



## CFS POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON REDUCING INEQUALITIES FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

### FIRST DRAFT

#### Rationale

Rising inequalities within and among countries is recognized as a major challenge to sustainable development<sup>1</sup> and human rights.

It is evident that inequalities across food systems and related systems affect food security and nutritional outcomes. High levels of concentration of power in food production, corporate concentration in food trade, transformation and distribution, unequal distribution of agricultural assets and access to natural resources and finance are all trends that perpetuate and deepen inequalities among different actors in agriculture and food systems<sup>2</sup>.

Inequalities in food security and nutrition (FSN) reduce people's life chances and quality of life, decrease productivity, perpetuate poverty, hinder economic growth and tend to systematically disadvantage and exclude certain groups: women, smallholders<sup>3</sup>, farmworkers, homeless, informal workers, migrants, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses, elderly people, youth, boys and girls. Often, multiple and intersecting disadvantages and discriminations<sup>4</sup> amplify marginalization and exclusion.

This vicious cycle continues as food insecurity and malnutrition further deepen inequalities, hinder the fulfillment of other rights, such as the right to health and education, and further reduce opportunities for those who are in vulnerable situations and marginalized people<sup>5</sup>. Ongoing natural disasters, shocks and conflicts in various parts of the world add another layer of complexity and exert additional pressure to those who are already in vulnerable situations.

Sustained inequalities within and across countries, as well as between those in vulnerable situations and other social groups, can slow growth and lead to political instability and forced migration, with related adverse consequences on food security and nutrition and the progressive realization of the right to adequate food, in high, medium and low-income countries, as well as countries in fragile contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), Para 14.

<sup>2</sup> [CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work 2024-2027 \(MYPoW\)](#), Page 12.

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of these policy recommendations, references to smallholders include those that are family farmers –women and men- and those that are small scale producers and processors, pastoralists, artisans, fishers, community closely dependent on forests, Indigenous Peoples and agricultural workers.

<sup>4</sup> CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment Para 98 iv) page 29.

<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of these policy recommendations, "those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people" refers to the principle of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), which is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole. LNOB not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor, but requires combating discrimination and rising inequalities within and amongst countries, and their root causes. A major cause of people being left behind is persistent forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination, which leaves individuals, families and whole communities marginalized, and excluded. It is grounded in the UN's normative standards that are foundational principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international human rights law and national legal systems across the world.

LNOB compels us to focus on discrimination and inequalities (often multiple and intersecting) that undermine the agency of people as holders of rights. Many of the barriers people face in accessing services, resources and equal opportunities are not simply accidents of fate or a lack of availability of resources, but rather the result of discriminatory laws, policies and social practices that leave particular groups of people further and further behind.

Evidence shows that food insecurity is more prevalent among adult women than men in every region of the world<sup>6</sup> and exacerbates gender inequalities. Achieving the realization of women’s and girls’ rights, especially the right to food, is therefore urgent and more important than ever for food security and nutrition<sup>7</sup>.

In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for “a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met”, the following CFS policy recommendations are envisioned as a focused, action-oriented document that provides guidance on developing and strengthening policies that explicitly focus on reducing inequalities and addressing their systemic drivers to achieve food security and nutrition for all, leaving no one behind.

In working towards this goal, the importance of grounding actions that address the drivers of FSN inequalities in a rights-based approach must be recognized, as well as the need to take into account national, sub-national and local contexts.

While all stakeholders share the responsibility to reduce inequalities in agriculture and food systems, their different roles should be recognized. These policy recommendations are therefore primarily addressed to Governments (relevant ministries, national, regional and local authorities and institutions), as well as to other relevant stakeholders, such as: international organizations, international financial institutions, universities and academic institutions, private sector (including micro, small and medium as well as larger-sized-entities), philanthropic entities and civil society.

These policy recommendations are voluntary and non-binding. Nothing in these policy recommendations should be read as limiting or undermining any legal obligations or commitments to which States may be subject under international law, including the UDHR and other international human rights instruments. The policy recommendations are intended to be interpreted and applied in accordance with national legal systems and their institutions. They should be implemented within countries and at regional and global levels, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. They build upon and complement relevant existing CFS policy instruments and are informed by the CFS High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) report on “Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition”.

## A. TACKLE INEQUALITIES WITHIN FOOD SYSTEMS

### Access to natural resources<sup>8</sup> and access to markets

Governments should:

1. Ensure equitable tenure rights, including protection of collective tenure rights in accordance with the [CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security \(CFS-VGGT\)](#) and other relevant frameworks; *(tenure rights)*

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<sup>6</sup> 2023 The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, Page 55.

<sup>7</sup> CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment, Para 4, Background and rationale.

<sup>8</sup> The CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (CFS-VGGT) can be used as an overarching reference framework for this subsection.

2. Ensure respect of women’s land tenure rights and property rights, ownership, use and transfer –including through inheritance and divorce, taking into consideration national legal frameworks and priorities<sup>9,10</sup>; (*women’s tenure rights*)
3. Design, strengthen, and implement legislation or introduce new legislation<sup>11</sup> that promote and improve access to land, fisheries, forests, aquatic resources and other food production resources for all, women and men, youth, Indigenous Peoples, those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people within the national context; (*access to resources*)
4. Develop and strengthen policies, laws and regulations that foster a more enabling environment for people who experience barriers in accessing international, regional, national and local markets for land, inputs, services, including digital and financial services, and water while mitigating concentration of resources; (*access to markets*)
5. Foster inclusive public procurement programs, food assistance and school feeding programmes which promote healthy diets and the equitable and inclusive sourcing of locally produced foods, while implementing policies that prioritize smallholders<sup>12</sup>, particularly women and youth; (*public procurement*)

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

6. Increase the capacity of smallholders’, vulnerable and marginalized groups’ capacity to access international, regional, national and local markets by strengthening cooperatives, associations, unions, and networks, and other organizations which can expand their bargaining power and participation in agriculture and food systems value chains, prioritizing healthy and nutritious foods to address all forms of malnutrition. (*inclusive market participation*)

### **Institutions, cooperation and partnerships**

Governments should:

7. Facilitate formal and informal organizations of people in vulnerable situations and marginalized groups and build inclusive, accessible, transparent and accountable institutions and partnerships to foster their collective action and participation in negotiations and decision-making processes by empowering individuals, civil society organizations, local organizations<sup>13</sup>, and communities to actively participate in shaping policies related to agriculture and food systems; (*participation and representation*)

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

8. Promote, strengthen and implement FSN strategies, policies and programmes for supporting, financing, and enhancing the social and solidarity economy<sup>14</sup> recognizing their role in providing decent work opportunities, particularly to those who are marginalized and in vulnerable situations, and in eliminating poverty; (*social and solidarity economy*)

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<sup>9</sup> CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment, Para 4 Background and rationale, para 69 i)

<sup>10</sup> CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (CFS-VGGT) para 4.6.

<sup>11</sup> UN Women and OHCHR, Realizing Women’s Rights to Land and Other Productive Resources (Second edition, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of these policy recommendations, references to smallholders include: those that are family farmers –women and men- and those that are small scale producers and processors, pastoralists, artisans, fishers, community closely dependent on forests, Indigenous Peoples and agricultural workers.

<sup>13</sup> For the purpose of these policy recommendations local organizations refers to women led, gender centred, youth led , small scale producers led, organizations of people with disabilities, indigenous peoples organizations, community base organizations, among others.

<sup>14</sup> Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) definition available at [Resolution II, International Labour Conference – 110th Session, 2022](#). Additional information can also be found at: [UNGA 77/281](#).

- Promote and finance North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, to improve the productivity of those who are marginalized and in vulnerable situations, as well as their access to finance, information and capacity to engage in all markets; (*cooperation for development*)

International Organizations<sup>15</sup> should:

- Improve the governance of global agriculture and food systems , focusing on increasing the representation, voice and decision-making power of those in vulnerable situations, and marginalized people, and of developing countries. (*agriculture and food systems governance*)

### **Investments in supply chains and in disadvantaged areas<sup>16</sup>**

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

- Increase responsible investment<sup>17</sup> in inclusive value chain approaches, , food processing and distribution to reduce inequalities and promote sustainable food supply chains while protecting labor rights, especially in disadvantaged areas; (*inclusive value chains*)
- Boost responsible investment in infrastructure, logistics, services, technologies and supply chains, especially in disadvantaged areas, by adopting territorial approaches and strengthening regional and local trade and market connections; (*improved connectivity*)
- Invest in expanding decent rural, non-farm employment opportunities, particularly for women and youth, to ensure that equitable and inclusive income generating opportunities exist outside of agriculture; (*non-farm employment*)
- Create opportunities for smallholders, those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people to strengthen their financial literacy and access to finance, including through credit, savings, insurance, while recognizing that increased access to finance for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can enhance these opportunities; (*access to finance*)
- Invest in inclusive, accessible and transparent information systems, as well as digital literacy across agriculture and food systems, leveraging innovations in digital technologies – such as market price information services, weather forecasting, climate services and video-based extension – to enable all stakeholders, particularly women and youth, to make informed decisions and help overcome asymmetries in access to information; (*access to information*)
- Increase responsible investment in support of agroecological and other innovative approaches<sup>18</sup>, including co-generation of knowledge, valuing the contribution of local knowledge and traditional practices, that contribute to the transition to more sustainable, resilient, inclusive agriculture and food systems, while also recognizing their role in facilitating equitable access to healthy diets; (*agroecological and other innovative approaches*)

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<sup>15</sup> For the purpose of these policy recommendations, international organizations refer, among others, to the UN Rome-based Agencies (FAO, IFAD, and WFP), other inter-governmental organizations, both international and regional, with a mandate related to food security and nutrition, as well as International Financial Institutions.

<sup>16</sup> For the purpose of these policy recommendations “disadvantaged areas” refer to statistically designated areas of socio-economic disadvantage on the basis of socio-economic factors, education, employment and resources.

<sup>17</sup> In accordance with the [CFS Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems](#).

<sup>18</sup> In accordance with the [CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition](#).

17. Increase investment in research, extension, innovation, and technical assistance in collaboration with universities, research institutions, and civil society organizations, especially from the global south, while also improving linkages between markets and those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people, particularly smallholders. (*inclusive research and extension*)

### **Food environments including processing and retail**

Governments should:

18. Undertake proactive planning of food environments, including in areas of rapid demographic growth and urbanization, to ensure that all populations, particularly those most at risk of food insecurity and malnutrition, have equitable access to adequate, sufficient, affordable, safe and nutritious food. This may include nutrition labelling instruments to promote healthy diets and address power imbalances within agriculture and food systems; (*healthy food environments*)

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

19. Protect the rights and recognize the role of informal vendors in meeting the food security and nutritional needs of populations and develop planning and policy tools that create an enabling and protected environment for them to sell healthy, nutritious and safe foods, while linking them to social and financial services that create opportunities for them to invest in their own businesses; (*informal vendors*)
20. Promote better access to knowledge and innovation for those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people, including through training and capacity building, and other services that can contribute to the reduction of food losses and waste throughout all stages of the food chain; (*FLW*)
21. Develop and strengthen programs and partnerships, such as state, community, or public-private food banks, community kitchens and school meal programmes that foster the recovery and redistribution of food to promote the access to healthy and nutritious, adequate, sufficient, affordable, safe food by those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people. (*food recovery and redistribution*)

## **B. TACKLE INEQUALITIES IN RELATED SYSTEMS**

### **Access to services and resources that impact food security and nutrition**

Governments should:

22. Foster universal access to and investment in services that are relevant to food security and nutrition, including primary healthcare services, immunization, education at all levels, housing, energy supply, sanitation, safe drinking water and transport infrastructure; (*universal access to services*)
23. Foster universal access to and investment in social protection as direct support to food security and nutrition. This involves analyzing and addressing specific barriers to access social protection systems and promoting the participation of local and community based organizations and actors in the design, implementation, and monitoring of social protection policies and programs; (*social protection*)
24. Leverage fiscal space, including through measures such as progressive taxation, to prioritize basic public services and use the available resources to equitably support those most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition and address the drivers of inequality. (*fiscal space*)

## **Trade, investment and debt governance related to food security and nutrition**

Governments and International Organizations should:

25. Incorporate an equitable and sustainable focus into trade, investment and debt governance related to food security and nutrition by addressing existing disparities of opportunity, wealth and decision-making power within food systems at the appropriate fora; *(equity and sustainability)*
26. Foster increased transparency and inclusion in the negotiation of multilateral trade and investment agreements to promote sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance access to healthy diets and healthy food environments for all, while also prioritizing the needs of those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people; *(transparency)*
27. Strengthen the rules-based, non-discriminatory, open, fair, inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core<sup>19</sup>; *(rules-based multilateral trade)*
28. Assess the food security and nutrition constraints associated with national debt and undertake appropriate measures to increase fiscal space including by engaging in debt restructuring with creditors to redesign debt terms, extend repayment periods, reduce debt burdens and promote global mechanisms such as the Food Import Financing Facility (FIFF); *(debt management)*

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

29. Continue efforts to address market power concentration in agriculture and food systems by the advancement of transparency of information on market structure and concentration. *(market power concentration in agriculture and food systems)*

Governments should:

30. Continue efforts to repurpose agricultural support which negatively affects food production prices, nutrition, trade, livelihoods and environment, in order to advance the transition towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems. *(agricultural support)*

## **C. TACKLE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND OTHER DRIVERS OF INEQUALITIES**

### **Systemic drivers of inequality**

Governments should:

31. Address the systemic drivers of inequalities through the promotion of meaningful inclusion, participation and representation of those in vulnerable situations and marginalized people in policymaking and practice with the aim of protecting their rights, including the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security; *(participation and representation)*

Governments and International Organizations should:

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<sup>19</sup> [COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action](#)

32. Enhance policy coherence and coordination across sectors such as agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forest, water and sanitation, environment, health, economy, finance, and trade through the promotion of interministerial and international platforms on food security and nutrition with a strong focus on reducing inequalities; *(multisectoral approach)*

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

33. Identify, manage conflicts of interests, including in research and extension services, by developing and strengthening safeguards against power imbalances in agriculture and food systems, and other safeguards to prioritize public interests and promote transparent and participatory decision-making; *(conflicts of interest)*
34. Increase responsible investment<sup>12</sup> that foster the potential of countries, especially developing countries, through appropriate financing instruments, such as climate financing, blended instruments, public-private partnerships, loss and damage funds, climate financing, among others; *(sustainable financing)*
35. Promote voluntary sharing of knowledge and practices, research and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms and improve equitable access to research results and technology on mutually agreed terms, at the national regional and international level, such as through South-South, North-South and Triangular Cooperation<sup>20</sup>; *(knowledge transfer)*
36. Address the structural causes of gender inequality, including discriminatory laws, policies, social norms, attitudes, harmful customary practices and gender stereotypes, in order to achieve the realization of women's and girls' rights, especially the right to food. This entails promoting a coordinated and integrated policy approach that supports the implementation of sectoral programmes such as health, education, science, innovation, economic, agriculture, food safety and accessibility, energy, environment, water and sanitation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and social protection that respond to gender inequality;<sup>21</sup> *(gender equality policies)*

Governments should:

37. Promote access to decent work for all in agriculture and food systems by strengthening regulatory frameworks and the enforcement of laws and regulations in practice to enable wages that provide an adequate standard of living; *(decent work)*
38. Prevent and eliminate labor rights violations, including child labor, including by ensuring labor inspection systems in occupations related to agriculture and food systems; *(labor rights)*
39. Develop and strengthen policies that pay specific attention to women's and girls' unequal burden of care and domestic responsibilities in food security and nutrition. These can include measures to reconcile paid work and unpaid care work responsibilities, such as flexible working arrangements maternity protection and paid parental leave<sup>22</sup> for women and men and the provision of high-quality, accessible, affordable and inclusive childcare<sup>23</sup>, as well as care systems. *(gender gaps)*

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<sup>20</sup> [CFS Policy Recommendations on Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems](#), recommendation 5g, page 9.

<sup>21</sup> CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition, recommendation 39 ii) page 12.

<sup>22</sup> CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition, para 82.

<sup>23</sup> CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition, recommendations 52 and 51 v).

## Climate, ecological, political and economic crises and FSN related actions

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

40. Prioritize populations whose livelihoods and safety are threatened by climate change, biodiversity loss, conflict, natural disasters and other contemporary global crises through targeted policies and resource allocations, including by developing skills, recognizing traditional knowledge and practices and by increasing, adapting and diversifying incomes as well as by enhancing access to early-warning systems, anticipatory actions, climate risk management services; (*protecting livelihoods*)
41. Promote the participation and representation of those most vulnerable to climate shocks in climate action decision-making at all levels; (*participation in climate action*)
42. Address food insecurity and malnutrition across fragile contexts, including in situations of conflict and protracted crises, by promoting coherent and well-coordinated humanitarian assistance and development programmes such as resilience building, while also upholding all Human Rights obligations, particularly the right to food, and International Humanitarian Law<sup>24</sup>; (*HDP nexus*)
43. Foster funding mechanisms to support the transformation towards more equitable, sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems. (*funding FS transformation*)

### D. STRENGTHEN DATA AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS TO ENABLE IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING AND MONITORING OF INEQUALITIES IN FSN-RELEVANT DOMAINS

#### FSN data collection, analysis and use

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

44. Prioritize capacity building on FSN data collection and analysis and use in areas where current relevant food security and nutrition data availability is poor, including through local universities and research institutions, with a focus on those countries which are lacking resources, infrastructures, data literacy and skills, in order to guide inclusive decision-making related to FSN<sup>25</sup>; (*FSN data capacity building*)
45. Identify and fill data- gaps, including qualitative and disaggregated<sup>26</sup> data, through investment in FSN collection, analysis, use with the aim of assessing which groups have the poorest FSN outcomes in different contexts, paying special attention to historically marginalized groups and disadvantaged regions, in order to guide inclusive decision-making related to FSN; (*closing FSN data gaps*)

Governments and International Organizations should:

46. Collect and share data to monitor agriculture and food systems market trends, including market concentration; (*market trends data*)

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<sup>24</sup> In line with the CFS Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises, Principle 4.

<sup>25</sup> [CFS Policy Recommendations on Strengthening Collection and Use of FSN Data and related Analysis Tools to Improve Decision Making in support of the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of Food of National Food Security](#), Recommendation 3 h).

<sup>26</sup> Disaggregated by sex and age, and other established demographic criteria and socio-economic variables, in accordance with the Beijing Declaration.



47. Promote innovative and inclusive governance frameworks for FSN data which strike the right balance between access and, sharing and protection, privacy and security, with the aim of creating trust and confidence<sup>27</sup>, while facilitating equitable access to data benefits. *(FSN data governance)*

### **FSN related research**

Governments and all relevant stakeholders should:

48. Increase responsible investment in agricultural and food systems research, including on harmonizing FSN data collection and analytical methods, metrics and indicators on FSN domains that facilitate globally standardized reporting, with focus on the interface between these metrics and those in vulnerable situations and disadvantaged areas; *(research investment)*
49. Promote the development and use of research that focuses on the systemic drivers of FSN inequalities, with special consideration to research carried out in and by developing countries, including qualitative and participatory research, engaging with local universities, civil society organizations and local knowledge institutions, while also taking into account diverse knowledges, such as those of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. *(diverse knowledge)*

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<sup>27</sup> [CFS Policy Recommendations on Strengthening Collection and Use of FSN Data and related Analysis Tools to Improve Decision Making in support of the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of Food of National Food Security](#), para 11.