

April 2024

CFS Call for inputs

Zero Draft of CFS Policy Recommendations on Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition

Contribution of the Philanthropic Foundations Mechanism (PFM)

Dear CFS Secretariat,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide inputs on the Zero Draft of CFS Policy Recommendations on Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition.

In previous consultations on the priority issues to be addressed at the CFS policy convergence process, we have elaborated that the recommendations could: i) **address systemic drivers of inequality**, including **power asymmetries and structural inequities**, ii) set a clear agenda on **data collection in inequalities** (specifying possibility, needs, type and current situation of data availability and usability), iii) highlight the **role of social protection policies** for food security and nutrition, iv) emphasize **participatory, inclusive, and democratic decision-making** in line with the pillar of representation highlighted in the HLPE report; and v) **challenge** persistent misconceptions **that inequality drives progress**. We have also mentioned that the PFM would more clearly articulate **potential roles for the philanthropic sector in catalyzing investments** in support of food system transformations that lead to more equal societies.

With this input, we comment on the issues raised above that are reflected in the current version of the recommendations, and we provide more elements on how we see the role for the philanthropic sector. In attendance to the cover message provided by the Rapporteur, we intended to be as concrete as possible, providing suggestions and text proposals when appropriate.

Systemic drivers, power asymmetries, social protection, participatory decision-making, inequality impacts

Overall, we appreciate the current version of recommendations, as it does address the points raised in our first communication. The Introduction sets a clear rationale for reducing inequalities, including through addressing systemic drivers, it highlights issues that are directly affected by inequalities, and it contextualizes global agreements that have recognized the topic as priority, in particular the

Agenda 2030. It also evades any comment that inequalities are indicative of progress, future versions of the recommendation could maintain this tone. For illustration and strong argumentation, the **Introduction could include a few major findings in terms of inequality trends** that were highlighted by the HLPE report, particularly those found in Chapter 2. **The PFM would welcome more information on how this introduction would feature in the adoption of the recommendations.** Would this be an integral part of the adoption, or be part of the CFS Plenary Report, if adopted?

We also find very positively that other aspects raised in the first communication of our mechanism were properly raised. Systemic drivers of inequalities are dealt in a number of paragraphs, from tenure rights, to access to resources, to social, political and others aspects (Section C.) Universal access to social protection amongst the most vulnerable is raised, as well as a whole section on stronger data collection and knowledge systems that would improve our understanding of inequality trends. This provides an important linkage with previous policy recommendations, including the most recent on data and analysis tools.

These policy recommendations could further explore how the linkages with previous CFS decisions are established. Currently, **there is only one paragraph referring to gender equality**, even though this has been recognized in the HLPE Report as one of the key drivers of inequality and the CFS had recently extensively discussed this issue. And **there is no reference being made to urban food system, the topic of the next HLPE Report. To explore these links could create a sense of continuity throughout the work of the CFS.** Policy recommendations could be backed by best available evidence, whenever possible, with the use of sources as footnotes for not increasing document length.

Finally, while we believe it was not the intention of the author that the order of the paragraphs indicates prioritization, it might unintentionally offer this conclusion. **This is in fact a key question that could be dealt with in the negotiations. Out of the 40+ recommendations, what should be prioritized?** Where do we see the strongest evidence in terms of effectiveness in dealing with social protection? Which investments are more efficient and/or which ones generate the most value added? Is it possible to measure this and compare multiple options? Under which areas would be members and other stakeholders more prepared to move forward? Do we have case studies/best practices that could show positive impact (these could also come from different areas of work, e.g. health) These are key questions to strengthen the focus and potentially applicability of the forthcoming CFS decision on the matter.

Role of philanthropy

The policy recommendations go in the right direction of consolidating a global consensus on policies and approaches that addresses inequalities in food systems. We observe other complementary efforts in this matter, the most recent one being the G20 initiative Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty.

Even though the evidence of policy tools seems to converge on a number of issues, **the critical question of financing these policies and strategies continues to be unsettled**. In very broad terms, many developing countries continue to operate with limited budgets, ODA has slightly increased in recent years, but it is still largely insufficient compared to the challenges of FSN, civil society organizations, especially farmer-led organizations, are mostly underfunded and funding mechanisms are often opaquely governed. There are calls for stronger involvement of the private sector in food system transformation finance, while acknowledging that this requires authentic debates on safeguards, conflicts of interest policies, and other protective mechanisms. Overall, **decentralization and stronger inclusion** in the governance of funding flows is required when debating financing food system transformation, including policies and strategies addressing inequalities.

This has been a crucial aspect being discussed within the philanthropic community and we believe these aspects could be more profoundly elaborated in paragraphs 30. and 35., which are the only ones touching these crucial issues.

Paragraph 35 could be expanded, as a preliminary proposal to *“35. Foster funding mechanisms to support the transformation towards more equitable, inclusive and resilient food systems. Develop diverse blended approaches that align higher risk investments with flexible financial returns, private philanthropic grants and public finance. Shift existing funds that do not account for all food system dimensions, explore shared metric and evaluations that assess comprehensive impact investments and divestment from unequal and unsustainable practices. Promote more internal alignment and coherence within public and private financing institutions, to support a diverse ecosystem of food system funders, connected and aligned with each other, moving out of isolated project-based financing to more synergic systemic impact.”*

The philanthropic sector has been operating flexible, more risk oriented and experimental funding, which we believe offer the possibility of piloting approaches that can be scale-up by the public sector once sufficiently mature. There are important lessons learned in terms of addressing inequalities within these strategies, which we will intend to bring to debate during the negotiations of these recommendations.

We thank you again for the opportunity to provide our input to the Zero Draft and we remain at your disposal for any further clarification.

Yours sincerely,

The Philanthropic Foundations Mechanism