



Rationale and Objective

The current global Covid-19 pandemic is unprecedented. In-person meetings are unlikely for weeks and months to come. The 2020 workplan, as detailed in the CFS MYPoW (2020-2023) approved by Plenary at CFS 46, guides the present work of the Committee and its Secretariat - including regular Bureau meetings and negotiating sessions to complete two core workstreams. While virtual means have allowed us to continue much of our work and meetings, the pandemic presents other challenges such as the inability to conduct in-person negotiations for the time being.

The Bureau, in consultation with the Advisory Group, will need to discuss and provide guidance on how best to deliver on the Committee's 2020 workplan in light of Covid-19. This should include a discussion of priorities and planning, including plans and preparations for CFS 47.

In addition, in light of the pandemic's links to global food security and nutrition, as well as ongoing plans for a 2021 UN Food Security Summit, the Bureau and Advisory Group may wish to consider how CFS work may need to be adapted to ensure it is relevant and meaningful in this new global context.

What we know

- Covid-19 has spread to every continent except Antarctica. Case numbers are rising daily.
- A Covid-19 vaccine is only estimated to be available after an 18-month timeframe.
- All in-person meetings scheduled to take place at FAO HQ are cancelled until the end of May 2020. No official schedule for re-opening FAO, WFP, or IFAD has been shared.
- Virtual negotiation of documents can be accomplished, e.g., via Zoom platform with interpretation. Different types of software are being tested worldwide – including by FAO, WFP, IFAD, the World Bank - to allow for large, multi-lingual virtual meetings to take place (i.e. the U.N. Security Council adopted four resolutions on 31 March by voting via email, a first for the global body). WFP and IFAD are planning their April Board meetings using virtual means.
- Preparations for CFS 47 modalities must begin soon, and will need to align with FAO corporate decision-making on its governing body meetings.

What we don't know

- When international travel, in-person meetings, and large gatherings such as CFS Plenary will be permissible, and under which modalities.
- What specific role CFS and its High Level Panel of Experts should play, in collaboration with the RBAs and the UN system at large, to help prevent the current health crisis to turn into a global food crisis.



IMPLICATIONS FOR CFS MYPoW DELIVERY

Strategic objective 1 – Platform

Leverage the convening power of CFS as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform to discuss the global FSN situation and seek to coordinate collective action at all levels.

Output 1.1 Inclusive discussions

Inclusive discussions on FSN developments, trends and emerging and critical issues can be documented through conclusions, reports, chairperson’s summaries and other ways.

1.1.1 Food security and nutrition: building a Global Narrative towards 2030

The HLPE is working on the finalization of the above report, which will also incorporate some of the findings of the Issues Paper on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition. Arrangements for a virtual launch on June 17 are under way. CFS discussions on the HLPE report could be held virtually.

Strategic objective 2 - Policy

Develop voluntary global policy guidance for policy convergence and coherence to achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.

Output 2.1 Global policy guidance

Delivered through the preparation of negotiated policy products (voluntary guidelines, principles or other policy frameworks) and recommendations on strategic topics.

2.1.1 Food systems and nutrition and 2.1.2 Agroecological and other innovative approaches

As highlighted above, while text negotiations via virtual large-scale, interpreted meetings appear to be the new normal in multilateral settings due to the pandemic, there is no such previous experience in CFS to guide us regarding how such processes will ensure members’ concerns are fully addressed.

In this context, virtual open meetings can be scheduled to advance consultations with the purpose of: (a) identifying key areas of convergence, and; (b) convening virtual friends of the Chair meetings to facilitate consensus-building around contentious issues.

Under this scenario, finalization of the policy convergence products would be endorsed by CFS Plenary, as planned, following a series of virtual negotiations. Should one or both of these products not be



finalized in time for CFS 47, taking into consideration the need for sufficient time for their translation before plenary, either the plenary session can proceed without these items, or, a Special Session could be convened during the first half of 2021 specifically for the purpose of endorsing one, or both, of these products. Similar arrangements were made for the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), which took more time to be completed than originally envisaged and were endorsed at a Special session of CFS in May 2012. Such arrangements would still allow CFS to contribute substantively with its policy guidance to the Food Systems Summit, expected to take place during the last part of 2021.

2.1.3 Gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition

The schedule of activities may have to be revised if the finalization of one or both of the VGs FSyN and Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches is delayed. If that happens, activities of this workstream may need to be rescheduled. At present, CFS 47 is expected to endorse a Facilitator for the process of an Open-Ended Working Group along with Terms of Reference for that process.

Strategic objective 3 – Uptake

Foster the uptake, follow-up and review, and sharing of experiences and best practices on the use and application of CFS products at all levels.

Output 3.1 Conclusion of follow-up and review sessions

Delivered through the follow-up and review of both global and country/region specific FSN situations, trends, progress, challenges and sharing lessons; assessing the effectiveness of CFS and voluntarily monitoring the use and application of its policy products and recommendations.

3.1.1 Global thematic event on CFS-FFA

No major disruptions to the workplan are envisaged, however, the prevailing circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic could affect the number of responses received to the calls for inputs. Inputs are crucial to monitoring progress in the use and application of the CFS-FFA, and without them the monitoring exercise cannot be considered complete. To this end, the deadline to send contributions has been extended by one month (until 30 April 2020).

Supporting activities

B.2.1 CFS Engagement in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



CFS Business Continuity Plan in the Context of Covid-19

Doc No: CFS/BurAG/2020/04/17/06

CFS has sent its contribution to the 2020 High Level Political Forum, scheduled to take place in New York from 7 to 17 July 2020. Plans for outreach activities to be carried out by the CFS Chair may have to be re-adjusted in case the event is cancelled, or turned into a virtual meeting.

B.2.2 CFS Multi-year Programme of Work

The Annual Update of the MYPoW Rolling Section will be a background document for CFS 47, as well an agenda item for upcoming Bureau and Advisory Group meetings. Potential delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which have spillover effects to 2021 and onwards, will be taken into account.

B.2.3 Communication/Outreach and Resource mobilization

CFS activities in this area will continue as planned while incorporating content on the impacts of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition.

THE ROLE OF CFS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Based on the above overview, all items that are included in the current draft CFS 47 Agenda could potentially be retained, with two caveats: (a) format and draft Timetable would require some re-adjustment if the session will take place virtually; and (b) policy convergence items will only be “for discussion” (vice decision) if final versions are not ready for endorsement. However, Bureau and Advisory Group members could take the opportunity to start a timely discussion on ways in which CFS (including its Plenary session and year-round activities) could be leveraged in the context of Covid-19.

The following questions could be helpful in guiding such reflections:

- How can CFS, in line with its first strategic objective (Platform), provide a space where stakeholders can regularly exchange experiences and good practices on measures that they have taken to minimize the impacts of Covid-19 to food security and nutrition at local, national, and regional levels?
- How can CFS, in line with its second strategic objective (Policy), ensure that its policy guidance will endure the test of time by being relevant to a post Covid-19 context?