

## PROMOTING DECENT WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

### DRAFT CONCLUSIONS

#### MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The session highlights the importance of agriculture and food systems in creating decent and productive jobs, as well as the importance of harnessing this potential to achieve sustainable development and contribute to the realization of the right to adequate food.

The panel is moderated by Christine Campeau, Global Policy Director, Food and Nutrition Systems at CARE, and a keynote presentation by XXX, International Labour Organization (ILO) on the ILO policy guidelines on Promotion of Decent Work in Agrifood Sector and their synergies and complementarities with the CFS policy instruments.

The panel is composed of:

- XXX (representative from Asia and the Pacific) TBC
- XXX (representative from Africa) TBC
- Svetlana Boincean, Agricultural Coordinator, International Union of Food workers (IUF), CSIPM representative
- Chris Hogg, Global Head of Public Affairs (VP), Nestle, PSM representative

2. The Committee:
  - a) Welcomes the Plenary session on *“Promoting Decent Work in Agriculture and Food Systems”* recognizing its critical role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;
  - b) Takes note of the overview provided in the document CFS 2024/52/inf.22 *“Promoting Decent Work in Agriculture and Food Systems – Information Note”*;
  - c) Highlights that: i) access to employment is a key element to consider for hunger and poverty reduction; ii) taking measures to encourage sustainable development to provide opportunities for work that foster adequate remuneration allowing for an adequate standard of living for rural and urban wage earners and their families is critical to achieve food security and nutrition;
  - d) Recognizes that several CFS policy instruments refer to the importance of developing and strengthening policies that create and safeguard decent work opportunities for people in agriculture and food systems to support their wellbeing, while contributing the realization of human rights, by implementing existing global policy and human rights instruments, including the ILO fundamental conventions;



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e) Takes note of the following comments provided in Plenary:

- i. XXX
- ii. XXX
- iii. XXX

## ANNEX 1

*[This annex includes, for ease of reference, the document “Promoting Decent Work in Agriculture and Food Systems – Information Note”, which will be part of the background documentation for the CFS Plenary (CFS 2024/52/Inf.22)]*

# PROMOTING DECENT WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

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## Background

1. Agriculture and food systems are a major source of employment in many countries, especially in developing and emerging economies, employing over 1.23 billion people worldwide<sup>1</sup>. This includes 877 million people employed in the subsectors of primary production (agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing, aquaculture, hunting), with the remaining 375 million people in other segments of the agri-food supply chain, including food processing and services, and manufacturing of non-food agricultural products. However, despite their crucial contribution, workers in agriculture and food systems have long been underpaid and undervalued. In many countries, they lack adequate social and labour protection afforded to workers in other sectors, while their jobs are often characterized by decent work deficits, including limited access to fundamental rights at work, poor occupational safety and health practices, excessive working hours, a lack of reliable and adequate incomes<sup>2</sup>.
2. Agricultural and food workers – both waged and self-employed – experience the highest incidence of poverty and are among groups of workers particularly exposed to socio-economic vulnerability. A quarter of agricultural workforce is in extreme working poverty<sup>3</sup>.
3. The extent of the precariousness and difficult working conditions is of particular concern for seasonal and migrant workers, including undocumented ones, in agriculture and food systems, as well as for vulnerable groups of the population such as women, youth and Indigenous Peoples who are overrepresented among informal, casual and low-paid workers. Of the 160 million children in child labour worldwide, 112 million, or 70 per cent, are in agriculture, including farming, livestock, forestry, fishing and aquaculture, where they often work in hazardous conditions<sup>4</sup>.
4. Addressing employment and labour challenges facing the agri-food sector is essential to the transition to sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems. The critical role that the promotion of decent work plays in this transition is also highlighted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which calls on all countries to “*promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*”<sup>5</sup> as a key action to end poverty globally. Similarly, stemming from the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and with the shared objective of transforming global food systems, the Coalition on “*Decent Work for Equitable Food Systems*” was launched by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and CARE International. This Coalition aims to promote constructive solutions and support actions towards “*advancing equitable livelihoods, decent work and empowered communities*”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, B., Mane, E., Gurbuzer, L.Y., Caivano, G., Piedrahita, N., Schneider, K., Azhar, N., Benali, M., Chaudhary, N., Rivera, R., Ambikapathi, R. and Winters, P. (2023). [Estimating global and country-level employment in agrifood systems](#). FAO Statistics Working Paper Series, No. 23-34. Rome, FAO.

<sup>2</sup> [ILO policy guidelines: Promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector \(2023\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> ILO: World Economic and social Outlook 2016: Transforming Jobs to End Poverty, (2016), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> ILO and UNICEF: [Child Labour](#). Global estimates 2020

<sup>5</sup> SDG 8 – [2030 Agenda for sustainable development](#)

<sup>6</sup> Reference is made to the UNFSS and its Action Track 4 (Advance Equitable Livelihoods).

5. In this context, with the overarching objective of eliminating hunger and malnutrition, ensuring food security and nutrition for all, and contributing to the progressive realization of the right to food, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) adopted the CFS Multi-Year Programme of work (MYPoW) 2024- 2027<sup>7</sup> at CFS 51, which includes a workstream focused on “*the role and rights of agriculture and food systems workers*”.
6. In particular, under its platform function (*Leverage the convening power as the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform to discuss the FSN situation and coordinate collective action at all levels*) the Committee agreed to hold a CFS Plenary discussion in October 2024 on Decent Work in Agriculture and Food Systems to highlight the key role of decent work in agriculture and food systems from a right to food perspective. The session will also provide its platform for relevant stakeholders to discuss potential synergies and complementarities between CFS policy agreements and ILO policy convergence work.

## Synergies and complementarities between CFS and ILO policy convergence work

### A. ILO - Policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector

7. Responding to the requests from its constituents, in May 2023, the ILO convened a *Meeting of Experts on Decent Work in the Agri-food Sector: An Essential Part of Sustainable Food Systems*. Bringing together experts comprising governments, employers and workers, as well as representatives of intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations, including FAO, IFAD, and Care International, the Meeting discussed and adopted Policy Guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector<sup>8</sup>.
8. These ILO Policy Guidelines set out common principles and the policy framework that should guide action to achieve decent work in the agri-food sector. It provides guidance in the form of concrete, actionable recommendations on the design and implementation of employment and labour policies, strategies, programmes, legislation, and administrative measures in the agri-food sector. Recognizing the diversity and significant number of actions that may be required given the vast scope and complexity of the subject, the guidelines emphasize the need for an integrated and coordinated approach at various levels (international, national, sectoral, local, and enterprise) and for the involvement of a wide range of actors.
9. The Guidelines draw their principles from ILO international labour standards (Conventions, Protocols and Recommendations) and other sources, including Declarations, codes of conduct and

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<sup>7</sup> [2024-2027 MYPoW](#)

<sup>8</sup> [ILO - Policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector \(2023\)](#)

other policy guidance directly targeting the agri-food sector, or of relevance to it, adopted and endorsed by the International Labour Conference or the ILO Governing Body.

10. They are structured around five chapters. Chapter 1 sets out the scope of the guidelines and identifies the intended users, while subsequent chapters cover the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda. Chapter 2 focuses on the rights at work, with a focus on the five categories of fundamental principles and rights at work, namely (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (c) the effective abolition of child labour; (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and (e) a safe and healthy working environment. It reaffirms that international labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work are essential to a rights-based and human-centred approach to the development of the agri-food sector that responds to changing patterns in the world of work, protects workers and promotes sustainable enterprises and economic units. It also underscores the importance of promoting gender equality and developing policies to address gender-based violence and harassment.
11. Chapter 3, which is on decent jobs and productive employment in the agri-food sector, provides guidance on sustainable enterprise development in the sector, including through the creation of an enabling business environment and business development services; the promotion of equitable access to financial services, to new technologies and to markets; investment in infrastructure; the promotion of skills and lifelong learning; the promotion of decent jobs for youth; the formalization of the informal economy; and a just transition towards an environmentally sustainable agri-food sector. This chapter is of particular relevance to small-scale agri-food production.
12. Chapter 4 considers social and labour protection, highlighting the essential role that effective social protection and decent terms and conditions of employment in the sector play in reducing poverty, achieving decent work, stimulating economic growth, improving livelihoods and safeguarding food security at a global level.
13. Chapter 5 addresses social dialogue and tripartism as key elements to be considered in all policies and action to ensure access to decent work in the agri-food sector.

## **B. Main CFS policy instruments that refer to promoting decent work in agriculture and food systems**

14. In producing policy recommendations and guidelines on a wide range of food security and nutrition topics, the Committee also tackled the key role of decent work and dignified livelihoods in advancing sustainable food systems and contributing to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.
15. One of the major CFS policy instruments, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food (VG RtF)<sup>9</sup> refer to access to employment as a key element for Governments to consider for hunger

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<sup>9</sup> [CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security](#) (2005).

and poverty reduction, along with direct and immediate measures to ensure access to adequate food as part of a social safety net. Additionally, they also specifically recommend taking measures to encourage sustainable development to provide opportunities for work that provide remuneration allowing for an adequate standard of living for rural and urban wage earners and their families, and to promote and protect self-employment.

16. The CFS Principles on Responsible Investment in Agriculture and food systems (CFS-RAI)<sup>10</sup> recognize the role of responsible investment in agriculture and food systems for sustainable and inclusive economic development and poverty eradication by respecting the fundamental principles and rights at work, especially those of agricultural and food workers, as defined in the ILO core conventions<sup>11</sup>; and creating and fostering decent work through improved working conditions and incomes. The CFS-RAI Principles also emphasize the importance of increasing young people's capacity and/or access to decent work and entrepreneurs' opportunities.
17. The CFS policy recommendations on Sustainable Agricultural Development for Food Security and Nutrition: What Roles for Livestock? <sup>12</sup> explicitly refer to the ILO conventions by reflecting on the need to "ensure that working and living conditions of all workers at all stages of production, transformation and distribution comply with the ILO conventions, are protected by domestic laws and provide adequate living wages".
18. The importance of ensuring access to safe drinking water for all workers at the workplace is emphasized in the CFS policy recommendations on Water for Food Security and Nutrition<sup>13</sup> as well as in the ILO Policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector and the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Agriculture
19. The promotion of social protection programmes to ensure food producers and workers have decent wages and sufficient livelihoods is emphasized in several CFS policy instruments, such as the policy recommendations on Social Protection for Food Security and the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSN)<sup>14</sup>. These instruments also reflect the positive impact that access to decent work has on empowering and engaging youth across food systems. This impact is articulated in the VGFSN, both in one of its six guiding principles and throughout the focus area of 'Sustainable food supply chains to achieve healthy diets in the context of economic, social, and environmental sustainability, and climate change'<sup>1</sup>.
20. Decent work also features extensively in the policy recommendations 'Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems'<sup>15</sup>. These policy recommendations underline the importance of developing and strengthening policies that create and safeguard decent work opportunities for young people in agriculture and food systems to support their

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<sup>10</sup> [The CFS Principles on Responsible Investment in Agriculture and food systems](#) (2014)

<sup>11</sup> ILO Declaration for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (1998)

<sup>12</sup> [Sustainable Agricultural Development for Food Security and Nutrition: What Roles for Livestock?](#) (2016)

<sup>13</sup> [Water for Food Security and Nutrition](#) (2015)

<sup>14</sup> [Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition](#) (2021)

<sup>15</sup> [Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment](#) (2022)

wellbeing, stressing the need for Governments to promote the realization of human rights of young persons, by implementing existing global policy and human rights instruments, including the ILO fundamental conventions.

21. The CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition<sup>16</sup> also recognize that access to decent work is vital to human welfare and well-being and is a key contributor to food security and nutrition. In providing guidance on women's access to labour market and decent work, they call for the promotion of "decent work in public and private sectors, including through respect of workers' rights, including the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, social dialogue and other measures including access to social protection systems".
22. The CFS MYPoW<sup>6</sup> 2024-2027 includes a dedicated policy convergence process on *Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition*. This process also aims to highlight the importance of promoting access to decent work for all in agriculture and food systems for improved food security and nutrition, thus contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

## Conclusions

23. Agriculture and food systems hold significant potential for creating decent and productive jobs, and harnessing this potential is imperative to achieving sustainable development and, contributing to the realization of the right to adequate food.
24. Policy coordination and cross-sectoral policy coherence are key elements in achieving our shared goal of realizing the 2030 Agenda. Designing policies and programmes that support the implementation of the policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector and the related recommendations included in the CFS policy instruments would represent an important step in making concrete progress towards building sustainable food systems and achieving food security and nutrition for all.

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<sup>16</sup> [CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition \(2023\)](#)