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Update on IFAD's Engagement with the Committee on World Food Security

Note to Executive Board representatives

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CFS	Committee on World Food Security
FSS	Food Systems Summit
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts
RAI	Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems
RBAs	Rome-based agencies
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
VGFSyN	Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition

I. Purpose of the update

1. This is IFAD's third annual written update to the Executive Board on the Fund's engagement with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). IFAD's vision of inclusive rural transformation targeted at the poorest of the poor recognizes that the organization must integrate food security and nutrition into poverty reduction efforts. Only that way can the most be made of the synergies between the various efforts to end poverty, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. More than 700 million people in the world are still hungry and millions more are currently being pushed into hunger by COVID-19. It means that ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030 is an immense challenge that requires coordinated and concerted efforts by numerous stakeholders.¹ IFAD recognizes the CFS as a catalytic platform with a broad range of constituencies, all of which are integral to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Decade of Action, and are prompting concerted action on issues of food security. The ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic underline how the CFS has been rapidly increasing its capacity and ability to operate as a vibrant mechanism for technical expertise and knowledge, and to share on critical responses to food insecurity. Throughout 2020, the CFS High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) has provided timely and rapid analysis on the pandemic, informing United Nations entities and international financial institutions early on of the danger of the pandemic triggering a food crisis. As the virus wanes in some places, the strengthened role of the HLPE as the scientific advisory body to the CFS remains even more important.
2. The purpose of this update is to provide Board members with the latest information on the progress made on IFAD's engagement with the CFS in 2020 and in the first half of 2021, and to seek members' guidance on the way forward.

II. Progress in IFAD's engagement with the CFS

3. IFAD attaches great importance to its engagement with the CFS as it works to strengthen the implementation of CFS policy recommendations and participates in the Committee's Advisory Group and related technical workstreams.
4. The CFS has played a vital role over the years in promoting food security and nutrition, particularly as regards sustainable food systems and global food supply chains. The multi-stakeholder forum helps in the formulation of inclusive policy guidance – developing, promoting and enabling policy environments that help finance smallholder agriculture and inclusive rural transformation. At the same time, it is working towards empowering smallholder farmers and poor rural people, and thus assisting countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The CFS is a key priority in IFAD's corporate global engagement and IFAD's Strategic Framework for 2016-2025.
5. With less than 10 years left to achieve the 2030 Agenda, IFAD is committed to continuing engagement in the various CFS fora. IFAD has been an active participant in Bureau and Advisory Group meetings, and has long strived to help guide the strategic direction of the CFS. IFAD has also routinely contributed its staff and expertise through CFS Open-Ended Working Groups, lent technical support to the CFS on nutrition through the United Nations umbrella– working along with other agencies (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Health Organization), technical task teams, the CFS Secretariat, informal consultations, and joint events on themes of strategic importance to the food security and nutrition goals of the 2030 Agenda.
6. Notably, IFAD has provided technical expertise to a number of CFS workstreams, including: the development of the Voluntary Guidelines (VGs) on Food Systems and

¹ The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2021.

Nutrition (VGFSyN); monitoring the use and application of CFS policy recommendations; and guidance on agroecological and other innovative approaches. More recently, IFAD also actively joined in regional consultations on the VGFSyN and provided cross-divisional feedback on the latest version of the document, taking into consideration its broad and multi-disciplinary nature. IFAD has highlighted the importance of these VGs as a critical input to the technical preparations for the Food Systems Summit in September 2021, as well as to the follow-up process. IFAD recognizes the VGFSyN as a huge step forward in bringing both the food security and nutrition agendas together, and looks forward to following the guidelines in IFAD's programme of work. Most recently, the Fund has actively contributed to an open-ended working group on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment, and to the development of the Zero Draft of the VGs.

7. IFAD has further actualized its commitment to the CFS through the development of an online database. It was launched last October and all CFS recommendations are readily accessible on this easy-to-use platform as a global public good. IFAD is confident that the database will help broaden the use and application of CFS products and can be referenced in IFAD's policy dialogue with client governments to help trigger policy reform. It will also help create an enabling policy and institutional environment for its lending programmes in those countries. Given the simple use of the database, CFS products can automatically be included in the formulation of proposals, documents and strategies. IFAD views the platform as a product in its own right – one designed to move CFS policy products and recommendations off the shelf and into the main street.
8. The Fund intends to promote CFS policy recommendations as instruments for achieving the SDGs. IFAD will also explore opportunities to leverage other organizations to disseminate CFS guidance more effectively in countries. Based on the above, IFAD will populate this section with concrete examples of CFS products being successfully used in 2021–2022 – with clear, measurable impact on household food security and the nutritional status of rural communities.
9. Depending on the country and IFAD's priorities, relevant CFS policy recommendations can be duly considered in forthcoming country strategic opportunities programmes, country strategy notes and IFAD policy dialogue initiatives – with a sharper focus on outcomes of relevance to poor farming communities/family farmers. CFS products on themes of direct relevance to IFAD and its stakeholders have continued to be used in various fora as a basis for advancing the food security and nutrition agenda. As reported on earlier occasions, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests have been used as a basis for providing guiding principles on access and ownership of land and water (including forests and fisheries) in the design of several loan projects in developing regions.
10. IFAD continues to encourage key considerations for responsible investment, as defined by the CFS-RAI Principles,² to help deliver on internationally recognized labour, social and environmental standards and commitments in its operations.
11. IFAD's Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) were rigorously applied to IFAD's entire programme pipeline in 2019. As the SECAP protocol is in full alignment with the CFS-RAI principles, IFAD is de facto furthering their deployment in the countries where it is operating.
12. In an effort to increase the visibility of the CFS within IFAD, a sharper focus was brought to bear in 2020 on internal dissemination to highlight CFS activities and products such as the HLPE report. Staff were regularly informed of CFS meetings and their outcomes through the intranet.

² Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems.

13. Furthermore, IFAD contributes to the work of the CFS through its active engagement with various CFS advisory groups like the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM). IFAD has been a strong partner and supporter of the CSM, and has been working to facilitate and strengthen civil society participation. The Fund has taken part at the highest level in the annual CSM forum preceding CFS week, and actively supporting interactions and meetings.
14. IFAD played a key role in CFS 47 by ensuring the President's presence at the opening session and organizing two key side-events. The first, on the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNFFF), allowed participants to discuss the UNFFF in the context of COVID-19 and the pandemic's impact on women and youth. The second event, on how CFS partners can ensure adequate food as a basic human right, was deeply moving as partners hotly debated how this can be achieved in practice – particularly in the midst of a pandemic. The President of IFAD delivered a powerful statement on the work of the HLPE and its key role in providing scientific evidence on COVID-19. IFAD also provided substantial support to a global thematic event on the CFS Framework for Action on Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises. The event discussed ways to improve the CFS plan.
15. IFAD's commitment to helping disseminate and update the knowledge spin-offs from CFS policy products as a key resource for the institution is being emphasized constantly. Following IFAD's engagement, blog posts and updates on the success of the event were made available via the intranet. In addition to joining in all major initiatives in the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW), IFAD encourages and supports the CFS's active engagement with the United Nations Food Systems Summit (FSS) in 2021. The CFS is participating not only in the Action Track for which IFAD is Anchor Agency (Advancing equitable livelihoods and value distribution) but also engages in all the other Action Tracks as well as the FSS Scientific Committee, and Advisory Group. IFAD has attended several public events that CFS organized on COVID-19 and IFAD's President participated in the October 2020 CFS High Level Special Event.

III. IFAD's participation in the Special Session of the 48th Plenary of CFS

16. The special session on Agroecological and Innovative Approaches took place in June 2021 and concluded with the adoption of a number of policy recommendations. IFAD played a prominent role in the lead-up to this session, taking part in the negotiations and finalization of the recommendation as well as providing feedback during Bureau and Advisory Group meetings.
17. At the Special Session of CFS 48, IFAD Vice-President Dominik Ziller made opening remarks during the plenary focusing on innovative approaches and IFAD's engagement and commitment to using CFS recommendations and promoting their dissemination. The statement was well received by all and highlighted the importance of "moving smarter, quicker and, most importantly, together" to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
18. The build-up to this session and the event itself allowed key stakeholders to discuss the upcoming FSS and the key role the policy recommendations can have in Summit follow-up efforts.

IV. Other actions in 2020/2021

19. IFAD will work closely with the Secretariat to increase opportunities for the CFS Secretariat to sensitize IFAD staff on its policy recommendations and ongoing workstreams (e.g., through platforms such as IFAD Interact). IFAD will also build on the online platform to improve outreach to IFAD Country Offices and regional hubs in order to share more information about the CFS and its policy products. Finally, IFAD will also explore field missions (when this becomes possible) to

IFAD-financed loan project sites for a more direct interaction with country and local staff, government and NGO representatives, civil society actors and farmers' groups. This would facilitate face-to-face exchanges on the ground, allowing interested parties to appreciate the value of the CFS and its policy products. At the same time, CFS stakeholders would be able to see, first hand, CFS recommendations being rolled out or being taken up by local stakeholders – whether in the context of improved land tenure or better nutritional outcomes from improved food systems.

20. The CFS remains on track for the implementation of the planned programme of work. In addition, the Committee has also increased its membership, reflecting increased confidence and recognition of its value to members. Important too has been the timely and useful introduction of the IFAD-developed database of CFS policy products, prominently displayed on the CFS website. A similar level of trust is evident from the Committee's participation in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change bodies such as the Advisory Committee, its Champions' Group, and its five Action Tracks, as well as in the follow-up to the Summit.
21. IFAD will continue to support the CFS Secretariat and the Committee's activities, including but not limited to, work related to the HLPE on Food Security and Nutrition, thematic workstreams, plenary sessions, and active engagement with the Bureau and Advisory Group.
22. As mentioned, IFAD has been working alongside the Rome-based agencies (RBAs) and the CFS to prepare for the 2021 FSS. The Summit is an opportunity to bring the issue of transforming food systems before a world audience. And central to the FSS will be the recommendations contained in two CFS reports, one entitled Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable food systems and the other VGFSyN. Discussions have already begun on the role each will have in the lead-up to the Summit and in the follow-up process. IFAD is committed to working with the RBAs and the CFS to ensure that these two products contribute substantively to the Summit's success.
23. IFAD has continued to provide financial support to the CFS on an annual basis. An IFAD grant of US\$500,000 is provided as core budget support – ensuring flexibility and efficiency in expenditure across the MYPoW and contributing to smooth business continuity at the Secretariat. IFAD's contribution allows the CFS Secretariat to better plan its resource projections in line with its current MyPoW.
24. IFAD's continued engagement in the CFS and its thematic workstreams reinforces a number of the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources priority areas, namely: (i) production for food security, nutrition and income generation; (ii) climate change, resilience and environmental sustainability; (iii) gender equality and women's empowerment; and (iv) opportunities for youth. Furthermore, given the opportunity provided by the reform of the United Nations development system to strengthen multilateralism, the promotion of multi-stakeholder platforms such as the CFS is central to establishing new ways of working within and beyond the United Nations.
25. IFAD's contribution not only serves to influence the global policy agenda, but also makes a valuable contribution, through the adoption and utilization of CFS policy products, to improving development outcomes.
26. The impact of the pandemic has shown the importance of the CFS as a knowledge-sharing mechanism, as outlined in the COVID-19 issue paper prepared in March 2020 by the CFS HLPE, at the peak of the pandemic. Additionally, the CFS has demonstrated its convening powers, circumventing obstacles created by the pandemic to organize virtual events enabling fruitful discussions on food security. IFAD is confident that the CFS will continue to be a space where RBA

collaboration is able to thrive as the agencies strive together to deliver on the SDGs.

V. Conclusion

27. IFAD has stepped up its engagement with the CFS due to its strong belief that the CFS platform will continue to offer policy guidance that helps achieve the 2030 Agenda – with particular attention to SDG 2 and its food security and nutrition dimensions. IFAD has engaged strongly also through the active CFS platform on its COVID-19 response, set up in the early days of the pandemic. While COVID-19 has further exposed the inequities and inequalities of our current food systems, the CFS platform provides a space and resources to discuss critical policy principles and ways to combat this and other emerging challenges. With less than 10 years left to achieve the 2030 Agenda, IFAD commits to working with the CFS and its partners (who are also IFAD’s own Member States) to move together to achieve the shared goal of delivering on the Decade of Action and accomplish the SDGs by 2030. This reflects IFAD Management’s unswerving commitment to the CFS’s principles and its respect for the achievements of this consensus-building institution as it strives for better nutrition and world food security.
28. IFAD’s focus will remain on helping enrich the pipeline of policy products while supporting their uptake and dissemination in the context of the Fund’s investment portfolio and, at the broader national level, through policy dialogue.