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## **Update on IFAD's engagement with the Committee on World Food Security**

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**Action:** The Executive Board is invited to review the update provided on IFAD's engagement with the Committee on World Food Security.

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## I. Purpose of the update

1. IFAD's core vision of pro-poor and inclusive rural transformation recognizes the importance of integrating food security and nutrition concerns into poverty reduction efforts. This is to ensure synergies between eradicating poverty, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. IFAD views the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as key to achieving this vision and has stepped up its engagement over the past several years, due to its strong belief that CFS is the foremost inclusive platform with the capacity to further policy guidance that will help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2030 Agenda and target the most marginalized populations.
2. The 2022 United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects report<sup>1</sup> warned us that the global economic recovery was losing momentum and called for better targeted and coordinated policy, and financial measures at national and international levels. Climate change, conflicts, COVID-19 and the increasing cost of food are having a significant impact on food supplies, both in terms of access to food, availability and affordability. As a result, the poorest and most vulnerable are the hardest hit. These new and growing challenges have reaffirmed the importance of working together to safeguard food supply chains and promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable food systems transformation. The rise in global hunger in 2021 reflects inequalities across and within countries as a result of the unequal pattern of economic recovery worldwide and unrecovered income losses among those greatly impacted by COVID-19. According to current projections, 670 million people will still be facing hunger in 2030.<sup>2</sup>
3. CFS has played a vital role over the years in promoting food security and nutrition, particularly with regard to sustainable food systems and global food supply chains. The ongoing challenges of the war in Ukraine underline how CFS has effectively utilized its capacity and ability to operate as a vibrant mechanism for convening and discussing critical responses to food insecurity. Since the start of the war, CFS has organized a series of informative sessions on the global food security crisis, bringing together countries, organizations and a wide variety of constituents to provide timely analysis on the impact of the war, rising food costs, and the implications for global food security moving forward.
4. This is IFAD's fourth annual written update to the Executive Board on the Fund's engagement with CFS. It provides Board members with the latest information on the progress made in the latter half of 2021 and first half of 2022.

## II. IFAD's strategic engagement with CFS

5. CFS is a key priority in IFAD's corporate global engagement, as stated in IFAD's Strategic Framework 2016-2025, and in furthering collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based agencies (RBAs). The platform is explicitly mentioned as a contributing factor in developing an enabling policy environment for inclusive rural transformation in the Strategic Framework 2016-2025.
6. IFAD's role within CFS is to provide strategic guidance around the CFS objectives and workplan. IFAD works closely with CFS to support the formulation of CFS policy recommendations, participate in the Committee's Advisory Group, and lend IFAD staff expertise to the related technical workstreams and open-ended working groups to support the Committee's Multi-Year Programme of Work 2020-2023 (MyPOW). In addition to advisory and technical contributions, IFAD provides an annual financial contribution of US\$500,000 in cash to CFS in the form of a small regular grant to support its activities and reinforce IFAD's commitment. Since 2014, the RBAs have provided funding for the

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Situation and Prospects (2022).

<sup>2</sup> The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (2022).

CFS Secretariat on a regular basis with a total biennial budget of US\$4,050,000, which is meant to be divided equally among the three agencies.

7. Key achievements from IFAD's strategic engagement with CFS during the period of 2021/22 include the following:
  - (i) **Contributing to CFS strategic direction.** During Bureau and Advisory Group (B/AG) meetings, IFAD, in its capacity as advisory member, actively contributes to important discussions around food security and malnutrition. This has enabled IFAD to advocate for longer-term responses and coordinated actions towards addressing crisis in the context of the war in Ukraine.
  - (ii) **United Nations Food Systems Summit.** In the context of the UNFSS, the Fund has also advocated for the use of CFS products and further collaboration between CFS and UNFSS coordination hub;
  - (iii) **Contributing to the development, operationalization and promotion of CFS products.** IFAD provides technical support towards the development of CFS policy products and workstreams. It is through these products that IFAD is able to translate global policy advice and guidance into country-level guidelines and recommendations. Moreover, IFAD has explicitly referenced the CFS products in its action plans and training toolkits to increase awareness of these products. IFAD is also committed to supporting Member States in utilizing CFS products when relevant and applicable.
  - (iv) **Promoting rural transformation and sustainable investment in smallholder farmers in the context of the current crisis.** IFAD's active participation in and contribution to CFS plenaries emphasizes IFAD's comparative advantage related to inclusive and sustainable rural transformation. IFAD has also been instrumental in ensuring the voices of rural peoples are brought to the forefront of CFS discussions. This is evident during the CFS plenary as IFAD is the organizer of the International Day of Rural Women annual events.

### III. Contributing to CFS strategic direction

8. The Fund, in its role as advisory member, provides the CFS Bureau with strategic guidance to help further the Committee's objectives. IFAD's regular participation has enabled IFAD to highlight critical and emerging issues that impact rural people and smallholder farmers. These meetings also provided IFAD with the opportunity to highlight the importance of finance for development and ensuring adequate and appropriate finance to build resilient food systems. In view of the escalating global food crisis, IFAD has had to use these meetings to advocate for a longer-term response that is coordinated and holistic in approach. Moreover, in July 2022, IFAD participated in the high-level special event entitled "Time to Act Together: Coordinating Policy Responses to the Global Food Crisis" hosted in New York by CFS and the United Nations General Assembly. The meeting was an opportunity to advance a shared understanding of the main challenges, deliberate on policy responses, identify emerging areas of convergence, connect the multiple efforts being developed and build synergies, and coordinate action in response to the current food crisis. It also reinforced the role of CFS, and the RBAs more broadly, as central actors in the crisis response.
9. IFAD has also been vocal in encouraging not only the use of CFS products in the UNFSS follow-up, but CFS's active engagement in the Food Systems Coordination Hub. This has been highlighted at various B/AG meetings and in direct discussions with the Secretariat. Additionally, as part of the Food Systems Coordination Hub, IFAD has worked with CFS and the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) to help mobilize and connect the science ecosystem (science and knowledge communities) at both national and global level, as a means to drive the implementation of national pathways through support to policymaking and investment prioritization.

## IV. Contribution to the development of CFS products

10. A core outcome of IFAD's engagement is the co-development of CFS policy products in the form of guidelines and recommendations. These policy products provide a launching point for discussions with governments, stakeholders and local organizations on how to integrate food systems and nutrition into national pathways and policies.
11. During 2021-22, IFAD has provided technical expertise to a number of CFS workstreams, including: the development of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN) adopted at the 49<sup>th</sup> Session of the CFS (CFS 49) plenary in 2021; guidance on the Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches adopted at the CFS 49 plenary; the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment to be adopted at CFS 50 in October 2022; and the Recommendations on Promoting Youth Engagement and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems to be adopted at CFS 50. In addition, IFAD has provided technical inputs throughout the various stages of drafting the CFS contributions to the High-Level Political Forum.
12. IFAD participated in all stages of development of the VGFSyN, providing technical support during the drafting process. IFAD was instrumental in bringing together farmers' organizations and representatives from rural communities to voice their concerns and share their insights. UN Nutrition, of which IFAD is a member, was on the frontline in the negotiations of these guidelines with Member States, ensuring that they were informed by evidence. Being part of this process was also an opportunity to increase the integration of the policy implications for nutrition within the broader food systems arena and embed policy engagement on nutrition into our everyday work and ambitions for rural transformation. In this regard, the guidelines will be very useful in strengthening nutrition sensitive food systems approach in IFAD's strategies and investments including capacity-building efforts of our implementing partners. The VGFSyN are a critical tool for directing policy and programming decisions at IFAD.
13. In addition to the VGFSyN, last year IFAD also participated in the development of the Recommendations on Agroecological and other Innovative Approaches. As part of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming alongside the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IFAD underscored the importance of promoting using digitalization to support family farmers and small-scale producers, as referenced in the preamble of the document. Further to this, the importance of ensuring equal access to land for family farmers and small-scale producers was also highlighted in section 2 of the recommendations. IFAD was able to draw from its own experience and evidence from engaging in the FAO-led Scaling up Agroecology Initiative.
14. This year, the CFS MyPOW focused on three key workstreams: gender, youth and data. Under the gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment workstream, IFAD's gender team supported the development of the guidelines with concrete practical guidance on how to advance gender equality, women's and girls' rights, and women's empowerment. Furthermore, IFAD underscored the importance of addressing land ownership issues, and promoting economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to participate in and benefit from profitable economic activities – all of which enables women and men to have equal voices and influence in rural institutions and organizations.
15. As part of the youth employment workstream, IFAD draws from its own work on promoting rural youth employment and entrepreneurship. IFAD's current work emphasizes the importance of inclusive financial services, especially among rural youth, in agribusiness, as a driver for reducing rural unemployment.<sup>3</sup> In addition to

<sup>3</sup> Scaling up rural youth access to inclusive financial services for entrepreneurship and employment.

encouraging financial investments, IFAD highlights the need to support rural youth communities with training in agricultural practices and innovation to maintain and support their own communities. This ensures that those in rural communities do not get left behind in the development process.

16. In the current global development context, IFAD's participation in these collaborative technical discussions is essential to ensure that both CFS and IFAD are aligned in addressing the escalating food security crisis, and that CFS products are informed by evidence and technical know-how.

## **V. Operationalization and promotion of CFS products**

17. CFS' voluntary principles and guidelines are informed by IFAD's own work and underpin IFAD's own efforts towards food systems transformation. IFAD is committed to supporting the Member States in utilizing CFS products when relevant and applicable to translate these principles and guidelines into concrete progress for the smallholder farmers and rural poor.
18. IFAD has explicitly referenced CFS products such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) in how-to-do land tenure toolkits (for youth and gender) and the IFAD's Rural Youth Action Plan 2021-2028. Additionally, IFAD's use of CFS products can be seen in the recently developed IFAD/FAO online peer-to-peer training programme called GeoTech4Tenure. This programme aims to enhance the capacity of IFAD and FAO country and project teams and their partners, in order to secure tenure rights as a key factor for rural transformation and social inclusion in a manner that is consistent with the principles of the VGGTs.
19. As part of the Food Systems Coordination Hub, IFAD has been very active in supporting countries to identify their national pathways to address food systems failures. The guidelines and recommendations will be useful in identifying critical actions and policy actions in line with IFAD country-level policy engagement. This will contribute to policy dialogue on nutrition and food systems with client governments and across relevant sectors and thereby create an enabling policy environment at country level.
20. To further facilitate the utilization and dissemination of CFS products, IFAD launched the CFS database in October 2020, where all CFS recommendations are readily accessible online. The aim of the database was to assist in expanding the use and application of CFS products, particularly in IFAD's policy dialogue with borrowing-country governments. In an effort to increase the visibility of CFS and the database within IFAD, an internal learning session was organized in May 2022 to inform staff of IFAD's engagement with CFS. The session brought together colleagues from headquarters and the field, the CFS Secretariat and HLPE to discuss the role of CFS in promoting inclusive and sustainable food systems transformation, introduce CFS policy products, and explore effective ways to promote the uptake of these policy products into IFAD's country programmes and policy dialogues. IFAD recognized the importance of organizing thematic learning sessions with staff as it promotes strong cross-divisional collaboration and enhances the organization's awareness on key topics of concern. IFAD will aim to organize another learning session on CFS during the last quarter of 2022.

## **VI. Promoting rural transformation and sustainable investment in the context of the current crisis**

21. IFAD's high-level participation in CFS plenaries and special events underscores IFAD's commitment to CFS, reinforces IFAD's role as a global leader in food security discussions and a key partner in this area of rural development, and ensures the interests of beneficiaries – poor rural people – are represented therein.

22. At CFS 49, IFAD played an active role in organizing a number of side events, focusing on advancing equitable livelihoods, identifying holistic approaches to food systems and nutrition, and ensuring the most marginalized populations are at the forefront of the discussions. IFAD also led the organization of a session celebrating the International Day of Rural Women. The Fund played a central role in identifying the key discussion topics: rural transformation, gender-based inequality and the impact of COVID-19 on food security and building resilient food systems. The event highlighted that more needs to be done to close the gender gap and ensure that rural women producers remain at the center of food transformation policies. Panellists from Asia, Africa and Latin America represented the varied constituencies including women producers, indigenous peoples, civil society, and United Nations organizations, providing unique insights from the field.
23. IFAD has already provided feedback on the CFS 50 agenda, and began preparations for side event contributions, participation in the main plenary session and organized the special celebration on the International Day of Rural Women to take place in October 2022.

## **VII. Conclusion**

24. While IFAD recognizes the CFS platform as a representative platform to collectively discuss critical policy principles and ways to combat the global food security crisis, the Fund also acknowledges that there is still potential to improve both the visibility and utility of the CFS platform. To this end, IFAD will continue to encourage the Committee to engage in ongoing multilateral mechanisms and relevant global initiatives to promote CFS knowledge-sharing at all levels. Additionally, IFAD is committed to ensuring that the discussions of CFS continue to be inclusive and relevant to on-the-ground operations.
25. Looking ahead, IFAD will continue to support and guide CFS by actively contributing to the B/AG, provide experience and technical support to the formulation and implementation of the MyPOW, and support the CFS annual plenary. In addition, IFAD will enhance the usage and dissemination of CFS policy guidance at the country level; develop a feedback loop to assess the accessibility and usability of CFS policy products on the ground; design a tool to capture the dissemination and utilization of the CFS products; and work to utilize CFS knowledge and policy products in the UNFSS follow-up and crisis response for long-term transformation.
26. With only eight years left to achieve the 2030 Agenda, IFAD commits to strengthening its partnership and engagement with CFS and its partners to move together to achieve the shared goal of delivering on the Decade of Action and achieving the SDGs by 2030. This reflects IFAD Management's unwavering commitment to CFS' principles and respect for the achievements of this consensus-building institution, as it strives for better world food security.