



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES *foundation*



# PFM statement on agenda item XI. Other matters

a) Modalities for a Philanthropic Foundations Mechanism for relations with the CFS (for information)

Dear CFS Members, Participants, Observers,

I am Matheus Zanella, from the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, and I am currently Leading the Coordination of the Philanthropic Foundations Mechanism. We are very pleased to present the PROPOSAL FOR MODALITIES FOR A PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS MECHANISM FOR RELATIONS WITH THE CFS.

As rightly stated in the CFS Reform Document, private philanthropic organizations were encouraged to autonomously establish and maintain a permanent coordination mechanism for participation in the CFS. This engagement with the CFS work has been increasing over the years and, more recently, organizations felt the need to bring more perspectives from the philanthropic community into this space.

As private entities serving public goals, philanthropic foundations are increasingly called to contribute to addressing the growing challenges of disrupted food systems.

Collectively, foundations group together or with other actors launching initiatives to address these challenges. We can take risks. We can fund exploratory research, catalyze processes, support community-led initiatives, build local capacities, and support civil society actors that are often marginalized from development schemes. Foundations have flexibility to respond to the needs of these communities, and their funding can trigger further support.

It's within this context that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Agroecology Fund - a donor community of 40+ active funders supporting agroecology - and us at the Global Alliance for the Future of Food - a strategic alliance of 28 philanthropic foundations working together on food systems transformation - are setting up this Philanthropic Foundations Mechanism (PFM).

Our main objective is to coordinate the participation of philanthropic organizations in the work of the CFS, including input to negotiations, input to consultations, and contributions to the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN).

The Foundations Mechanism will fulfill its role by i) exchanging CFS information, analysis and experience; ii) developing common positions as appropriate; and iii) convening philanthropic organizations.

We will seek to offer statements and submissions representing the maximum consensus possible. Where consensus is not possible, the PFM might either express a range of different positions from its constituencies, or remain silent on the issue.

And we formed a Coordination Committee with a representative of each Philanthropic Organization, and a rotating leadership every year.

While building this Foundations mechanism, we had several consultations with the CFS community, including an informal meeting with CFS members in June 2022, a side event in the past CFS Plenary and B&AG meetings that we were invited to. We had very fruitful exchanges on how the PFM could become a transparent and accountable mechanism, with proper safeguards to ensure the participation of interested foundations in the work of the CFS.

Let me offer a few highlights:

- a. We are working to ensure transparency and accountability of our activities, and I invite you to check our website [pfm-cfs.org](http://pfm-cfs.org) for keep track of our engagement;
- b. We will assess our performance, achievements and areas of improvement during an Annual Review;
- c. We are discussing the definition of principles and eligibility criteria to attract other foundations. We reiterate that the membership to the PFM is open to interested foundations that do not have commercial interests in their givings, and we are defining protocols to ensure we avoid Conflicts of Interest;
- d. And now we have a focal point - Ludovica Donati, some of you already met as our Liaison here in Rome.

We take this responsibility seriously. This reflects a continued effort from philanthropy to elevate food security, nutrition and food systems transformation in global processes and to collaborate and support different actors.

Let me conclude by trying to answer the single most asked question I heard from colleagues here this week when explaining this mechanism. “But how exactly are you going to work together”? Important question, as we do have different approaches and theories of change.

I will use two quotes to answer this question. One from former CFS Chair Gerda Verburg, who moderated our side event last year: She challenged us saying *“it is important that this go through the frictions, debates, heated debates, so it develops a vision and a consensus to have a principles-based platform; and the need to make those principles public to serve for inclusivity”*.

My second quote is the title of an article by Thomas Risse, a scholar that influenced much of my personal academic thinking. I think it fits very nicely as an answer to this question of how exactly are we going to find convergence among our diversity. The title is of the article is “Let’s argue”.