

The United States cannot accept the proposed Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Contribution to the 2021 High Level Political Forum (HLPF). During the January 12 CFS Bureau meeting, there was a clear agreement that the “Secretariat avoid including concepts or language in the draft that is likely to result in lengthy debate and negotiation.” In that meeting, multiple CFS members suggested that CFS Secretariat limits itself to member agreed language such as the relevant recommendations in the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition.

The Bureau’s authority to by-pass the Plenary consideration is not procedurally consistent with CFS rules or approved actions under the program of work. In the 46<sup>th</sup> Session of the CFS, Members approved paragraph 96 of the CFS MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020-2023 (MYPoW) which says “HLPF contributions will be finalized in a further open, facilitated meeting and conveyed to the CFS Bureau in consultation with the Advisory Group after consideration by Plenary.” The next MYPoW is pending approval in the 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the CFS, thus it is not agreed by all Members that the CFS’ HLPF contribution can go forward without consideration in the CFS Plenary. Secondly, the CFS Plenary has not delegated to the Bureau the final decisions regarding the HLPF contributions to the Bureau.

Unfortunately, the proposed CFS contribution to the 2021 HLPF does not follow this advice and instead proposes to send the recommendations from the HLPE Issues Paper to the 2021 HLPF. This includes multiple recommendations that are highly controversial, use unbalanced language, and diverge from recommendations provided by other expert panels. In particular, the United States objects to inclusion of recommendations 3, 4, 5, and 6 from the HLPE Issue Paper in the CFS contribution to the 2021 HLPF.

The United States has long noted the CFS is not the appropriate place for discussions on trade policy. Recommendation 3 is a clear example of why this is the case. The recommendation is unbalanced on trade, taking only the viewpoint of food importers and not examining other viewpoints. It emphasizes an undefined concept of “protection” for importing countries and blends facets of trade and domestic production in a manner that is unclear. It fails to consider other important factors that could increase the resiliency of food systems, such as the importance of trade facilitation and market transparency. Furthermore, it fails to acknowledge that unjustified trade barriers arising from countries’ response to COVID-19 continue to raise food security concerns in this space, and the increasing use of such measures without a scientific basis. The United States also disagrees with the HLPE statement that there is a connection between recommendation 3 and SDG 10.

Components of recommendation 4 are also quite problematic. The United States does not think the CFS should be the lead body in coordinating the international response on COVID-19 nor should the CFS lead an international task force to track the food security impacts of COVID-19. Furthermore, the United States is not aware of any CFS Bureau decision making this recommendation, despite the CFS Bureau having discussed COVID-19 since the beginning of 2020. The United States also notes that the recommendations “developing a global campaign to educate and inform the public on nutrition-sensitive practices to prevent and manage COVID-19 infections at household and individual levels” is beyond the scope of CFS’s mandate and outside

CFS's expertise. Concerningly, this recommendation also appears to incorrectly imply linkages between the epidemiological spread of COVID-19 and consumption of more processed and shelf-stable food.

On recommendation 5, the United States disagrees that shorter supply chains and territorial markets are more diverse or resilient than longer supply chains or international supply chains. This also seems to diverge from recommendations from other sources. For example, FAO Chief Economist Torero has stated that international trade helps manage risks associated with shocks and contribute to enhancing resilience of markets. Similarly, recent OECD research suggests that localizing value chains in the post-COVID world would add to the economic losses and make domestic economies more vulnerable (<https://voxeu.org/article/localising-value-chains-after-covid-would-add-economic-losses-and-make-domestic-economies-more-vulnerable>).

On recommendations 6, the United States is troubled by the HLPE Issue Paper's recommendations on agroecology. The recommendation seems to treat agroecological approaches as automatically sustainable. However, this is a logical fallacy; one cannot simply categorize a particular agricultural approach as sustainable or unsustainable. Instead, the sustainability of agricultural approaches needs to be evaluated against measurable outcomes at the appropriate level of food affordability, and accessibility; farmer income and wellbeing; and environmental indicators. Because recommendation 6 treats agroecology as automatically sustainable, it recommends more investment and research into agroecological. Instead, research and investment should be focused on the approaches that are most promising, no matter how they are categorized. There is no evidence that agroecology is more cost-effective or resilient than other agricultural methods. This recommendation is also inconsistent with prior HLPE recommendations such as those that appear in the HLPE Report on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches or in the Food Security and Nutrition Report.

Finally, the United States does not support inclusion of the graphic on page 2 of the CFS contribution. Not only is the graphic used here taken out of context of the report, but it appears to link COVID-19 issues unclearly, and in some cases speculatively. Additionally, it is based around an understanding of food security that differs from the one typically used internationally.

Given the clear desire of CFS Bureau to avoid lengthy debates on the CFS HLPF 2021 contribution, the United States insists the CFS rethink its contribution to the HLPF 2021 and limit it to recommendations that all CFS members can accept. The United States will object to sending the currently draft CFS contribution to HLPF if the problematic elements identified above remain.