[https://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/consultations/HLPE\_reducing\_inequalities\_scope](https://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/consultations/HLPE_reducing_inequalities_scope" \t "_blank)

**Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition - HLPE consultation on the report’s scope**

The report will provide recommendations to the CFS workstream on inequalities, will:

* Analyse quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to how inequalities in access to assets (particularly land, other natural resources and finance), and incomes within the agri-food systems **impede opportunities** (very central point to focus on …identifying concrete actions!) for many actors to overcome food insecurity and malnutrition. Relevant data on asset endowments in rural communities will be useful in this respect, along with the findings of latest SOFI reports. Given the focus on agri-food systems and the key role of family farmers within these systems, linkages and complementarities with the UN Decade of Family Farming will be examined, including as reference to **decent employment** (also key point to focus-on …identifying concrete actions!) issues in the agri-food sector;
* Analyse the **drivers of inequalities** (HLPE has already done this 2017, 2020; see below) and provide **recommendations** on entry points to address these; (only on entry points?)
* Identify **areas requiring further research and data collection**, (only identify? Then who will f/u on it?) also in view of the opportunities provided by the ongoing joint effort of the World Bank, FAO and IFAD within the 50 x 2030 Initiative. (the involvement of free of CoI academics is a must, no?)

The proposed thematic workstream on inequalities will contribute to the **CFS vision** (at this point don’t we need more than a vision?) and the overall objective of **addressing the root causes** (yes, and how to do this bindingly…) of food insecurity with a focus on the **people most affected** (this is a key human rights requirement; say so) by hunger and malnutrition. The focus will be on inequalities within agri-food systems.(but also wider, no?) The workstream will provide an **analysis**, based on this HLPE report, on **drivers of socio-economic inequalities between actors within agri-food systems that influence food security and nutrition outcomes**.(beware of the risk of “paralysis in analysis”…) **Gender inequalities** and the need to create **opportunities for** **youth** would inform the analysis. (both very central)

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According to the HLPE 2nd Note on Critical and Emerging Issues (2017), increasing risks to food security and nutrition **can be linked** (only can…?) to high levels of income concentration, corporate concentration in food trade, transformation and distribution, as well as to uneven distribution of agricultural assets and access to natural resources (CFS MYPoW 2020-2023) (all these well proven). In addition, unequal endowments in agricultural assets and access to natural resources (such as land) together with income inequality deeply affect food security and nutrition (also well proven). Unequal access to food and adequate nutrition further deepen inequalities through lost opportunities in health, education and jobs. (proven as well) Sustained disparities between vulnerable and other social groups – reflecting inequalities between and within countries - **can slow growth** (only can…?) and lead to political instability and conflict, migration flows, with related adverse consequences on food security and nutrition (well proven) (HLPE, 2017). Stark inequalities in access to basic services and assets, but also in terms of food security and nutrition, affect households' prospects for overcoming poverty, and ultimately perpetuate food insecurity and malnutrition (Ibidem). (all these well proven) One of the starkest trends of recent years has been the growing concentration in food-related production, industries and services, which has affected power relations between different actors in food systems and fueled inequalities (well proven AND all the above been documented by the HLPE) (HLPE, 2020). (So, if well proven, then what can/will a new HLPE document do/achieve BEYOND?)

The HLPE (2017, 2020) has stressed the importance of addressing food security and nutrition through a food systems approach, highlighting the linkages between supply chains, food environments, consumers’ behavior and the resource, economic, social and institutional systems that connect to food. Inequalities affecting food systems’ drivers can be transmitted (only can…?) to all components of food systems and ultimately do affect food security and nutrition outcomes. Furthermore, HLPE (2021) stressed the importance of using an intersectionality[1] lens in analyzing and addressing inequalities: different dimensions of inequalities, based on individual, household, community and country characteristics, intersect and are mutually reinforcing. (so it is not ‘can’ then…) Reducing inequalities requires addressing the different dimensions of inequality holistically and simultaneously, being aware of the complex power dynamics that generate and sustain inequalities.(yes, voila the crux)

COVID-19 has further exacerbated existing inequalities, as the brunt of the economic, social and health impact are being borne by the most vulnerable individuals, communities and countries. The estimated impact of the pandemic is an increase in the average Gini index for emerging and developing countries by 6 percent (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10>). Human rights are at the core of the 2030 Agenda, (not true: the right to food is not even mentioned! Vivero and I wrote a paper about it) which with the motto “No one left behind”, recognizes the severe consequences of inequalities on the attainment of sustainable development. (Does it?: Communities are not forgetfully left behind! It is the neoliberal policies that systematically exclude them). Agenda 2030 has two goals specifically concerning inequalities (SDG 5 and SDG 10), in addition to including inequality reduction in a number of targets and indicators (<https://sdgs.un.org/>). To reduce inequalities, it is fundamental to ensure comprehensive legal frameworks and governance systems (need to qualify what ‘ensure’ is, i.e., how?) able to uphold human rights, including the right to food (not mentioned in the SDGs).

The report will focus both on (a) inequalities originating within food systems and concerning nutrition and (b) inequalities in the political, social, cultural and economic environment around food systems, which have a bearing on unequal outcomes regarding FSN. (what will the ‘focus’ do? Just demonstrate inequalities affecting the FS? Create yet more awareness? Or mobilize claim holders and duty bearers as the HR-based framework really calls for to bring about changes?)

The report will document the scale, the multidimensional, dynamic, intergenerational and intersectional aspects of inequality (see what I mean? Just document …yet further?) regarding food security and nutrition, how individuals are affected depending on their characteristics (age, gender, location, social group - class, ethnicity, race, migrant vs. native status), within households, communities, local and national levels, and between countries. (don’t we already know quite a bit about this? When is time to act?) Inequalities often (??) depend on the priorities and choices of private and public investments, or legal status, and more generally, on the political balance between urban and rural areas or different regions, particularly if there are religious and/or ethnic differences within a country. (quite a bit more than often…) Particular attention needs to be given to (addressing flagrant inequalities in) conflict areas and fragile States. The report will also deal with market power at different levels in food systems, driving inequality throughout supply chains from production to food processing, transport, distribution and trade. (‘deal’ meaning what? this is the question!)

The response to such multi-dimensional and multi-actor inequality calls for a holistic and integrated political approach for fair and equitable development (HLPE, 2021). Broadening the definition of food security, as proposed by HLPE (2020) provides a framework to comprehend the nexus between inequalities and social, economic, and environmental sustainability in food systems. (a definition, even if better, stays a definition… is food sovereignty included?) The report will explore how inequalities originating within food systems can be alleviated, (‘explore’ to then do what?) learning from good practices in existing policies, legal frameworks, approaches and successful bottom-centered interventions (so as to adapt and apply them widely if pertinent). Support for agroecological practices, small scale agriculture, territorial/local market initiatives, as well as alternative educational methods including the use of digital tools and platforms accessible to all, (support will entail what?) are among the options that have been identified as promising development pathways for transforming food systems and promoting food security (and food sovereignty?) and nutrition for all (HLPE, 2020 and 2021).

These developments need to be put in context, (meaning what? To achieve or do what?) taking into account the concentration of market power in global food systems. (just taking into account?) The report will develop the concept of “agency” as a lens to address the issue of structural barriers to obtaining economic resources and [of] to address? inequalities in food security and nutrition, and define the right to food as a legal entitlement towards equality (what will defining then do?) through upholding all relevant human rights, raising living standards, and eliminating intergenerational inequality for all. (and developing this concept and lens will help how?)

**Questions to guide the e-Consultation on the scope of the report**

With this e-consultation, the HLPE Steering Committee is seeking your feedback. In particular, you are invited to:

**1. Share your comments and suggestions on the objectives and content of this report:** (done above already)

Defining inequality within the context of food systems and for food security and nutrition (--Inequalities are much greater than just “differences”.

--People are essentially equal; differences arise secondarily.

--Doing more for disadvantaged people is not the same as addressing inequalities!

Inequality is an injustice in access, an exclusion from enjoyment, a disparity in the quality of life.

--A common misconception about ‘equality’ is the perception that just because equality can never fully be achieved it is not a useful concept in development planning and practice.

--Equality that is not defined by human rights is just another word. Equality, as a human right, must be respected, protected and fulfilled by all governments and UN agencies.

--Multiple inequalities actually overlap to create mutually reinforcing cycles of disadvantage that are transmitted across generations.

--Many of the disadvantages claim holders live under, come together and fall into self-sustaining patterns of inequality the world over.

--A caveat: Be aware that equality of opportunity is not what we are striving for; we are striving for equality of results!

--Inequality is what Jacques Chirac called ‘the social fracture’.

--Finally: It is not inequality what kills people; it is those responsible for these inequalities that kill people.

--So, inequalities will remain entrenched even if the SDGs are achieved by 2030.)

a.

1. *What does ‘inequality’ mean through a food security and nutrition perspective;*
2. *Trends within and between countries (data collection, measurement tools);*
3. *Links between health and nutrition inequalities and labour productivity, educational attainment, economic growth and human wellbeing;*
4. *Commitments to reduce inequality (SDGs) (by member states?), efforts to improve measurement;*
5. *Relationship between inequality and inequity.*

(--Inequity can be defined as unfairness of opportunities that result in inequalities.

--Inequity adds the moral dimension, i.e., the way in which wealth is unfairly distributed.

--Inequity implies unfair and avoidable differences.

--Inequity refers not only to injustice in distribution and access, but to processes which generate this injustice; inequity thus is about how the social structure determines social inequalities.

--Inequity arises from the appropriation of power and wealth, which leads to discrimination).

1. *Identifying drivers of power asymmetry that cause and perpetuate inequality*

(--A broad knowledge of international human rights law within a society has the potential to protect citizens/claim holders from abuses of power or neglect of duties by lawmakers, police, military personnel, elected officials, bureaucrats or the judiciary --all as duty bearers.

--Any call must be coupled with human rights learning so as to help/contribute to empower claim holders to themselves demand needed changes. Otherwise, the call will become yet another aspirational letter to Santa Claus (who brings us toys ….batteries not included).

--Keep in mind: Should is where you hope for, must is where you are urging that it be so, shall is where you can mandate.

--A process of *empowerment of claim holders* to organize, mobilize and demand needed changes is key. Without this, we can anticipate little happening or just token steps 'to keep up with the Joneses' and save face in front of the international community.

--It is the claim holders suffering violations of their right to nutrition to lead in deciding priority actions.

--We must be highly skeptical about private sector actors becoming involved in allegedly 'empowering' claim holders: this is counterintuitive to them....

--Multidisciplinary approaches --as opposed to a dialectical approach-- simply most often take the social and political context (i.e., the individual and institutional power relations) as given; they therefore end up being conservative in their recommendations.

--Achieving nutrition equity requires social policies of empowerment and a redistribution of social wealth.

--Alliances will only work if activists come to the table from a position of power. Any alliances built from a position of weakness ultimately leads to subordinate the interest of claim holders to those of minority groups that hold the power.

--Beware: Data provide a linear conceptualization for data-driven decision making, overlooking that all policy making is based on particular values, interests, and power imbalances and that while evidence is important for policy making, ‘data’ is only one limited kind of evidence.

--In truth, the multistakeholder approach skillfully covers up long-standing injustices, power imbalances and abuses thus deepening inequality and injustice.

--Multistakeholderism in the current paradigm successfully conjures-up a persuasive, but false argument of equal footing. It hides the workings of power.

--Are claim holders right to feel that none of their messages reach the power structures….and the HLPE?

--Political will is not owned by politicians, who usually act only in response to consistent and compelling pressure from organized and mobilized claim holders from the left and (cronies from) the right. Therefore, it is not a lack of political will, but rather the accumulation-of-a-political-will-by-the-powerful to oppose or stall the implementation of progressive policies that tackle HR abuses.

--We cannot forget that ‘a political will’ must be pulled from those in power since it is not a lack of political will, but rather the accumulation-of-a-political-will-by-the-powerful to oppose or stall the implementation of progressive policies that tackle HR abuses.

--So, it becomes clear that there has never been a more urgent need for a powerful countermovement).

1. ).
2. *Concentration of economic, social, and political capital within the food systems;*

*Structural barriers to equality for historically disadvantaged and poor populations (women, people of colour, rural and urban poor, indigenous communities, peasants, migrants, refugees, etc.).*(

--Gender equality is not just a women’s issue, but a development and a human rights issue.

--Non-discrimination is an immediate obligation as considered in the UN Charter of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Action is needed now!

--Reducing gender inequalities indeed creates a fairer society.

-- Gender-specific barriers must be removed to ensure a more level playing field for males and females.

--Programs for women can and will only succeed if and when they address power relations.

--Forever, poverty worldwide has had a female face.

--The Sustainable Development Goals are an unrealistic distraction. Gender equality needs for a more integrated approach to implementation.

--We will not achieve any of the SDGs without achieving greater equality for women in all areas.

--Corporations not only do not pay taxes; they perpetuate gender inequalities.

--The discussions must move from designing *‘gender-aware-programs’* to *‘gender-transformative-programs’* that actively seek to correct gender inequalities in access, uptake and in results.

--The worse feeling for women is one of impotence, because it leads to passivity and indifference.

--Efforts to revert the violation of human rights in the world should start with the empowerment of women. Unfortunately, we never focus on it as a real prerequisite.

--Empowerment of women ultimately expands their 'political-space'.

--The empowerment of some, most of the time, entails the disempowerment of others --usually the current holders of power.

--Not all of us are, therefore, currently involved in work that really helps women to empower themselves.

--Sustained gender discrimination shackles any economy. Gender equality is a sensible goal also in business terms.

--Key elements to tackle in gender inequality are:

* disparities in educational and health outcomes, and
* disparities in the access to productive resources, to credit, to capital, to new technologies and to other social and legal services.

--To promote gender equality, policies need to address the voice and influence of women as claim-holders:

* In equality under the law (whether customary or statutory);
* in equal access to human capital investments and to equal chances to own property, control productive (and reproductive) resources and in equal access to markets;
* also, in equality to influence and contribute to the political discourse and the development process.

--Looking at where governments put their money is indeed a good way to judge the importance they attribute to gender equality.

--Women need equal access to land, at the same time that they need a more enabling legal environment.

--The challenge, then, is to foster the needed consciousness raising of women for them to effectively place claims in front of pertinent duty bearers. This becomes the basis for organizing women locally.

--If women’s groups do not yet exist, efforts will have to be made to organize them.

--States that are party to the Convention to End all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) undertake the solemn obligation to scrutinize their national laws accordingly and to inform the population (and its women) about it; unfortunately too many states are slow or lenient in doing so.

--There is no way women can exercise their rights if they do not know what these are. If this is the result of an intentional stance, one has to be clear: Imposed ignorance (or ignorance tolerated) is a human rights violation!

--The lack of a capacity to forcefully demand remedy (in the HR sense) entrenches the weakness of women’s groups.

--Gender inequality is the mother of all inequalities and of the violation of all women’s rights.

--In our land of Oz, hypocrisy is without shame. Patriarchy rules.

--Women are not ‘men of the feminine sex’: society can change the gender roles!

--Gender equality is not a woman’s issue, but must concern and engage men as well as women.

--What all the above means is that women-must-propose, society-must-respect and the-state-must-guarantee. But this is not going to come without a struggle: in-dignation must grow from dignity being denied.

--The path to equality must not be one that takes from men and gives to women.

--Too often, men think that the gains of women come at their expense. This is simply not true and such thinking is a real barrier to progress.

--Governments must protect women, certainly no less than what they protect corporations.).

1. Paths toward equality
2. *Human Rights Based approach - “equality” as a human right principle* (see above under equality)*, relevance to the right to food;*
3. *Good governance to rebalance power and influence;*(

--The UN is clearly helping to establish ‘stakeholder capitalism’ as a governance model for the entire planet. This clearly lacks democratic legitimacy and focus.

--Challenging people to together examine the situation in which they live --and to challenge a whole new lax vocabulary, e.g., partnership, transparency, good governance, stakeholders, evidence-based…-- means examining the realities critically, asking not only how things are, but also how things should be.

--I’m afraid the CFS has never been the foremost policy platform. Food governance remains siloed and this limits the remits of the CFS. I suppose we have to deal with the contradiction that the CFS is relevant, but remains a political dwarf.

--Ponder the risks and governance issues raised by a mechanical use of distinct forms of data.

--Multistakeholderism gives the illusion that all stakeholders are equal in their rights, capacities, and responsibilities.

--In truth, the multistakeholder approach skillfully covers up long-standing injustices, power imbalances and abuses thus deepening inequality and injustice.

--Multistakeholderism follows the interests of ‘some’ in the domain of the global governance apparatus.

--Stakeholder cooperation without political accountability is only likely to push our shared human future further into the quagmire of governance failure.

--Multi-constituency networks, partnerships and collaborations cannot replace governance arrangements based on political legitimacy.

--Private sector dominance sells us a new 'compassionate governance' that is totally apolitical and that leaves fighting inequality out of the agenda).

*Legal and policy interventions to regulate the influence of corporate actors (and those with concentrated power), and remove structural barriers and increase capital (for those with diminished resources).* (

--When private companies talk about corporate social responsibility, it is usually a mere face-saving activity as what is given back to the community is usually very minute compared to the profit being exploited.

--Evidence suggests that **corporate social responsibility** strategies are intended to facilitate access to government, to co-opt nongovernmental organizations to corporate agendas, to build trust among the public and the political elite and to promote untested, voluntary solutions over binding regulation.

--What ultimately counts, I contend, is TNCs social and political accountability.

--Many of us in the public interest civil society space reject corporations’ ‘crocodile tears’ calls for corporate social responsibility and demand for civil society to monitor corporate social accountability based on the principles of human rights and their effect on the social and political determinants of a misguided development path.

--Corporations do use their outsized financial advantage to shape politics and policy robbing people of their ability to use local democratic channels to rein-in corporate-driven excess and harm).

**2. Share good practices and successful experiences on policy, legislation, interventions and initiatives that have proven successful at:**

1. reducing inequality gap and its potential impact on food security and nutrition outcomes; (a shift to food sovereignty is a prerequisite for this).
2. ensuring the effective legal framework to guarantee equal rights to access land and other productive resources, basic services, and the right to food to reduce inequalities; (see the comment on political will above)
3. enhancing food systems’ role in the reduction of inequalities (through income and livelihoods generation, (this points towards poverty reduction when the real challenge is income and wealth disparity reduction) while contributing to healthy diets and environment, among others);
4. empowering the role of small farmers’, producers’ and workers’ organizations in making food systems more equitable and accessible; (see comments about claim holder challenges above)
5. addressing capacity gaps in generating and using data and other new technologies in policy-making processes, monitoring and reporting on inequalities for FSN. (not only data and technologies are necessary for more people-oriented policy making. Cannot keep pushing aside the politics of it all…)

**3. Share the most recent references that should be considered in this report.** (OK, but do not be too academic; there are key qualitative data needed in the final equation)

**4. Provide feedback on the following questions, to guide the development of the report:** (Feedback meaning exactly what? guiding the development of the report only? What about how and if the Report will be used thereafter?)

1. How do food systems drivers affect inequalities? And specifically what are the different impacts of trends in: (Corporate capture at all levels of the system is primarily what keeps the inequalities)
2. *assets, land, other natural resources and finance*
3. *infrastructure and technology, including ICT*
4. *market structure in input provision, logistics, processing, transport, distribution of food*
5. *access to information and data*
6. *demographic trends including migration and urbanisation*
7. *socio-cultural factors around gender, ethnicity, religion, caste, race, language and their intersection*
8. *political and economic factors (presence/absence of a legal framework to ensure equal rights to key resources and services and the expression of agency)?* (All of the above)
9. How [can?] do social inequalities impact FSN outcomes? (As said at the top the mechanisms are already known)
10. How [can] ought the reduction of inequalities in food systems’ drivers foster sustainable economic and social transformation and improve FSN? (foster including what?) Which different pathways [should] ought to be considered? Which policies and practices have proven to work in reducing inequalities in FSN outcomes? (How to disseminate them for adaptation?)
11. Are there livelihood systems that are more successful at reducing inequalities and enhancing empowerment? (Cannot always generalize; context is key)
12. How can the reduction of inequalities through sustainable food systems and better FSN contribute to conflict prevention and peace building? (Moving towards food sovereignty, the only way to sustainably get there)
13. How [can] ought gender and youth mainstreaming approaches, as well as adopting an intersectional (see comment on multi-sectoral approaches above) lens on inequalities, taking multiple identities together in the analysis (including gender and youth) in food systems contribute to social justice and better FSN?
14. What are the main knowledge and data gaps hindering the understanding of how inequalities determine FSN outcomes? (Probably not many, I contend. Much must be done with what we already know and what the HLPE has pointed out at least since 2017. It is not lack of data that hinder!!) What could be improved in data collection and analysis tools for FSN inequalities? (Improve for collection or for application to decision making?)
15. How [can] ought strengthened food systems’ governance contribute to the reduction of inequalities in FSN outcomes? (a real thorn on our side…)
16. Which legal frameworks can guarantee equal rights to land, basic services, but also the right to food, and do they contribute to reducing inequalities? (None can guarantee unless claim holders demand and succeed in having these rights fulfilled and protected sustainably)
17. What is the role of political economy in reducing inequalities in food systems and in reducing other inequalities that have an impact on FSN outcomes? (elemental Watson)

*Évariste Nicolétis, HLPE Coordinator  
Paola Termine, HLPE Project Officer*https://assets.fsnforum.fao.org/public/images/dot_line.png[1] Intersectionality often refers to a person's multiple intersecting identities, including gender, class, caste, race, occupation, ethnicity, etc. (this only confuses what is meant in the context of inequalities in F+N. The CFS has not used the term in this sense)