



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

OVERALL GOAL

Food security has multiple dimensions – availability, access, utilization and stability. Eradicating hunger requires policy action that addresses all four dimensions. Depending on the specific context, actions may be required to increase productivity, promote rural development and incomes, strengthen social protection mechanisms, improve infrastructure and invest in education and health. These multiple actions involve a variety of stakeholders, who often have diverging views and goals. The challenge is to improve stakeholders' coordination to enhance the effectiveness of actions to promote food security and nutrition. Such coordination requires an enabling environment that creates incentives for all stakeholders and empowers them to participate in policy formulation and implementation. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) promotes such an enabling environment.

COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

CFS is a United Nations Committee based at FAO's headquarters. Its Secretariat comprises the three Rome-based UN agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP).



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Investing in rural people



CFS – IN A NUTSHELL

CFS was set up in 1974 as a United Nations intergovernmental body to serve as a forum for review and follow up of food security policies. In 2009, CFS agreed on a substantial reform package aimed at increasing its legitimacy as a decision-making body for global governance of food security. Since its reform, CFS has often been referred to as a model for inclusive decision-making.

In this room, we find a coordinated process that is inclusive, international, and intergovernmental. [...] I encourage you to share more of your knowledge and experiences [...]. Yours is one of the best “untold stories” of modern development.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's address to the CFS, May 2014



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Governance, in any form, requires legitimacy. Achieving and maintaining legitimacy implies a perception by all relevant stakeholders that there is a value-added component. Three elements can be identified as distinctive and unique to the CFS framework and contribute to its legitimacy.

A multi-stakeholder institutional structure

There is increasing recognition by the international community that participation can enhance the quality of decision-making, increase ownership of the decisions, improve accountability and transparency of processes and enrich outcomes through a variety of views and experiences. However, participation needs to be organized around clear institutional structures and rules of engagement in order to find the right balance between inclusiveness and effectiveness.

The CFS vision is to be “the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner” (CFS Reform Document, 2009). To achieve this vision, CFS has gone beyond the traditional UN grouping of “Members vs. Observers” and created a new space for active engagement to “ensure that the voices of all relevant stakeholders – particularly those most affected by food insecurity – are heard” (CFS Reform Document, 2009).

The new “Participants” category includes representatives from UN agencies with a specific mandate in the area of food security and nutrition, civil society and non-governmental organizations, private-sector associations and philanthropic foundations, international agricultural research systems as well as international and regional financial institutions.

Science-based and technical expertise

In addition to acknowledging that effective policy-making on food security and nutrition issues requires the active participation of multiple actors, CFS has also recognized that due to its complex, multidisciplinary nature, decision-making needs to be based on solid intersectoral expertise.

The production of CFS policy work is technically supported by FAO, IFAD and WFP, who also make up its Secretariat, and by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE). The HLPE provides independent, evidence-based analysis and advice at the request of CFS, using existing high-quality research, data and technical studies.

The HLPE contributes to facilitating CFS policy convergence work by building a common understanding of the different causes of food insecurity among the different stakeholders, which facilitates more informed policy debates. The CFS Secretariat capitalizes on the three agencies’ expertise and comparative advantages to facilitate meaningful consultation and negotiation processes.



Linking multi-stakeholder consultation and state of the art knowledge to decision-making

Many expert-based and dialogue-focused processes have a weak point when it comes to identifying their linkage into official decision making. In CFS, all multi-stakeholder consultations feed into the CFS Plenary decision-making processes whose outcome is then reported yearly to the UN General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This means that within the CFS framework, inclusiveness and sound expertise are not considered an end but rather a means for the Committee to better deliver on its roles as the global governance body for food security and nutrition:

- Co-ordination at the global level
- Policy convergence
- Support and advice to countries and regions

Promoting policy convergence is the primary role of the reformed CFS. CFS has transformed itself from a “policy review and follow-up body” to a “policy-making and knowledge provider”.

IN PRACTICE

Since 2009, CFS has produced several policy outputs aimed at mainstreaming food security and nutrition through sector-specific guidance. These include recommendations developed on the basis of HLPE reports, as well as stand-alone guidance tools such as the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of National Food Security.

The inclusive and evidence-based process through which CFS policy products are developed, combined with their formal endorsement by a legitimate UN body, provide the basic framework for effective implementation by a variety of actors at global, regional and national levels.



SCOPE FOR DOING MORE AND BETTER

CFS is continually working to expand its outreach and grow its community of practice. Each year, the annual sessions includes agenda items dedicated to building linkages between CFS and other food security and nutrition fora with a particular focus on multi-stakeholder platforms. There is also the opportunity for regional and country initiatives to showcase best practices and lessons learned either in the plenary session or in side events.

CFS will intensify efforts to reach out to regional and country levels to raise awareness of its products and policy recommendations. Five years after the reform, CFS is undertaking a survey to canvas views on its effectiveness and the results of this will be used to continuously improve the work of the Committee.



CFS is funded equally by FAO, IFAD and WFP and by voluntary contributions to cover support to specific CFS workstreams, the HLPE and to facilitate the participation of civil society through the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM). The same elements that have contributed to making CFS a legitimate body: inclusiveness, evidence and concrete outputs will require continuous extra-budgetary support to ensure that CFS is able to play its role in improving global governance of food security and nutrition.

Invest in a hunger-free world by supporting and promoting the Committee on World Food Security!



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MORE INFORMATION

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