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**Revised concept and process note for the 2<sup>nd</sup> HLPE note on  
Critical and Emerging Issues for Food Security and Nutrition  
by the HLPE Steering Committee**

**Summary**

This document describes the context and purpose of the work of the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), towards a note on *Critical and Emerging issues for Food Security and Nutrition*, the second one requested by the CFS.

As for other HLPE studies, a central element of the evidence-based work will consist of documented inputs by the scientific community and a wide range of knowledge networks and knowledge holders, through a public inquiry.

The documents for the inquiry (notice and questionnaire) are attached to the present note and available online at [www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe](http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe).

Replies to the questionnaire are expected by 6 October 2016 at [cfs-hlpe@fao.org](mailto:cfs-hlpe@fao.org).

The Committee on World Food Security, the foremost intergovernmental and international evidence-based and multi-stakeholder platform related to food security and nutrition, mandated its High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) to “identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas” (CFS reform Document, 2009).

In October 2013, the CFS requested the HLPE to produce a *Note on critical and/or emerging issues in the area of food security and nutrition*. This request came in the context of the CFS’s own ongoing discussion on the selection and prioritization of its activities.<sup>1</sup> This first note was released in August 2014.<sup>2</sup> Its main results are presented below.

In October 2015, at its 42nd Plenary Session, the CFS decided that this HLPE note shall be updated at least every four years, depending on funding availability and the HLPE workload, and released in due time to be used at the starting point for the process of elaboration of the following CFS multi-year programme of work (MYPoW).

In this perspective, at its meeting on July 8th, 2016, the CFS Bureau requested the HLPE to produce a second “*Note on critical or emerging issues in the area of food security and nutrition*” (hereunder referred to as the C&EI note), no later than the end of 2017.

This note is expected to provide an evidence-based perspective, built on the knowledge of diverse actors, on critical and emerging issues impacting on food security and nutrition which would deserve to be included in the CFS agenda. **The purpose of this exercise is to help CFS stakeholders prioritize future actions and attention on a limited number of critical policy-relevant areas.**

Considering CFS’s efforts to contribute to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the note could support CFS work on identifying policy gaps and challenges impeding country progress on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture which may call for further CFS policy convergence work in order to achieve the SDGs and their targets.

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The present document describes the process by which the HLPE will prepare this note and the expected outcomes. Given the nature and specificity of this request from CFS, this process will be slightly different from the one implemented for preparing thematic reports and will build upon the experience of the first HLPE C&EI note released in August 2014. The key principles that guide all HLPE reports will of course be respected: transparency, openness to diverse forms of knowledge, solicitation of inputs through open inquiry, and expert peer review prior to finalization and adoption of the note by the HLPE Steering Committee (StC).

## **I. Context and challenges of the work**

Food insecurity and malnutrition is a global and persistent issue, recurrently highlighted by crises. It manifests itself in various ways in the different regions of the world and it has a vast variety of complex and interdependent underlying causes. It is interlinked with many other problems and factors from local to international levels. **Ensuring food security and nutrition requires, first, understanding many**

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<sup>1</sup> In the CFS context, a clear distinction needs to be made between (i) issues of relevance to food security and nutrition, which are the object of the present knowledge-based exercise by the HLPE, and (ii) CFS activities, which are not the object of the present exercise as they are discussed and decided upon at the level of the CFS, by its own, distinct processes.

<sup>2</sup> See: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/hlpe/hlpe\\_documents/Critical\\_Emerging\\_Issues/HLPE\\_Note-to-CFS\\_Critical-and-Emerging-Issues\\_6-August-2014.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/hlpe/hlpe_documents/Critical_Emerging_Issues/HLPE_Note-to-CFS_Critical-and-Emerging-Issues_6-August-2014.pdf)

**different issues and how they relate to each other, and second, tackling them at different levels in a coordinated way.**

A growing number of institutions are engaging with these debates as food security and nutrition rises on the agenda of governments, civil society organizations, social movements, research organizations, and bilateral and multilateral aid and development agencies. This is not without often difficult political confrontations, especially when it comes to allocating policy priorities and resources, as different interest groups might have different priority concerns.

What can science and knowledge contribute to such debates? What are the issues of critical importance for food security and nutrition from the point of view of science and knowledge, given available evidence and methods? How to identify them from an evidence-based perspective?

Critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition are those issues that have an important impact on one or several dimension(s) of food security and nutrition (availability, access, utilization and stability).

“Issues” can be very diverse. They include both challenges and opportunities, as impacts can be potentially positive or negative. They potentially include clear and present dangers, medium-term emerging issues that need immediate consideration, and/or persistent but overlooked issues. They include trends and drivers of the food and nutrition system, changes that increase vulnerabilities (e.g. climate change). Those issues can be local or global, short-term or long-term, nascent or persistent. They can be systemic or relevant to one or more critical points in the system. They can include new developments, such as technologies. Policies – either directly related to food security and nutrition or in other domains – can in themselves constitute a critical or emerging issue, challenge or opportunity for food security and nutrition. Due to the very nature of food insecurity, issues that have an impact on vulnerable people and groups are of particular concern.

**Identifying, from an evidence-based perspective, critical and emerging issues in the area of food security and nutrition comes with specific challenges.**

First, to start with an academic point of view, there are **many disciplines involved in the identification and framing of relevant issues, and there are many different ways to relate them to the four dimensions of food security.** Issues vary according to disciplines, from environmental or food sciences and agronomy to economics, political sciences and other social sciences. Each discipline further brings its own vision, focus, concepts, and interpretation of food security and nutrition issues, framed and focused by specific methodologies and approaches. Reinforcing, but also diverging views can emerge from this confrontation of disciplinary approaches.

Second, agriculture, agricultural knowledge, science and technology, food security and nutrition have often been considered detached from other sectorial issues (environment, transportation, energy, health, etc.) since several decades, but are now, in practice, increasingly interacting with them: **issues can emerge specifically due to increased interdependencies.**

Third, **issues can emerge in the future** –therefore needing to be anticipated, and not only dealt with ex-post. This requires the use of specific methods to identify them, such as foresight tools.

Fourth, **contexts are continuously changing and issues vary over time, as well as the knowledge about them,** sometimes unexpectedly. Any attempt to identify, at one point in time, a range of present or foreseen issues, will thus have to be recurrently updated.

Finally, **knowledge on important and emerging issues comes from science and academia, but also from evidence-based knowledge of social actors, and from field practice.** The HLPE recognizes the need to acknowledge and work with distinct, evidence-based, knowledge systems, while accepting the real challenge emerging from such an objective, inter alia when it comes to assess the quality, validity and relevancy of such knowledge.

Any process is always limited by constraints of time and resources. This process and its level of detail have been crafted and optimized to be consistent with the calendar constraints and the overall workload of the HLPE StC and Secretariat.

## II. Results of the first exercise

In addition to the topics of the HLPE reports already published or requested until 2014,<sup>3</sup> the first HLPE C&EI note has identified a short list of five main *critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition*:

### 1. Healthy nutrition in changing food systems

Worldwide, populations are suffering from deficiencies in dietary energy intake, nutrient deficiencies and obesity, often co-existing in the same country: the so-called —triple burden of malnutrition. Understanding the causes of this situation is key to any action to improve nutrition. It requires considering recent evolutions of diets and food systems and their drivers: how and why do diets change? What are the links between diets, consumption and consumer habits and food systems? How do changes in food systems affect changes of diets, and therefore health and nutritional outcomes?

### 2. Livestock systems and food security and nutrition: challenges and opportunities

Growing demand for livestock products is driving major changes in food systems worldwide, with multiple, diverse and context specific consequences. Increased production can offer opportunities for more diversified diets, access to essential proteins and micronutrients. It also creates opportunities for producers, including diversification of activities, with increased incomes. On the other hand, overconsumption can have negative nutritional and health impacts and concentration of production in some areas can lead to significant environmental stress. How can opportunities be maximized and challenges tackled given the diversity of situations and livestock systems?

### 3. Inequalities and food security and nutrition: the imperative of addressing the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable populations

Poverty is a major cause of food insecurity and hunger. Inequalities explain why global availability does not translate into global access to food, both because of unequal distribution of income and because the demand of wealthier populations drives food and resource price increases. Inequalities in access to productive resources are a major cause of food insecurity, particularly for the most vulnerable populations, women, the young and ethnic minorities. Moreover, inequalities also undermine good governance, implementation of human rights including the right to food, and efforts to improve food security and nutrition. How do inequalities at different levels affect food and nutrition security and what can be done to improve the situation and mitigate negative effects?

### 4. The increasing role of financial markets in food security and nutrition

Agriculture is increasingly part of the global economy and international trade, which are increasingly influenced by global financial markets. These financial markets, worldwide, are increasingly influencing land transactions, agricultural production decisions, rural credit provision, risk insurance and commodity pricing, as well as food distribution and retail. The globalization of food systems goes along with direct or indirect links between them and non-agricultural commodities such as energy, or with financial products such as pension funds. Considering the rapid developments of these trends, what are the potential effects

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<sup>3</sup> #1 *Price volatility and food security* (2011); #2 *Land tenure and international investments in agriculture* (2011); #3 *Food security and climate change* (2012); #4 *Social protection for food security* (2012); #5 *Biofuels and food security* (2013); #6 *Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security* (2013); #7 *Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food security and nutrition* (2014); #8 *Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems* (2014); #9 *Water for food security and nutrition* (2015).

of financialization on food and land prices, on investments in agriculture and as a result on food security and nutrition?

5. Pathways to sustainable food systems: the pursuit of human and environmental health for all

The overarching challenge is how to ensure food security and nutrition for an increasing world population, now and in the future, from limited and diversely available resources, given social and economic imbalances, unequal access to resources and distribution of potential for economic growth income and purchasing power. Current concerns include the inefficiency of food systems, symbolized by food losses and waste, the environmental impacts of food systems and their tendency to rely on low-paid, often informal forms of employment, which in turn have negative social effects. How to find pathways to sustainable food systems that deliver food security and nutrition for all, now and in the future?

This first HLPE C&EI note actually informed the work of CFS for the year 2016-2017 as shown in the table below and most of the five issues identified were further covered by HLPE reports.

1 <sup>st</sup> HLPE C&EI NOTE ISSUES	RELATED HLPE REPORTS
Healthy nutrition in changing food systems	HLPE report #12 on <i>Nutrition and food systems</i> (2017)
Livestock systems in FSN	HLPE report #10 on <i>Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition: what roles for livestock?</i> (2016)
Inequalities and FSN	Not covered yet
Increasing role of financial markets in FSN	Not covered yet
Pathways to sustainable food systems	HLPE report #8 on <i>Food losses and waste</i> (2014) HLPE report #10 on <i>Sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition: what roles for livestock?</i> (2016)

III. Inputs

Questionnaire:

The HLPE is seeking **evidence-based, rationally inducted and documented inputs on critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition through the form of a questionnaire (attached), primarily directed to the scientific community as well as to the diversity of knowledge networks and knowledge holders: institutions, organizations, knowledge networks and individuals.** Unless requested otherwise by the respondent, each reply will be made available to the public as part of the inquiry proceedings. The results will inform the work of the HLPE StC. This questionnaire will be used in two ways:

- The HLPE will formally seek inputs from some major institutions, organizations, of global and regional knowledge networks in the area of food security and nutrition.
- As commonly practiced by the HLPE with other work streams, contributions from a wide range of knowledge holders will be sought through a public online electronic consultation.

**Importantly, the HLPE is not inviting opinions or advocacy on issues through the questionnaire but specifically requesting documented evidence in support of the issues brought forward.**

Respondents are invited to fill a separate form for each critical and/or emerging issue they identify.

The issues brought forward in the questionnaire might be either “challenges” or “opportunities”, or both, simultaneously, depending on the specific context, for example depending on the region or kind of impact studied. Whether the issue is a challenge and/or an opportunity, the questionnaire allows the respondent to propose one or more “solutions” which in the respondent’s view would lead to overcoming the challenge or taking the opportunity.

**In section 1**, respondents are invited to first describe the issue in just a few lines, as well as the underlying methodology and approach used for its identification.

**In section 2**, respondents are invited to categorize the issues according to the following broad typology:

- Is the issue an external or internal driver to food systems?
- What is the primary dimension of the issue itself?
- What is the primary dimension of the impact on food security and nutrition?

For the last two questions, respondents are invited to identify the main category according to the 3 classic dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. They are also invited to stress whether the issue is mainly related to governance (including institutions and rights) or to specify any other dimension of sustainability impacted by the issue.

**In section 3**, respondents are invited to detail how, and to which degree, the issue affects different aspects of food security and nutrition. This section helps to characterize the issue: first, by indicating whether and how much the issue affects one or several of the four “classical” dimensions of food security, and second, by giving information on additional attributes:

- Whether the issue affects food and nutrition systems as a whole or specific, critical parts?
- The breadth of the issue—how many people are affected?
- The scale of the issue: local, national, regional and/or global?
- The effects of the issue on already marginalized and vulnerable peoples or groups.
- Whether there are gender specific effects, any specific effects on mothers, on children?

**In section 4**, the questionnaire asks about the time scale of both the issue raised and the actions needed to address it (short, medium and/or long term)?

**In section 5**, the respondents are invited to provide an estimation of the degree of confidence on the above assessment, i.e. an evaluation of the quality of the understanding of the issue presented and its impact on food security and nutrition, in terms of the currently available evidence.

**In section 6**, the respondents are invited to indicate how the issue is integrated in the overall framework of the implementation of Agenda 2030 and to identify the most relevant sustainable development goal(s) relevant to this issue and, if relevant, the existing links with other Agenda 2030 SDGs or targets.

**In section 7**, they are invited, the case being, to indicate the existing relations with any other critical and emerging issue for food security and nutrition

Finally **in section 8**, respondents can provide additional supporting information, such as further evidence and references or indication of knowledge gaps.

#### Conferences:

In addition to consultation through a questionnaire, the HLPE will organize or co-organize for this second exercise two conferences to allow a direct interaction between different knowledge holders and political decision-makers and to seek inputs and feedbacks at different stages of the process. The first conference, organized with Hohenheim University will take place in Stuttgart (Germany) at the beginning of the process, in September 2016.<sup>4</sup> The second conference will take place in Coventry University, London (United Kingdom) in 2017 at the end of the process.

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<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe/news-archive/detail/en/c/426340/>

#### IV. Expected outcomes

The HLPE's objective is to develop a **map of the most relevant issues (both opportunities and challenges) in relation to food security and nutrition, from an evidence-based perspective**. It will aim at positioning the issues and their causalities, given their multiplicity, in relation to the different ways they can impact food security and nutrition, in relation to how much their impact and effect is pregnant according to the various attributes of food security and nutrition, whether these effects are direct or indirect, local or remote, whether they are of particular concern for specific populations, including gender, age, marginality considerations, etc.

**The analytical work will explicitly position the issues in relation to SDG2 (*End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*), and to the set of the 17 SDGs and related targets and indicators:** the issues could either be challenges to achieve one or several SDGs, or opportunities for the implementation of Agenda 2030. Critical and emerging issues for FSN, and/or related policy responses, could cut across SDGs as they could impact other goals as well. The note will describe these linkages, synergies or, the case being, trade-offs.

**This work will also aim to describe how the issues are linked to one another, and interact.** Such an effort would seek to understand how various approaches to strengthen food security and nutrition now and in the future could relate to and reinforce each other. Which would have the most effect, and of which nature? **The mapping will also help identifying and addressing dependencies of issues**, which will be useful to try to assess consistencies, or sequencing, in attempts to tackle them.

**The analysis will finally consider the issues according to their level of specificity, a quality which we call "granularity".** For example, the question of investment in agriculture, as opposed to the more specific question of investment in small-scale agriculture, as opposed to the yet more specific question of constraints on investment in small-scale agriculture all reflect different degrees of granularity. As levels of granularity are difficult to define in advance for all potential issues, the distinctions will not be introduced in the questionnaire but at the time of designing the synthesis, based on the material collected. To be consistent, the analysis of issues will be led within comparable classes of granularity.

#### V. Process and timeline

The HLPE will prepare its note to the CFS as follows.

Once inputs have been received, the HLPE StC will identify, with the support of the Secretariat, broad thematic areas based on the descriptions of the suggested issues and their types of impacts and effects, as well as based on the attributes described above. Issues received will be classified within thematic, and, as relevant, sub-thematic areas. This will be complemented by the information provided on methodology, evidence/data, reference, and the description of each issue.

A first synthesis of inputs received will be produced by the HLPE Secretariat, under the guidance of the StC, for discussion at the HLPE StC meeting in November 2016.

Based on its own expertise and its knowledge of recent exercises, the HLPE StC will build a critical analysis of the breadth of inputs submitted. The final note will undergo expert peer review prior to finalization and approval by the HLPE StC in May 2017.

**The HLPE StC reiterates its commitment to use this process as a learning exercise, with a view to improving the methodology for the future, in particular to find the best adapted methods to reach other forms of knowledge and other knowledge systems than those based in academia and research institutions.** The HLPE recognizes that the inclusion of other forms of expertise than scientific

expertise to approach issues, and to devise concepts and methods for describing them and making them understandable, is in itself one of the critical issues for food security and nutrition today.

Provisional timeline

<b>Step</b>	<b>Expected dates</b>
CFS Bureau request	8 July 2016
Inquiry	August / September 2016
Conference with Hohenheim University (Stuttgart, Germany)	27 September 2016
Exploitation of the results of the Inquiry	6 October – 15 November 2016
HLPE StC meeting: first discussion on the result of the inquiry	28-30 November 2016
HLPE StC draft note on C&E issues	December 2016 – February 2017
Expert Peer review	March 2017
Finalization of the StCnote (HLPE StC)	April 2017
HLPE StC meeting: Approval of the final note	May 2017
Conference in London	September 2017 (tbc)
CFS 44 Plenary Session	9-13 October 2017