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Secretariat HLPE, c/o FAO
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: 0039 06 5705 4411
Fax: 0039 06 5705 4593
Website : www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe
E-mail : cfs-hlpe@fao.org

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Lyla Mehta
HLPE Project Team Leader

Presentation on behalf of the HLPE

Good afternoon ladies and Gentlemen. I am delighted and honoured to be back at CFS to present our Report on Water for Food Security and Nutrition. I hope you have had productive discussions over the past few months and will come up with strong recommendations this week on this highly important topic.

In my presentation, I focus on the key messages and main findings of the report.

At the very outset it must be said that without water there can be no food security and nutrition. Also this is the first comprehensive effort to bring together Water and Food Security and Nutrition that goes beyond the usual focus on agricultural issues. The report also focuses on crucial aspects concerning water and sanitation for human wellbeing and for maintaining ecosystem integrity (thus combining WASH and water resources dimensions).

This is done by also highlighting future uncertainties and drivers of change (for example, climate change, changing diets and demand).

The report is comprehensive in its focus on the technical, institutional, socio-economic, cultural and political dimensions.

It addresses water management as well as complex knowledge and governance challenges from local to global. It argues for the need to improve policy coherence and prioritize water for FSN. It is original in making a case for strengthening the relationship between the right to water and the right to food al issues

Water is life

Water is essential for human wellbeing and survival. There are competing demands over water from different sectors such as agriculture, energy and industry. Water supports economic growth. Water is the lifeblood of ecosystems which are key for the food security and nutrition of present and future generations.

Linkages

Let me now highlight the multiple linkages. Water is essential to food security and nutrition. We link four dimensions of water (in blue):

- Availability
- Quality
- Stability of water resources, and
- Access to water;

and the four dimensions of food security (in yellow):

- Utilization/quantity
- Stability
- Access
- Availability

Clearly, water of appropriate quality and quantity is essential for drinking and sanitation. Water is key for food production (fisheries, crops and livestock) as well as for feed and other non-food crops. Irrigated agriculture uses 70 percent of total withdrawals globally. Finally, water of good quality is essential for drinking, food processing and preparation.

Availability, scarcity and competing uses

Our starting point is that there's enough water and food to go around. We follow the UNDP in rejecting neo-Malthusian notions of scarcity and food security. Annual renewable freshwater resources are adequate at global levels to meet human needs. Still, as indicated here, rainwater, surface and groundwater resources are very unevenly distributed across the globe, within regions and within countries and there is significant variability, often focussed in poorer regions leading to floods or droughts.

These global portrayals say little about how human-induced land and water-use changes as well as socio-political issues cause water scarcities. This calls for going beyond physical scarcity to also look at its economic and socio political dimensions.

Access to water and stability

Water availability doesn't translate to access to water. Access is usually determined by socio-economic, political, gender and power relations.

Currently 663 million people around the globe lack access to safe drinking water and 2.4 billion people lack access to improved sanitation with about 946 million people defecating in the open. This situation undermines good nutrition and health and is a global outrage.

Accessing water can be particularly challenging for small holders, vulnerable and marginalized populations and women.

Women and girls are responsible for water collection, and may spend several hours per day collecting water, undermining their health, educational and life chances.

Poor water quality affects human health and ecosystems' functioning.

Climate change will add irregularity and uncertainty to the availability of water in many regions.

Managing scarcities

We take an ecosystems approach to integrate the management of water, land and living resources. Rainfed agriculture is the primary source of food production globally. 93% of agriculture in Africa is rain-fed.

We argue for the need to upgrade both water and land productivities through better management of rainwater, soil moisture and supplemental irrigation.

Irrigation has been essential to achieve productivity gains and food security globally. But irrigation systems need to improve equity, reduce environmental damage, strengthen ecosystem functions and enhance management and productivity.

Governance

We show that inclusive water governance is crucial to ensure sustainable, equitable and gender-just decision-making and allocation.

Water allocation tools can have a huge impact on FSN and can negatively affect community based systems. Market based tools often tend prioritize sectors which offer the highest economic value.

Land and water are linked. Certain water reform processes and large scale land acquisitions often overlook and threaten the customary and informal rights of poor and marginalized women and men, with impacts on FSN.

Women's entitlements are often recorded as belonging to the male "head of the household". Removing this gender bias in farming and water and providing equal access to resources for both male and female farmers would have a big impact on food security and nutrition.

Private actors are playing an enhanced role in water management and leading to water being re-allocated in significant ways. They also have significant economic and political influence. In many countries there is insufficient regulatory oversight of of private actors.

Water users associations play a key role in governing water but it's important to ensure that they are not captured by powerful players.

At the national level, ministries and departments dealing with agriculture, environment, water, food and land are often separate and do not coordinate their efforts and actions. This in turn affects food security outcomes.

Investments in economic activities can provide development opportunities, increase income and the provision of water, with positive impacts on FSN. But they can also have negative impacts on local communities.

Major global initiatives around water, land and food governance are not adequately integrated. For example, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests adopted by CFS do not address the link with water.

The human right to safe drinking water and sanitation as well as the right to food are globally recognised rights. There are significant challenges in realising these rights.

The right to water largely focuses on domestic aspects and has not been deployed to look at the productive uses of water.

The rights to water and sanitation and the right to food have close ties because water and sanitation are crucial for health and nutrition and because access to water is indispensable for food producers. While local users rarely separate out these issues, they are not integrated at national and global levels.

Recommendations

I now turn to the recommendations which are addressed in particular to governments but also to all actors of the CFS: the private sector, civil society and international organizations.. Our key message is integration and prioritization and all recommendations need to be adapted to local and regional contexts.

1. Ensure sustainable management and conservation of ecosystems

One, the sustainable management and conservation of ecosystems is needed to secure the continued availability, quality and stability of water for FSN. It is likely to be effective if done through participatory and co-managed mechanisms. States need to focus on regulatory systems, targeted incentives and disincentives and accountability schemes.

2. Ensure an integrated approach to water and FSN related policies

While most states have Integrated Water Management plans, these must better incorporate and prioritize FSN concerns. Also, all water related policies need to take into account food security and nutrition.

3. Prioritise the most vulnerable and marginalised, including mainstreaming gender and addressing the specific needs of women

States should ensure that no action related to water has negative impacts on the access to water for the food security and nutrition of vulnerable and marginalized peoples.

Women and men should be given equal access to water. Particular attention should be given to indigenous peoples, smallholder farmers, and other marginalized communities.

The specific water needs of women and girls need to be addressed, taking into account women's productive and reproductive roles as well as strengthening their representation in water institutions.

4. Improve water management in agriculture and adapt agricultural systems to improve their overall water efficiency and water productivity

Water and land productivity improvements are central to development and to water management for food security and nutrition. We call for more efficient and more productive uses of all water in agriculture, including rainwater.

This should be done by considering different water management options such as water harvesting, water storage infrastructure, and by improving the productivity of a range agricultural systems, including rain-fed systems.

5. Improve the contribution of trade to "water for FSN"

Water scarce countries depend on food imports. They are particularly vulnerable to food price volatility, and to export restrictions and need a rules-based, transparent and accountable multilateral trading system.

But growth and export should not be at the expense of ensuring local ecosystem sustenance and better working environments.

6. Devise and share enhanced knowledge, technologies and management tools

The HLPE report also has recommendations on sharing knowledge, technology and management tools for water.

7. Foster an inclusive and effective governance of water for FSN

States should ensure a full and effective participation of all actors, including the vulnerable and marginalized. States should protect the access, use and tenure rights of poor people.

Allocation tools need to give adequate priority to water for food production as well as for the basic needs of poor and marginalized populations and women. They should not erode rights enshrined in customary systems.

States should ensure that investments respect basic rights to water and food, and abide by the CFS principles for responsible investments in agriculture and food systems.

A special meeting should be organized where all relevant actors discuss how to achieve coordinated actions regarding water for FSN.

8. Promote a rights-based approach to governance of water for FSN

States should ensure the full and meaningful implementation of the existing rights to water and sanitation, as well as the right to food.

We call on the CFS to provide guidance on how to ensure access to water for food security and nutrition when implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on the Good Governance of Tenure.

Finally we call on the United Nations Human Rights Council and its Special Procedures (ie the various Special Rapporteurs) to explore how the human rights to water and santitation and food can be joined up in a meaningful way.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are calling for a human rights approach to water governance to enhance food security and nutrition. Only this will ensure healthy and productive lives for all for now and in the future.

Thank you for your attention.