

PSM priority issues to be addressed during the CFS policy convergence process—Reducing inequalities for FSN
(23 January 2024)

Overarching remarks:

The Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the development of the Policy Recommendations on Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition and acknowledges the pressing need to discuss and address inequalities, and their drivers, within food systems at all levels, to accelerate progress on achieving food security and nutrition.

To effectively address the various drivers of inequalities, all stakeholders, including the private sector, must form alliances and partnerships that drive innovation, create jobs and advance equitable growth for food security and nutrition. Hence the need for the policy convergence process to aim at identifying areas for collaboration to address inequalities for greater food security and nutrition. Consequently, as previously mentioned during the e-consultation, the PSM calls for all multi-stakeholders to be portrayed in a balanced manner that acknowledges the role they must all have in the solutions identified.

The value chain for agrifood systems plays a vital role in delivering food in a broad range of contexts and markets. It is therefore essential to understand the importance of farmers and fishers as well as small and medium enterprises and the many national and international companies and the role of regional and international trade that make up the fabric of this system and support global food security and nutrition. Appreciating the need to accelerate access for SMEs, smallholders and others requires the ability to work with organizations of all sizes throughout the agrifood value chain.

With the Reducing Inequalities workstream beginning in earnest, PSM calls on CFS to focus on prioritized topics that can lead to consensus and provide operational and constructive recommendations based on robust science and that provide an unbiased view of the issues to effectively contribute to policy-making decisions that tackle the root causes of inequalities.

Prioritized topics

The SDGs are inherently interconnected and actions in support or against the achievement of one can hinder the achievement of the over-arching goal. It is with that mindset that PSM calls for CFS to ensure its outputs on gender and youth be prioritized and analyzed through the lens of reducing inequalities for greater food security and nutrition.

As SDG 10 calls for reducing inequality within and among countries, PSM urges CFS to begin to focus on those CFS outputs that provide strong guidance on factors that affect inequality: namely, gender and youth challenges. These groups are disadvantaged stakeholders that should benefit from inclusive institutions and improved representation.

Gender

By working towards the achievement of gender equality, we are not only working towards the objective of SDG 5, but also promoting a driver of sustainable development that can reduce hunger (SDG 2), and reduction of inequalities. The CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment provide an important foundation from which to further refine CFS guidance on this issue (see para 52¹).

Youth

Youth are agents of change, and key catalysts to advance the SDGs to improve the lives of people and health of the planet. They contribute to the resilience of their communities, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress and inspiring political change. In order to reduce inequalities, it is instructive to explore how to more effectively implement the CFS Policy Recommendations on promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems for food security and nutrition (see para 5²). Provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, young people can play a key role in reducing inequalities.

Innovation and Technology

A balanced view of innovation and technology is needed, as it could advance sustainable productivity growth and address the various challenges the agrifood sector currently faces, such as food security and nutrition. Technology can be harnessed, scaled, and utilized in a manner that helps reduce inequality because once conceived, they can serve all in a variety of capacities. Currently, innovation and technology are listed as one of the systemic drivers and root causes

¹ Gender inequality in food systems limits women's and girls' - especially Indigenous women's - access to resources, affecting productivity and their ability to manage risks; women's participation and voice in producers' groups; and women's access to, as well as time and energy for remunerated activities, constraining their contribution to their family's income and the households' food security and nutrition. The collection of sex and age disaggregated data and gender statistics on women and girls in agriculture and food systems would help to better address these inequalities and discrimination.

² The engagement and continued participation of young people in sustainable agriculture and food systems is a key driver to fostering the competitiveness, resilience, inclusivity and vitality of these sectors. To guarantee generational renewal, it is essential to develop systems, legal frameworks, policies, and programmes that engage more youth in agriculture and food systems and associated professions and that enable them to enjoy universal human rights by addressing the structural inequalities and all forms of discrimination that negatively affect them, while improving overall service provision and well-being in rural and urban areas.

of inequalities, which is a narrow and overly negative perception that does not acknowledge the full potential and reality of food science and technology, among other innovations. Furthermore, one approach should not be praised over other forms of innovative approaches to contribute to sustainably feed a growing population. It is well documented and understood that a “one size fits all” approach to food production, supply chains, and dietary patterns is not feasible, context sensitive, or culturally appropriate.

Improved supply chains

PSM agrees that further investments in supply chains and in disadvantaged areas are crucial. Areas that lack the necessary infrastructure and supply chain development to guarantee equitable access will suffer from limited access to access to inputs, such as plant nutrients which are vital for food security. Without improved supply chains, access to an adequate food supply can amplify inequalities that result from underlying factors and recent events.

CFS guidance on linking smallholders to markets could be developed to provide guidance on reducing inequalities. For example, supporting value chain development that links smallholder farmers, and the informal food production sector, directly to the formal food processing and packaging sector thereby provides smallholder farmers with increased income, improving the accessibility of local & traditional food supply whilst improving and safeguarding food safety and nutritional value of foods. Also, inequalities between farmers that are part of formal value chains and farmers that are not, can be reduced by linking producers in the informal market to processors, retailers, aggregators, and markets in the formal sector.

Furthermore, a more balanced approach to trade is essential to build sustainable, resilient food systems that deliver food and nutrition security for all. Despite the evidence-supported benefits of trade for food security and nutrition noted on p48, para 2, trade liberalization is framed in a negative manner, suggesting that trade should be restricted. This runs counter to evidence demonstrating that restricting trade would increase the prevalence of undernourished people by up to forty-seven percent, while more open trade scenarios have the potential to decrease the prevalence of undernutrition by sixty-four percent.

Sustainable agricultural production

CFS stakeholders are being asked to take into account the context of climate, ecological, political and economic crises in all FSN-related actions. PSM would urge CFS to leverage agreements recently made at COP 28, which acknowledge these challenges and encourages the implementation of integrated, multi-sectoral solutions. (see Para 5³ of COP outcome document)

³ Encourages the implementation of integrated, multi-sectoral solutions, such as land use management, sustainable agriculture, resilient food systems, nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches, and

Conclusion

The PSM thanks the HLPE and CFS for this opportunity and their consideration of the present written remarks on the priorities for the upcoming policy convergence process. We look forward to collaborating with all CFS multi-stakeholders to promote effective CFS outputs and outcomes.

protecting, conserving and restoring nature and ecosystems, including forests, mountains and other terrestrial and marine and coastal ecosystems, which may offer economic, social and environmental benefits such as improved resilience and well-being, and that adaptation can contribute to mitigating impacts and losses, as part of a country-driven gender-responsive and participatory approach, building on the best available science as well as Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and local knowledge systems