

DATES OF FUTURE CFS PLENARY SESSIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

At its meeting on 19 December, the Bureau *“noted the need for a follow-up discussion on potential alternative dates for future CFS plenaries from 2025 onwards. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a proposal containing options, considering the overall calendar of FAO, RBA and UN events, as well as the interlinkages between the CFS Plenaries and intersessional work”*.

This request was based on the consideration that different high-level meetings are scheduled in the month of October, and that moving the CFS plenary to another month could have a positive impact in terms of high-level participation and visibility.

In this context, Bureau and Advisory Group members may want to discuss whether alternative dates could be considered for future CFS plenary sessions.

The present document is intended to provide elements and indications to inform an initial discussion between Bureau and Advisory Group members, including considerations concerning the current scenario that foresees the CFS plenary taking place in October as well as two alternative options.

II. CURRENT CFS WORKFLOW – CFS PLENARY TAKING PLACE IN OCTOBER

With the CFS plenary currently scheduled in the fourth week of October, the part of the intersessional period that is dedicated to the preparation of the background documentation for the plenary and to the development of the different activities and policy outcomes lasts around eight months, from the second half of November to the end of July.

The background documents that are expected to be presented for consideration by the Committee are required to be ready in all languages six weeks before the plenary starts, which means the second week of September.

This implies that these documents are finalized by the Bureau and sent for translation 5 weeks before they are circulated in all languages which corresponds to the first week of August. In this regard, the Bureau and Advisory Group usually meet at the end of July to approve these documents and give a few days to the Secretariat to format them.

The month of August is mainly dedicated to the translation of documents and for the Secretariat to take care of logistical matters in preparation of the plenary, which continue in September and the first half of October.

In the course of the intersessional period, six rounds of Bureau and Advisory Group meetings are scheduled in order to prepare the plenary and oversee the implementation of the CFS programme of work. These meetings are usually scheduled in November, January, March, May, July and September.

Similarly, Open-Ended Working Group meetings – dedicated to the development of specific workstreams planned in the programme of work – take place between November and July. In case of policy workstreams, negotiations for the finalization of the policy agreements are usually scheduled between May and July and may require different sessions of negotiations (each session could last up to one week).

HLPE-FSN reports are launched in June or July and then discussed during the plenary in October, as the starting point for the policy workstream that would take place the following intersessional period.

The Final Report approved at the end of each CFS Plenary in October is presented to the FAO Council in December and to ECOSOC in April of the following year.

With the current scenario, the CFS plenary takes place in the same month of the World Food Day, in line with the historical linkages between these two events. At the same time, the CFS plenary takes place at the end of a very busy period with many international meetings which reduces the possibility of high-level participation.

III. POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE SCHEDULES

A) ALTERNATIVE 1 – CFS PLENARY TAKING PLACE IN FEBRUARY

Alternatively, the CFS plenary could take place in the first week of February.

The part of the intersessional period that is dedicated to the preparation of the background documentation for the plenary and to the development of the different activities and policy outcomes would last around eight months, from early March to early November.

The background documents to be presented for consideration by the Committee would have to be ready in all languages by 22 December (six weeks before the plenary starts). This would mean that all documents would be finalized by the Bureau in early November and sent for translation by mid-November.

Logistical matters and organizational aspects related to the plenary preparation would be dealt with between mid-November and early February.

As currently foreseen, six rounds of Bureau and Advisory Group meetings would be held in the course of the intersessional period, taking place in March, May, July, September, November and January.

The same timeframe (March-November) would apply for Open-Ended Working Groups while negotiations of policy agreements would be scheduled between September and mid-November.

The HLPE-FSN report would be launched between mid-September and mid-November and then discussed during the plenary in February.

The Final Report approved at the end of each CFS Plenary in October would be presented to the FAO Council in April and to ECOSOC in April of the following year.

In terms of other events taking place in the same period, every two years the CFS Plenary might be held back to back to FAO Regional Conferences. For example, in February 2024, the FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East and for Asia and the Pacific are taking place, in addition to the IFAD Governing Council and the WFP Executive Board.

B) ALTERNATIVE 2 – CFS PLENARY TAKING PLACE IN JULY

Another alternative could be represented by the CFS plenary taking place the third week of July.

The part of the intersessional period that is dedicated to the preparation of the background documentation for the plenary and to the development of the different activities and policy outcomes would last around eight months, from September to end of April.

The background documents to be presented for consideration by the Committee would be required to be ready in all languages by the first week of June (six weeks before the plenary starts). This would mean that all documents would be finalized by the Bureau by the last week of April and sent for translation by early May.

Logistical matters and organizational aspects related to the plenary preparation would be dealt with between early May and mid-July.

As currently foreseen, six rounds of Bureau and Advisory Group meetings would be held in the course of the intersessional period, taking place in September, November, January, February, April and June.

The same timeframe (September-April) would apply for Open-Ended Working Groups while negotiations of policy agreements would be scheduled between February and mid-April.

The HLPE-FSN report would be launched between mid-March and mid-April and then discussed during the plenary in July.

The Final Report approved at the end of each CFS Plenary in October would be presented to the FAO Council in December and to ECOSOC in April of the following year.

In terms of other events taking place in the same period, every two years the CFS Plenary might be held back to back to UN Food Systems Stocktaking Moment. In addition, the High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) usually takes place in mid-July.

IV. TABLE WITH ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

ACTIVITY	CURRENT SCENARIO	ALTERNATIVE 1	ALTERNATIVE 2
Date of CFS Plenary	Fourth week of October	First week of February	Third week of July
Intersessional period	From November to the end of July	From March to early November	From September to end of April
Deadline for finalization of background documents for the plenary	End of July	Early November	Last week of April
Deadline for circulation of plenary documents in all languages	Second week of September	22 December	First week of June
Dates for Bureau and Advisory Group meetings	November, January, March, May, July and September	March, May, July, September, November and January	September, November, January, February, April and June
Timeframe for OEWG meetings and for negotiations	From November to July (OEWG) and from May to July (negotiations)	From March to November (OEWG) and from September to mid-November (negotiations)	From September to April (OEWG) and from February to mid-April (negotiations)
Launch of HLPE-FSN reports	June or July	Between mid-September and mid-July	Between mid-March and mid-April
Reporting to FAO Council and ECOSOC	December (FAO Council) and April (ECOSOC)	April (FAO Council) and April of the following year (ECOSOC)	December (FAO Council) and April of the following year (ECOSOC)