



CFS Bulletin

A Briefing Note of the 2nd Session of the Committee on Food Security Open Ended Working Group on Nutrition
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SECOND SESSION OF THE CFS OEWG ON NUTRITION: 25 FEBRUARY 2016

The second session of the Open Ended Working Group on nutrition (OEWG) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was held 25 February 2016 at the headquarters of the World Food Programme (WFP), in Rome, Italy. The meeting, which brought together CFS members and participants, addressed a revised proposal for CFS engagement in advancing nutrition. This draft proposal includes electronic comments from OEWG participants and inputs from the Technical Task Team (TTT). Prior to the third OEWG, scheduled to convene on 29 April 2016, written comments will be received by the Secretariat and a revised draft proposal will be distributed to participants.

The OEWG on nutrition was established by CFS at its 42nd Plenary session. The objective of this informal working group open to all CFS Stakeholders is to agree on a proposal on a CFS workstream on nutrition which should result in a clear vision for CFS role on nutrition, with a workplan leading to concrete outcomes for 2017 and beyond. A proposal will be submitted to the CFS 43rd Plenary session (October 2016).

At its first meeting, the OEWG discussed: the overview of the role of OEWG on nutrition as per the multi-year programme of work (MYPoW); a proposal prepared by the TTT on the area of focus of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) report on Nutrition and Food Systems and one on potential areas for CFS further involvement in nutrition; and the workplan of the OEWG on nutrition. After the first meeting a request for a report on Nutrition and Food Systems was submitted to the HLPE.

This report summarizes the proceedings of the second session of the OEWG.

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Chair Khaled El-Taweel, Egypt, opened the meeting, and noted that a request for a report on Nutrition and Food Systems had been submitted to the HLPE after being approved by the CFS Bureau. He drew attention to an information note mapping some important actors in nutrition (OEWG/Nutrition/2016/02/25/03), and a concept note on reporting on the overall follow-up of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). He noted that the purpose of the Proposal for CFS Engagement in Advancing Nutrition (OEWG/Nutrition/2016/02/25/02) was to establish a clear vision for CFS role in nutrition.

CFS Secretariat highlighted the main changes in the new draft proposal, in particular the inclusion of a vision for CFS work in nutrition, saying the proposed scope for CFS is to focus on food systems as an early priority with the possibility to extend to other areas at a later stage remained unchanged. She said the draft clarifies the reporting mechanism and CFS' added value.

Chair El-Taweel suggested focusing the ensuing discussion first on the general direction and vision of the proposal, and then separately to focus on CFS functions and activities.

PROPOSAL FOR CFS WORK IN NUTRITION: VISION

WFP emphasized: the most vulnerable who lack access to adequate diets; the importance of CFS as value added; and South-South and triangular exchanges, and use of Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN) countries, Renewed

Efforts Against Child Hunger and nutrition (REACH). She highlighted the need to link to the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) working group on sustainable value chains for nutrition, particularly nutrition sensitive value chains.

Afghanistan suggested focusing on comparative advantages of CFS as a multi-stakeholder platform and clearly referencing a global commitment to the Rome Declaration and its Framework for Action, further specifying that any activity of CFS should be within the scope of the ICN2 outcomes.

The Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) said the vision should be holistic and that food should be linked to health, culture, identity and women's rights, all of which are important for nutrition. She underlined that CFS must address the existing fragmentation in nutrition, and that currently no intergovernmental body oversees this issue.

The United Kingdom (UK) called for reference to the Global Panel for Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition. He questioned how private sector engagement would be structured within the proposal.

The EU supported strengthening attention to undernutrition, stunting and wasting. He stressed using the mapping document on nutrition actors to specify how to collaborate within this landscape.

Brazil called for broadening the vision to include reference to: causes and consequences of malnutrition; the right to adequate food; culture and health and the needs of the most vulnerable, including indigenous and traditional people and women; recognition that the food we consume comes from small-holders; climate change; education; food prices; food losses and waste; and access.

Germany said CFS should not replace the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN). On mainstreaming, he stressed that CFS should not be promoting implementation, cooperation, or coordination between different UN agencies of the UN system because UNSCN played this role for the 2030 Agenda. He pointed to UNSCN as a platform for overall follow-up of ICN2. He further: underscored a food-based approach, rather than a focus on nutrients, and looking at diets as a whole; and called for "cross-sectoral" rather than multi-sectoral approaches.

UNSCN said the right to food should have a more prominent place in the text and that the agreed definition of food security which mentions food preferences, should be included. She mentioned the importance of considering the two-way relationship between nutrition and food systems: how food systems impact nutrition, and what good nutrition means for food systems. She announced that UNSCN is organizing an interessional event on 10 June 2016 with the support of CFS as an exchange on basic concepts on food security, noting that UNSCN has yet to finalize their strategic plan for 2016-2020.

WHO underlined the importance of providing the right nutrients at all stages of life and food access. She supported the functions as proposed for CFS but said more information is needed on ICN2 implementation.

France proposed further refining the section on review of progress to clarify how this reporting will relate to the work of the OEWG on the SDGs, and clarify CFS' contribution to global thematic reviews. She supported reference to nutrition-sensitive food systems, links to other nutrition platforms, and food preferences. She supported a focus on diets and not nutrients.

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Italy supported reference to diets rather than to elements of food, and specifically to healthy diets as included in the ICN2 outcomes, and nutrition education.

Consortium of International Agriculture Research Centers (CGIAR) called attention to its research on value chains, biofortification, agriculture biodiversity, and agriculture associated diseases, and offered to contribute evidence-based knowledge to the HLPE.

Argentina underlined using the ICN2 outcome document, suggested inserting a paragraph on how nutrition is affected by many factors, and proposed focusing on the concrete actions CFS can take under its proposed three functions.

On mapping of actors, FAO pointed to the on-going efforts to define the role of UNSCN and suggested the UNSCN Chair provide a brief presentation of its strategic plan at the third OEWG. He said guidance on the nutrition architecture of the UN system should not come from the OEWG on nutrition or CFS.

The US said the proposal should be streamlined and put more emphasis on the food industry and private sector. He suggested inserting a long term vision statement for CFS.

The Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) advised “proceeding with caution” in adding to the strength of the ICN2 outcomes. She stressed mention of stunting and wasting and food losses. Pointing to the background of the proposal, she requested omitting reference to the conflict between nutrition and profitability and also to amend text citing that current food systems are globally unstable and unsustainable. She supported reference to partnerships.

Switzerland highlighted the need to refer to right to food, noting the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food. She cautioned against having a broad vision, supported emphasis on women’s decision making in food systems, and suggested clarifying CFS deliverables in reference to policy convergence.

Ecuador expressed concern that the text does not link food systems and nutrition, specifically on adequate and healthy food.

The CSM noted the fragmentation, gaps, and lack of coherence in nutrition, and the need for an intergovernmental body responsible for nutrition that goes beyond ICN2. She supported CFS taking a role to oversee nutrition in terms of policy convergence.

Norway supported references to the right to food, rights of women and diversified access to food.

The Netherlands suggested refining the review process, articulating the relationship to the SDG workstream, and adding information in the mapping document on CFS activity outcomes.

Pointing to the similarity of the proposal to the ICN2 outcome documents, Afghanistan stressed that CFS focus on policy convergence between actors on nutrition while the actual work should be done by the agencies with the capacity to do it. He said the main issue for both developed and developing countries is how to integrate nutrition into agricultural planning.

Chair El-Taweel asked the FAO to clarify how the mapping document would feed into discussion in the OEWG. In response FAO said clarification of UNSCN’s role will be useful and that policy convergence is what is missing and cannot be taken on by UNSCN and other UN agencies.

CFS Secretariat summarized discussion highlights including: preferences for addressing all forms of malnutrition versus emphasizing undernutrition; general consensus on a food systems approach; that policy convergence is a key function for CFS; the need to add access and consumption in the vision and revisit language on food security and food preferences; the need to emphasize women’s rights, focus on diets rather than foods and integrate with other CFS workstreams in particular SDGs; interest of inputs from the UNSCN strategic plan; and the value added of the progress review.

Chair El-Taweel highlighted the need for a short term and long term approach to the vision, for including food systems and nutrition sensitive food systems, and said there was no objection to focusing on the right to food.

PROPOSAL FOR CFS WORK IN NUTRITION: FUNCTION AND ACTIVITIES

Chair El-Taweel opened discussion on the function and activities of CFS. The PSM suggested moving nutrition beyond mainstreaming instead proposing to “embed” nutrition.

On activities, he suggested adding that CFS stakeholders could also share experiences so their role goes beyond participation and towards the role of implementation. He called for food system mapping to assist the identification of roles of existing agencies and understanding of gaps and interlinkages.

Argentina called for clarification on how the priorities for policy convergence would be identified taking into account the HLPE recommendations, on concrete actions and on how the CFS platform would be used for lesson sharing.

Afghanistan stressed that policy convergence does not entail new work by CFS.

Italy called for clarity on policy convergence outcomes, opining that this could be limited to policy recommendations based on the HLPE report, or, as he favored, developing a more substantial policy product such as negotiated principles or voluntary guidelines on nutrition and food systems to be released in 2019. He pointed to the MYPoW 2016-2017, which is considering nutrition as a potential standing item.

The US suggested reference to: the role of women’s education in empowering women to make healthy decisions in the home, and suggested CFS could play a role in the development of a nutrition curriculum; and to social behavior change communication and its role in increasing dietary diversity.

Brazil stressed the need for global level policy coordination, and proposed stressing the role of women and the most vulnerable consumers.

The CSM reiterated that CFS is the global space for convergence and coordination on food governance and supported a human rights based approach. She proposed the next MYPoW define a nutrition workstream and that the aim of reviewing progress should be to strengthen coordination amongst governments, CSM and UN agencies at all levels.

On mapping, the EU suggested adding information on outcomes and on how activities are done. Speaking in his role as Chair of the OEWG on SDGs, he stressed aligning with that working group.

On nutrition and profitability and on partnerships, the CSM pointed to the “elephant in the room” on conflicts of interest, stating that the tension between profit and nutrition must be acknowledged. Referencing a recent speech by Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO, she quoted “its not just big tobacco anymore, public health must contend with big food, big soda, and big alcohol,” saying efforts to prevent non-communicable diseases go against the interests of the food industry, which is one of the biggest challenges to nutrition.

Saying the private sector, as opposed to the government “runs the food system” in a country, Afghanistan stated the private sector has a role to play, and proposed focusing on how to have the private sector contribute to more positive nutrition outcomes. He suggested CFS convene a session exclusively on this issue.

Chair El-Taweel suggested focusing on synergies.

The CFS Secretariat acknowledged questions on the development of policy priorities and outcomes saying that this process needs better definition.

FAO expressed its commitment to having discussion on ICN2 progress reporting in relation to their joint role with the WHO.

The CFS Secretary spoke to the development of policy recommendations, and cautioned against commitments to produce voluntary guidelines before the evidenced based report is available. She described the lessons sharing function of the CFS as a pilot that would evolve. Regarding linking to the MYPoW she described that it is possible to look into other processes but also emphasized the opportunity to feed into other processes.

Argentina highlighted the importance of coordinating with the OEWG on the MYPoW.

Chair El-Taweel outlined the proposal review process leading up to the third OEWG, informing participants that electronic comments would be accepted by the Secretariat and that a new draft proposal would be made available prior to the next meeting. He concluded the meeting at 5:03pm.