

Comments by Ambassador Zoltán Kálmán, Former Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN agencies in Rome (FAO, IFAD, WFP), in relation to the [online consultation on the V0 draft of the report "Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition"](#), launched by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE-FSN) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS).

Inequality is one of the root causes of hunger and food insecurity, therefore, I consider this topic relevant and timely, reminding that Hungary was one of the sponsor countries proposing this issue to be included in the CFS Multi Year Programme of Work (MYPOW).

I appreciate the open, transparent and inclusive process, providing opportunity for all stakeholders to submit comments in the framework of this online consultation.

I wish to start by congratulating the HLPE, its Steering Committee and the Drafting Team for the high quality of the V0 Draft, commending their efforts to rely also on previous HLPE reports and CFS policy papers.

I agree with the concept outlined in the V0 Draft, seeking to address inequalities and inequities as main drivers of food insecurity. In this regard, I appreciate that the definition of food security is used in a broader sense, acknowledging that in addition to availability, access, stability and utilisation, the two new dimensions (agency and sustainability) play an essential role in the fight against food insecurity. Among the definitions, I appreciate and find helpful the clearly explained distinction between inequity and inequality.

I very much welcome the human rights approach throughout the document, putting in evidence the universality and the interlinkages among the various human rights. Similarly, we appreciate references to a number of SDGs as well. I would suggest to include also SDG 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), considering the high number of food workers and other employees in the food systems and their labour rights. Furthermore, I would suggest to include explicit reference to the right to decent work (including decent rural employment<sup>1</sup>) and consider it appropriate to make clear reference to the respective UN resolutions, for example when it comes to decent livelihood<sup>2</sup> or clean environment<sup>3</sup>, on page 19. of this document mentioned only in brackets.

Regarding the "Systemic Drivers" in page 21, I find it not sufficiently comprehensive and exhaustive. I miss in particular the following important drivers of inequalities.

1. Lack of sustainability assessments of food systems, based on independent and neutral science. Outcomes of these assessments could help policy makers take the right decisions aiming to reduce inequalities. Science-based sustainability assessments should give due consideration to all environmental and particularly social externalities, including the „hidden costs”, applying the principles of true costs accounting<sup>4</sup>.
2. Lack of appropriate policy environment (due to lack of appropriate sustainability assessments of food systems), with consequences listed below:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fao.org/rural-employment/background/en/>

<sup>2</sup> In July 2022 UN General Assembly declared access to clean and healthy environment a universal human right.

<sup>3</sup> According to Article 25(1) UDHR, 'everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family'. This provision sets out some of the elements of this right: a) food; b) clothing; c) housing; d) medical care; and e) necessary social services.

<sup>4</sup> [https://futureoffood.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Compendium\\_TCA-Strategic-Convening-2019-04-15.pdf](https://futureoffood.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Compendium_TCA-Strategic-Convening-2019-04-15.pdf)

- a) Incorrect distribution of subsidies, (favouring mainly large entities) which further aggravate the existing inequalities. As a current prevailing practice, farm subsidies mainly support unsustainable, input-intensive, monoculture farming, with all the well-known negative consequences (biodiversity loss, soil degradation, etc.). This is confirmed by the recent [FAO/UNDP/UNEP joint report](#) on public support to agriculture. As the document says: „Globally, support to agricultural producers currently accounts for almost USD 540 billion a year, or 15 percent of total agricultural production value. This support is heavily biased towards measures that are distorting (thus leading to inefficiency), unequally distributed, and harmful for the environment and human health. Under a continuation of current trends, this support could reach almost USD 1.8 trillion in 2030.” According to the report, these “harmful” subsidies benefit mainly large-scale farms (to the detriment of smallholders) and include farm supports provided in the frameworks of the Common Agriculture Policy and the US Farm Bill.
- b) Misconceptions about taxes, including neoliberal policies guaranteeing low level of taxes for the largest and richest stakeholders, and often tolerating tax avoidance/dodging with no efficient measures against tax heavens.
- c) Limited access for smallholders and other marginalized groups (women, indigenous people, etc.) to
  - land and other natural resources,
  - loans or credits
  - inputs and technologies
  - markets,
  - research and innovation (The main focus of research is mainly industrial farming and corporations...)

I welcome the references to power imbalances along the food supply change, often creating conflicts of interest situations, which are the major obstacles to transformative changes of food systems. I would find it indispensable to make a clear distinction of roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders. Contrary to the present practice, multinational corporations and other lobby groups could be consulted but they are NOT supposed to be involved in decision making and they should not be allowed to use their strong power to influence policy decisions<sup>5</sup>. Decision making is the competence of governments. Furthermore, we consider it essential to draw attention to and duly address in the report the greenwashing attempts by many corporate stakeholders, including their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) measures<sup>6</sup>. Although CSR activities are generally welcome, the CSR messages are regularly positive, they cannot be considered in any way sufficient for the necessary transformative changes.

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<sup>5</sup> As Jeffrey Sachs put it in his speech at the U.N. Food Systems Pre-Summit: „...We cannot turn this over to the private sector, we already did it a hundred years ago!... The key for the private sector is simply this: behave, pay your taxes, and follow the rules. That's what businesses should do...” <https://www.jeffsachs.org/recorded-lectures/5jf86pp5lxch35e6z3nct6xnmb8zy5>

<sup>6</sup> As a CEO of a multinational corporation acknowledged, the role of CSR (corporate social responsibility) is „either to hide the dirty part of the business or to simply promote sales”. Adding that the amount spent for CSR is very small