies of the people most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition are fully participating in the shaping of the focus and direction of the Summit.

The current crisis has shown that sustainable and resilient food system do depend on small scale food producers including a web of millions of micro-, small and medium enterprises, in particular those cooperatives and enterprises from social and solidarity economies. These deserve support to build partnerships, as distinct to the corporate sector.

#### **Key messages:**

- The proposal for a human rights-based agroecological transformation of food systems toward food sovereignty food sovereignty, climate justice and cultural diversity reflects the intersectionality of communities' struggles and speaks to the interconnectedness and synergies across the SDGs.
- The new food crisis at global scale that comes along with Covid-19 is a dramatic reality now. Policy responses should be people-centered, fostering local food systems, fighting inequalities, and strengthening the public sector. CFS as the foremost inclusive platform for food security

and nutrition can serve as the platform to draft and agree on a Global Policy Response to this new food crisis.

- The well-known fact that smallholder farmers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, food and agricultural workers and other small-scale food producers provide most of the food consumed globally, is now indeed a central entry point for a coherent global response to the new food crisis *and* for policies aiming at long-term resilience of food systems into the future, as we look toward to a post-COVID world.