

FAO Statement regarding the CFS HLPE Report

“Data Collection and Analysis Tools for Food Security and Nutrition”

- FAO welcomes the HLPE Report and commends the Panel of Experts for their thorough examination of existing and emerging tools, initiatives and governance arrangements for FSN data.
- In the same way, FAO commends the CFS for having, three years ago, decided to include the topic of data in its agenda. We interpret this as a recognition of the central role that relevant, timely and granular data play to strengthen a virtuous process of designing policy making based on evidence to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition.
- The central role of FSN data and the need to strengthen its generation and use has been clearly highlighted with the recent events of the COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine that have pushed the world to the verge of a global food crisis.
- In this sense, FAO agrees with the main findings of the Report and considers its recommendations useful and, as the specialized agency of the United Nations on food and agriculture, with a clear mandate on data, it is ready to discuss their implementation with the CFS and lead the process.
- In particular we would like to emphasize the importance of working together to close the data gaps on FSN statistics and to find solutions to the constraints that prevent the production and use of this data.
- As the Report rightfully points out, fundamental data gaps still exist to correctly guide action and inform policymaking.
 - A fundamental gap to address concerns the one on diets and the quality of diets.
 - We have also important gaps on our capacity to timely assess the ability of people's access to food and to do it in a granular way in order to identify new hotspots of food insecurity or target interventions at local level.
 - At the same time, in low and lower middle income countries we still find fundamental data gaps on structural characteristics of the farms, especially those of small size which hamper a detailed assessment of their performance and profitability.
- Another important finding of the report that FAO would like to highlight is that, even in cases where data availability is not an issue, data is usually not accessible for policy makers. Also, often policy makers are not aware of its existence or there is simply no capacity in the institutions that are called to design policies to analyse the data and use it for policy making.
- Some solutions for these problems have been proposed and are currently under implementation and FAO plays a vital role on them. One example is the 50x2030 Initiative, which is simply the biggest initiative that the world has ever seen to support low and lower middle countries to strengthen their statistical systems and generate relevant data on agriculture.
- Another example is the Voices of the Hungry project, which developed the Food Insecurity Experience Scale and is currently supporting countries to collect and analyse the required data to assess the state of food security at country level. Also worthy to mention is the IPC Global

Platform which is the multi-partner initiative to provide decision makers with an agreed assessment on acute food insecurity to inform emergency response in crisis countries.

- These initiatives need to be strengthened and scaled up but at the same time there is the need to mobilize financial resources to design new initiatives that aim at filling the fundamental gaps that are highlighted in the report. More importantly, efforts are needed to alleviate the financial constraints that low and low-middle income countries face and prevent them to invest in data. In this way, the Report needs to be interpreted as a call to the international donor community and International Organizations at large, to scale up investments that are targeted to overcome these gaps.
- Regarding the Report's recommendations, we agree with having a joint technical commission for harmonizing FSN data and indicators but we suggest to strengthen existing mechanisms rather than creating a new one. For example, we can strengthen the UN Committee of Experts on food security, agriculture and rural statistics that exists under the umbrella of the UN statistical commission. FAO as the specialized agency of the topic, is ready to lead the committee, in coordination with other relevant stakeholders.
- Another important recommendation concerns the establishment of the Global Food Security and Nutrition Data Trust Fund. FAO considers this Global Data Trust Fund as instrumental to close the existing data gaps and fund both the structural and the emergency FSN data that are needed to guide policies at national and global levels.
- Finally, a recommendation whose feasibility and implementation modalities need additional thoughts is for FAO to become a FAIR (findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability) and CARE (Collective benefit, authority to control, repositability, and ethics) certifier for agriculture, food and nutrition datasets. FAIR and CARE principles are clearly vital for promoting the appropriate access to and use of data, while protecting privacy and data confidentiality. Should the CFS endorse this recommendation, and adequate resources will be devoted for this purpose, FAO would be ready to serve this function. This would be crucial to achieve a certification framework that will enjoy the support of all relevant stakeholders.