

GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM MEET IN ROME

Civil society representatives working globally on food security and nutrition have gathered in Rome to attend the CSM¹ Forum towards influencing food security and nutrition policies and actions at global, regional and national level. The CSM i.e. Civil Society Mechanism is considered to be the largest international mechanism of civil society organizations (CSOs) working on the issue of food and nutrition security.

The two-day CSM Forum, kicked off on 15 October, broadly focused on where and how the CSM can specifically contribute to the CFS43 policy decisions and actions that affect millions of lives. The key elements of the CSM agenda spanned across women's rights and struggle for land and resources, political assessment of the CFS today, information sharing on CFS work streams, finalizing CSM contributions to CFS 43 and beyond, consultation on civil society priorities for the CFS MYPOW² 2018-19.



The CSM Forum started off with the welcome address by **FAO DG José Graziano de Silva** where he stressed that eradicating hunger is a state's permanent function and the civil society and all other stakeholders should be involved in this process. He further added that food security and women's rights are closely interwoven. However, climate change is a huge challenge towards achieving food security, he told.

Following the welcome address, the CSM work sessions began with an overview on the CSM activities on CFS work streams in 2015-16, political analysis and discussion on the CFS state of health in 2016, civil society visions for the CFS, and the implementation and monitoring of its decisions.

As presented by Alberta Guerra³, the discussions about the political situation of the CFS and the assessment of its development after the reform have been part of the CSM work since the beginning. This discussion is also important and timely as the CFS Evaluation has started in September 2016. It will involve all actors and bodies of the CFS, including members, participants and observers, at the Rome level including some country visits. Two draft versions of the evaluation report shall be discussed in February and March and the discussion on the response to the report recommendations will remain a major issue of debate between April and October 2017.

¹ www.csm4cfs.org

² Multi-year programme of work

³ Representing Northern NGOs in the CSM Coordination Committee, also Policy Advisor to ActionAid and IFSN

As to the main assets and achievements of the CFS, she mentioned that in response to the food price crisis of 2007-8, the CFS Reform established a new vision for global governance on food security and nutrition, with a strong mandate to foster the progressive realization of the human right to adequate food, opening the space to all relevant actors, while explicitly underlining that particular space and voice should be given to those constituencies who are most affected and at risk, and who are at the same time the most important contributors to food security and nutrition worldwide. The CFS, she added, has become a unique space in the United Nations System where the representative of small-scale food producers, family farmers, fisher folks, indigenous peoples, food and agricultural workers, pastoralists, landless, women, consumers, the urban food insecure and NGOs have been able to actively participate through an autonomous and open space, the CSM. Most topics dealt with by the CFS so far have been extremely relevant to the urgent demands of CSM constituencies.



Moreover, the CSM, with its exclusive mandate to facilitate civil society participation to the CFS, is at the same time the most inclusive and largest space of civil society organizations working on food security and nutrition worldwide. The HLPE⁴ has been called by many the second pillar of innovation to the CFS, as it introduced a knowledge-policy interface with the CFS, which in addition to the comprehensive analysis of academic research also uses the extraordinary diversity of actors in the CFS in their role as knowledge holders.

While assessing the effectiveness of the CFS Reform seven years later, it can be observed that some of the previous controversies continue to pose challenges even today. Some limitations have become more evident over the years, others only recently. She pointed out some key concerns from the civil society perspectives as to the vision of the CFS, prioritizing attention to the voices of the most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, the challenges as to implementing certain decisions, lack of financial resources, inclusiveness and roles of actors in a multi-stakeholder setting.

While focusing on policy convergence she stressed that this is particularly necessary concerning the issues of high relevance where a divergence of views prevails. What is needed is the courage to prioritize and address those key issues that are contentious yet central to food security and nutrition, taking into account the relevance for constituencies most affected by hunger and malnutrition.

In the end, Alberta Guerra presented two options as the way ahead: one is the way of the erosion of the CFS Reform, through revising fundamental decisions taken with the Reform, and slowly evolving into an insignificant multi-stakeholder forum that would claim only to comply with its vision and roles, while in reality would not have the needed political commitment, clarity, support and budget to carry out its functions as defined in the Reform. The other option is to strengthen the CFS in line with the vision and roles defined in the Reform that would call for a self-critical, in-depth learning process on progress and shortcomings as to the effective compliance with its roles, and the political commitment of the CFS members and participants to reaffirm and reinforce their practical commitment to the key decisions of the Reform.

The next discussion focused on women's rights issues entitled **'Public Panel Discussion on the occasion of the International Day of Rural Women: Women's struggle for land and resources towards Food Sovereignty'**. Adwoa Sakyi from IUW and other speakers stressed that establishing women's rights

⁴ High Level Panel of Experts

should be considered a cross cutting priority in any national and cross-boundary human development initiatives. Women's rights, including their right to land and natural resources, should be upheld through various conventions e.g. CEDAW, constitutions, and laws. However, Nettie Wiebe from La Via Campesina underlined that the legal framework is not enough. Economic and social transformation is imperative so as to allow women to exercise their right to resources. Margot Skarpeteig⁵ stressed that by constraining the potential of half the world's population, right to food or women's rights can never be established as they're interlinked. We should continue mainstreaming right to food and women's rights in all CFS products and focus on how we can make use of the CEDAW recommendations, she added. On the other hand, Taina Hedman from the International Indian Treaty Council vowed to fight till the end in establishing the rights of women, particularly the indigenous communities who are often killed and tortured for speaking for their right to land and other natural resources.



The afternoon included parallel CSM working group sessions on: **Sustainable Agricultural Development and Livestock, Sustainable Development Goals, Monitoring, Urbanization and Rural Transformation, Nutrition, Smallholder to Markets, GSF and CFS Evaluation, and Women's empowerment.** The primary objectives of the sessions were to finalize contributions to CFS 43 and discuss advocacy strategy for CFS 43 and beyond.



The participants raised various concerns and issues in different thematic groups. For instance, at the **Urbanization and Rural Transformation Group** discussion Antonio Gonzalez from MAELA stressed on a global definition of rural transformation while Elene Shatberashvili from LVC proposed that the Working Group may consider developing a common CSM position on urbanization and rural transformation. Some other concerns that surfaced during the discussion were the issue of urbanization being heavily focused on population growth, not having any clearer definition of territories, often failing to adequately link peri-urban and urban areas and pertinent

issues.

From the International Food Security Network (IFSN) Jane Seruwagi Nalunga⁶ suggested the working paper should consider offering possible solutions to some of the existing challenges e.g. rural agriculture in West Africa is affected by cheap exports. It is important to know how such problems can be tackled. Ensuring policy coherence is another important area towards addressing issues of rural transformation as some policies include issues like trade and finance.



⁵ Deputy Permanent Representative of the Norwegian Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome

⁶ Representing East and Southern Africa Food Security Network (ESAFSN), Food Rights Alliance and SEATINI Uganda, and International Food Security Network (IFSN)

On the other hand, the **Women's Empowerment Working Group** had both men and women participants, along with women constituency focal points, Sophie Ogutu Dowlar⁷ and Emily Prangue Cahilog⁸ to discuss the challenges women still face in accessing land and other resources and services and how they can be addressed. It was underlined that the Forum should be built on the CFS policy recommendations, adopted in 2011, on gender, food security and nutrition that recognize the role of women in agriculture, the discrimination they face in accessing natural resources and other services, and recommend further actions to promote gender equality and empowerment. It is expected that the CFS work stream would provide an opportunity to assess the implementation of these policy recommendations, as well as to move forward in recognizing women's rights.

During the meeting, Alberta Guerra informed that the CFS will organize in 2017 a Forum on Women's Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition, with the purpose to discuss the challenges that remain in economic empowerment of women and help promote a shared understanding of how those issues are evolving in the agriculture sector.



When the floor was opened Sayda Waleska Tabora Rios⁹ from Honduras shared that the situation of women in Central America, is not much different from that of Africa and Asia with respect to violations of rights, denying the right to life, credit, ownership of the land, and political participation. Women often face jail and killing for demanding their right to land. In Honduras, more than 1500 women have been tried for demanding their right to land, as reported by La Via Campesina in 2015. Despite the government's claim that they endorse certain international human rights instruments, women are continually being disrespected in all spheres of life through various forms of violence. It is important to reflect and follow up on the recommendations of the working group to improve the overall situation of women, especially as to poverty and discrimination, she added.

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The **Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture Development and Agriculture**, as reported by Tsegaw Lencha¹⁰, focused on three main issues: evaluation of the negotiation process i.e. what the CSM achieved and missed in the negotiation thusfar, how the CSM can implement, monitor and defend the policy recommendations and the way forward. The policy roundtable will have the presentation of the HLPE report first, and then the endorsement of the policy recommendations. The moderated noted that there are two major processes in the CFS session: report presentation of the HLPE and policy recommendations. The discussants, mostly those involved in the negotiation previously, reflected that the negotiation was completed without addressing the emerging issues in the livestock sector like poultry and the challenge of climate change was not addressed appropriately. Moreover, the need for addressing the emerging bio-power companies in the food supply chain was stressed along with health hazard assessment of the livestock workers.

The **Working Group on Global Strategic Framework (GSF) and CFS Evaluation** focused on the GSF and CFS evaluation process. It was mentioned that in October 2013 (CFS 40), the CFS endorsed the recommendation to conduct periodic assessments of its effectiveness in improving policy frameworks, especially at the country level, and in promoting participation of and coherence among stakeholders on food security and nutrition. This evaluation is now starting with the objective "to determine the extent to which the

⁷ World March of Women, based in Kenya

⁸ International Women's Alliance, from the Philippines

⁹ REDCASSAN-Veterinarios Sin Fronteras--IFSN

¹⁰ Regional Coordinator – East and Southern Africa Food Security Network (ESAFSN)-International Food Security Network (IFSN)

reforms implemented since 2009 are working”. The evaluation will use the OECD-DAC¹¹ criteria of relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, and impartiality and independence, credibility and usefulness. However, the moderators mentioned that the evaluation was initiated by the CFS itself without involving the CSM. The criteria for selection of countries that involve in the evaluation were not discussed with the CFS. The overall process was not transparent. Furthermore, CSM is not certain whether the evaluation will address regional food security and nutrition policies.

The participants pointed out that the GSF only mentioned the gaps in governance, not the main issues of the problem like the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) and IMF that contributed to poverty. For this reason, the CSM need to place higher demands for renegotiation. It was also discussed whether there is any need to renegotiate the GSF in the first place. Once the agreements are approved, one should rather defend that not negotiate again, the house expressed.

Like these groups, all Working Groups went through similar exercises to come up with the main messages developed for the CFS which were presented on the second day of the CSM Forum.

The second day opened with the presentation of results from Working Groups that included main positions, spokespersons, and strategies. Alberta Guerra presented the decisions and agreements from the **Sustainable Development Goals Working Group**.

The WG decided to resort to two interventions in the Plenary with two interventions Regarding the general political statement, the WG decided to welcome the proposal for the CFS engagement in the SDGs implementation and remind all that a world without small scale producers would never achieve SDG2 and other related goals, and the CFS recognize that the small scale producers have a central role to achieve food security and nutrition. Moreover, the WG agreed to restate the centrality and indivisibility of human rights in the implementation of the SDGs (and central in the mandate of the CFS), as well as stressing on the interrelation among all the SDGs. The second intervention, that concerns the debate on how to design, in the format and content, the contribution of the CFS to the High level Political Forum Global Thematic Review of SDGs in July 2017. The WG reached a consensus to point up the critical importance of implementation and monitoring of the commitments by Governments, and the respect of the CFS’s way of working when it comes to monitoring progress in food security and nutrition, especially on the active participation of civil society in the monitoring of this progress.

The group also agreed on a number of issues that should be included in the CFS contribution to the HLPF¹² Global Review of SDG2. For instance, the need to improve access to land, water, and interrelation of the SDGs (also 16, 17) as well as stressing on the importance and value of traditional knowledge. As to policy coherence at the national level, it was decided to further discuss how CSOs can engage as to the policy design, implementation and monitoring of the country plans on SDGs, and how the CFS can support countries given the fact that CFS has no mandate to implement decisions at the national level. It was also agreed to underline the centrality of agroecology and genetic resources (agricultural biodiversity) in achieving food security and nutrition. Moreover, mere release of data and figures are not enough, a qualitative assessment of vulnerable groups around their food security and nutrition status is imperative, the group agreed.

The **Working Group on Connecting Smallholders to Markets** agreed that the issue of markets is important for CSM and the WG recognize the importance of local, national and regional markets (‘territorial’ markets) and food systems for food security. In order to achieve this, strong support of public policy is needed. However, corporate power and concentration continue to pose challenges as markets are often synonymously dubbed as international markets only.

¹¹ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee

¹² High Level Political Forum

As to the monitoring aspect, the group strongly agreed that in the future no monitoring event should ever take place without any interpretation support. However, the WG expressed appreciation for the CFS Chair who was instrumental as to the strategy of implementation and follow up, dissemination, capacity building and advocacy for implementation at all levels.

The **Monitoring Working Group** welcomed the TOR that is based on the GSF monitoring principles and human rights approach. The TOR also requires participation of those affected and respects autonomy of civil society self organizing. Moreover, it is country-led and inclusive which again is positive. Nevertheless, there is certainly room for improvement e.g. more emphasis should be laid on people most affected at the centre (not corporate monitoring) and the tension between human rights based approach and 'best practices' should be taken into consideration. As to the Tenure Guidelines Monitoring Event, the WG agreed that the civil society space was shrinking alarmingly.

It should be mentioned that all working groups shared their thematic positions which were then discussed for finalization as contribution to the CFS.

The two-day Forum ended with a public panel debate on **“The CFS at the crossroads, 7 years after its Reform”** on the occasion of the World Food Day 2016. The discussion addressed the issue of the CFS vision in the future after seven years from the reform.



The CFS Chair H.E. Amira Daoud Hassan Gornass¹³ highlighted the two important milestones of the last decade, the 1996 World food summit that reaffirmed the right to everyone to be free from hunger and the reform of the CFS in 2009 which made the challenge of hunger and malnutrition more effective and thereby achieved great success such as the endorsement of the VGGTs. However, there are still many challenges ahead, especially the fact that the CFS remains not-so-known outside the circle of Rome. Therefore, the effectiveness of CFS products should be enhanced by reaching out to the other UN regional commissions and organizations, and countries which should

adopt domestically the CFS deliberations, she added.

Kostas G. Stamoulis, Assistant Director General, FAO underlined how the CFS through its ambitious reforms brought the perspective of the real people into food and agriculture policy discussions. The CFS should be able to respond to the new opportunities such as the ICN¹⁴ follow up and the SDGs. The CFS was associated with the crisis. However, the expectation from the CFS as to the SDGs process is very high. The CFS should work to avoid proliferation of work streams and focus on major priorities such as the relation with ICN2 and the decade of nutrition, SDGs and the translation of the CFS products into actions. The CFS should also open to new partnerships and actors going outside the Rome circle, he expressed.



¹³ Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan, Permanent Representative to FAO

¹⁴ International Conference on Nutrition



Bettina Prato, Senior Representative from IFAD highlighted the importance of the CFS in promoting policy coherence and providing the space for sharing of experiences among a variety of actors. The CFS is now on the international map for its normative value with an increasing profile beyond the UN. It is “young” in its genuine willingness to question and to learn with energy and enthusiasm. The big challenge is to really capture the added value of the CFS, what unique contribution it can make and also as to monitoring how to translate policy deliberations into action. The future actions for the CFS should include a real sense of discipline and focus where it

can add values and to remain practical in providing guidance and tools, and follow up concerning the review of the 2030 agenda looking at gaps and challenges, and finally become better at looking of what is really happening on the grounds, she concluded.

Alberta Guerra as one of the CSM representative reported on the reflections shared on CSM day one where she highlighted some of the achievements of the CFS Reform: CFS mandate being centered on the human rights and the right to food approach, CFS promoting inclusive governance with active participation of those affected by hunger despite being the food producers, the HLPE that recognizes traditional knowledge that contribute to the CFS policy work, the CFS capacity to respond to the critical challenges such as land rights with the development of the VGGTs. She also pointed out some current challenges e.g. the centrality of human rights often being questioned by some actors, the primacy to the most vulnerable put at risk by the increasing corporate influence and other private-interest led actors, conflicts of interest arising out of the CFS arena, and the erosion of the CFS ambition given the lack of funding and the attenuation of work plan with no negotiation processes foreseen in the future.



George Dixon from FIMARC as the other CSM representative recapitulated the history of the Reform and the decision of the civil society taking part with no voting power that reflects lack of trust between parties. He also stressed that in any decision making process, the issue of human rights should overtake profit-oriented interests. George mentioned there is clear distinction between the voice of the most vulnerable being heard and being taken into account.



He suggested that the CFS should foster coordination among the agencies at all levels, improve internal decision making procedures by taking into account priorities from small scale producers, and ensure financial resources from the governments to the CFS and the CSM that forms the core part of it.

With this event, the two-day CSM Forum ended with renewed commitment and conviction towards eradicating hunger and malnutrition from across the world.

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