

SwedBio comments to the V0 draft of the HLPE report “Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition”

14 January 2023

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and welcome this progressive and comprehensive report and its emphasis on agency, intersectionality and power relations, and transformative change through human rights-based approaches for the realisation of the right to food for all.

Our reflections below respond primarily to the consultation questions 2 (does the V0 draft sufficiently cover the implications of broadening the definition of food security with regard to inequalities), 4 (gaps in the literature and data referred to), 7 (issues concerning inequalities in FSN or within food systems that have not been sufficiently covered).

In our view, the framing of the issues in the early chapters could be more coherent with the systemic drivers and actions described later in the report. The coherence and logic of the report would be improved if **key cross-cutting concepts and drivers related to inequalities in food systems for food security and nutrition outcomes were more clearly integrated throughout the report and introduced in the initial chapters** when framing the issue. This concerns issues such as:

- **Human Rights as a general framework:** a definition could be added to Table 1 to clarify as a foundation framework for addressing inequalities in FSN. The explanation should connect and emphasise the framework in line with Chapter 6, where the relation of rights perspective, FSN, and equity are more detailed. Alternatively, an opening paragraph clarifying human rights as a general framework, as stated in HLPE 14. This would pave the way for comprehension of the foundation to tackle (reducing) inequalities.
- **The Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment** is recognized as a fundamental human right and part of the international legal framework (UNGA, 2022 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3983329?ln=en>). Human rights and a healthy planet are mutually dependent. Therefore, it is vital to acknowledge the R2HE in the debate concerning inequalities and FSN.

We observe an increase in biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and climate change, which impact the livelihoods of a large number of people and particularly the ones in vulnerability, exacerbating inequalities and causing food insecurities, among other issues. The realization of the Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is fundamental to improving environmental quality and governance, which are preconditions for healthy and sustainable food production and livelihoods. See the Right to a healthy environment: good practices report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/355/14/PDF/G1935514.pdf?OpenElement> and the Right to a Healthy Environment – information Note <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/information-materials/2023-01-06/r2heinfofinalweb.pdf>

- **Role of nature and biodiversity** in relation to multidimensional poverty, human well-being, food security and nutrition: In line with the recommendation above on the R2HE, the report could more clearly outline the interdependencies between healthy ecosystems and FSN and inequalities in this realm. Diverse and productive terrestrial and marine ecosystems, both wild

and managed, provide a foundation for livelihoods, food and nutrition security and rich and varied biodiversity, both wild and cultivated, contributes to reducing malnutrition and sustaining a more nutritious diet. Consequently, the main drivers of ecosystem degradation, such as land use change, overexploitation of species, and climate change, also undermine rights to sustainable and equitable development and food security and nutrition. This is particularly true for marginalised and vulnerable people living in poverty. This was evidenced in chapter 2.1 on Status and trends - Drivers of change in the IPBES Global Assessment report, 2019.

These interdependencies could be made more clear for example by making the connection between the **SDGs and food security and nutrition**, e.g. as illustrated by Stockholm Resilience Centre (<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2016-06-14-the-sdgs-wedding-cake.html>) outlining how all SDGs are directly or indirectly connected to sustainable and healthy food, with the biosphere (and SDGs 6, 13, 14 and 15) providing the foundation for food security (SDG 2), but is undermined e.g. by overfishing (SDG 14), deforestation and unsustainable land use (SDG 15), freshwater shortage (SDG 6), and the climate crisis (SDG 13). These interactions and the foundational role of the biosphere-related SDGs are crucial also for SDG 1 on poverty.

Interventions that ignore nature and culture can reinforce poverty (Lade et al., 2017). The concept of **poverty traps** as situations characterised by persistent, undesirable and reinforcing dynamics (Haider et al., 2018) is increasingly being used to understand the relationship between persistent poverty and environmental sustainability (Lade et al., 2017). A lack of social-ecological interactions in a social-ecological system can contribute to a poverty trap. For example, a lack of diverse seeds during a drought, can impoverish a farmer (<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2018-01-29-broadening-the-definition-of-a-poverty-trap.html>)

It might also be useful for this report to develop in parallel with and consult the **IPBES** process of developing the nexus and transformative change assessments, which will both provide critical insights on the relationship between biodiversity, food, health, climate change and sustainable development. This would also deepen the synergies across the IPBES knowledge base, including Indigenous and local knowledge, and the HLPE.

Finally, the recently adopted **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** under the Convention on Biological Diversity is a milestone toward living in harmony with nature, seeking to stop and reverse biodiversity loss. As highlighted previously, biodiversity is essential for economic and social well-being, food security and safety, and human health. The Global Strategic Framework recently adopted, as well as the supplementary agreements to the CBD, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing might be helpful to pay attention to. Linking the report analysis and proposed actions for reducing inequalities in FSN with the expected outcomes, targets, and goals of the Biodiversity Convention can provide more adherence of policymakers and linked work towards a more equal and sustainable society in harmony with nature. It is important to highlight Target 10 in the newly adopted Framework, which foresees ensuring sustainable use of biodiversity through biodiversity-friendly practices which contribute to food security. See COP-15 Decision documents, particularly CBD/COP/DEC/15/4 Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity

Framework <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2021-2022/cop-15/documents>

These reflections regarding the decisions on the Convention of Biological Diversity would be suitable for Chapter 4, where the root causes for FSN inequalities are presented, and Chapter 5, where the actions to reduce inequalities are presented.

- **Food sovereignty** is only introduced in Chapter 6, however as a central concept related to inequalities in food systems and closely related to the aspect of agency in the broadened definition of food security it should preferably be discussed and defined already in Chapter 1, including e.g. in table 1. As elaborated in the HLPE 14 report, the food sovereignty concept seeks to ensure more equitable trade relationships; land reform; protection of intellectual and indigenous land rights; agroecological production practices; gender equity and participation in defining policies. Aspects which are all central for addressing inequalities in food systems and widely discussed in the VO draft.

In addition, we are lacking and would like to see **a clearer integration of the following areas in the report:**

- The **role of aquatic foods** (marine and inland) – fish, shellfish, aquatic plants and algae captured or cultivated sustainably and equitably in freshwater and marine ecosystems – play a central role in food and nutrition security for billions of people; they are a cornerstone of the livelihoods, economies, and cultures of many coastal and inland communities. increasingly, studies (such as the EAT Lancet Commission report (<https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/eat-lancet-commission-summary-report/>)) conclude that aquatic foods must play a key role in the effort to build resilient, sustainable and healthy foods for all. It can contribute to diet-related health challenges – by reducing micronutrient deficiencies, improving heart, brain and eye health, and replacing consumption of less healthy red and processed meats – and be a part of the climate solution. Blue foods also provide much more than protein. Many blue food species are rich in nutrients such as zinc, iron, vitamin A, vitamin B12 and omega 3s. Eating more blue food can help prevent non-communicable diseases and nutrient deficiencies, especially in regions and populations where there are high burdens of malnutrition. With the right management, blue foods can be caught with reduced impacts on biodiversity or grown more sustainably than various terrestrial animal proteins, thus producing lower greenhouse gas emissions and water pollution and using fewer land and water resources. See the Blue Food Assessment report (<https://bluefood.earth>) and specifically the Environment Performance Paper on Blue Foods (<https://bluefood.earth/science/environmental-performance/>).
- In particular the role of **small-scale artisanal fisheries (SSF)** must be considered and highlighted in the report. They play crucial roles in employment, food security, nutrition, livelihoods, culture, and coastal communities well-being. There are major inequalities in aquatic food systems as of today. Overall, fishing communities continue facing the competition of industrial fishing fleets and other blue economy sectors, such as coastal tourism, oil and gas exploitation, struggling to access waters safely, seeing climate change impacting their activities, dying at sea in high numbers, facing challenges in financing and in equipment. For FSN, it is absolutely crucial to increase their recognition, and also create action securing their access to marine resources and markets, as promised by States under Sustainable Development Goal 14.b. In the Blue Call to Action (<https://www.cffacape.org/ssf-call-to-action>) - a milestone of 2022 and the year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture

(IYAFA), a group of SSF organisations from around the world have come together to raise key aspects to support SSF and thereby, their invaluable contribution to FSN.

It is crucial to reflect on the role of **Blue Economy** discourses as a solution to food security, but also an 'instrument' that can exacerbate inequalities and directly affect coastal communities. Reference to the FAO Blue Transformation roadmap can support the reflection and recommendations. However, adding small-scale fishers, fisherfolk, and coastal communities' perspectives and reflections on the implications of the Blue Economy to exacerbate inequalities, food insecurity and rights violation is critical. See The People's Tribunal reports <http://blueeconomytribunal.org/>

One specific action with high potential is that of implementing Exclusive Small Scale Artisanal Fishing zones. There are studies on how to make such zones work: https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/930.ICSF223_Anhra_Pradesh_Tenure_Right.pdf

As States have recently committed to protect 30% of marine areas by 2030 (target 3 of Montreal agreement), we and many SSF organisations along with us insist that it cannot work if it does not have a human-rights based approach. It will be important to monitor, and valuable additions to this report stating that the 30x30 goal also needs to be achieved in a way that is compatible with SDG14B and other commitments such as the Guidelines to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries.

Connected to the appreciated highlights in the report of Farmers Organisations, we would like the authors not to forget the similarly critical role of Small-Scale Artisanal Fishers Organisations. They are much younger, but are building momentum and capacity. Some studies/articles worth looking into might be: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1416288> "Implicating 'fisheries justice' movements in food and climate politics" and "Transnational fishers' movements: emergence, evolution, and contestation. Maritime Studies 21, 393–410 (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-022-00280-3> by Mills, E.N.

- In general, reference to and inclusion of other food producer constituencies than farmers such as small-scale fishers and pastoralists, could be strengthened throughout the report.
- Importance of **collective rights**: Collective rights are primarily discussed in relation to land rights, and it can be clarified that collective rights also concerns access rights to forests and fisheries. In particular, for small-scale fisheries, it is crucial to highlight collective tenure rights and have a clear understanding that tenure can be understood as how communities secure access to natural resources, which is key to their livelihood and food security. Access to resources is the base for small-scale fishers' and fisherfolks' social, economic, and cultural well-being (SSF Guidelines, 2014). We recommend The Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) as an important reference to the report. It is based on HRBA and was developed in an inclusive, participatory and transparent manner where SSF representatives and their support organisations played a critical role.

- **Farmers rights and farmer seed systems:** While the V0 draft describes adverse effects of corporate concentration of the global seed system in Chapter 4, it doesn't recognize the negative impacts of seed policies, plant variety protection and other intellectual property laws, seed marketing laws, variety registration and certification schemes, that are largely designed to meet the needs and interests of the agricultural industry, on the agency of farmers (restricting their right to freely save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seeds) and its implications for livelihoods and FSN outcomes. See e.g. [The Right To Seeds And Intellectual Property Rights.pdf \(geneva-academy.ch\)](#) For Member States to meet target 2.2 of the SDGs, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food has provided a framework to cohere and advance farmers', Indigenous peoples' and workers' rights and ensure that the world's seed systems are diverse and safe and fulfil the rights to life and food. This is elaborated in the 2021 thematic report A/HRC/49/43: Seeds, right to life and farmers' rights - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4943-seeds-right-life-and-farmers-rights-report-special-rapporteur>. These perspectives could be reflected in Chapter 3, e.g. p 50 or p. 51 related to Agency. Supporting Farmers rights and diverse farmer seed systems is important for FSN outcomes (See e.g. Farmer-Led Seed Systems - A Biowatch Briefing Securing food sovereignty in the face of looming ecological and social crises: <https://biowatch.org.za/download/farmer-led-seed-systems/?wpdm=1958&refresh=63c153dc5b3791673614300>). Also, this case demonstrates how diversification and promotion of local crop varieties has made it possible to shorten the hunger period <https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/cereal-banks-guinea-bissau-english.pdf>
- The role of **integrated agroecological approaches such as agroforestry** for food security and nutrition: As the V0 report also demonstrates, tackling food insecurity and malnutrition requires an increased focus on food quality, which can be achieved for example by promoting diversified production systems such as agroforestry and other agroecological approaches. Scaling up agroforestry can contribute to food and nutrition security, while contributing to more sustainable and resilient food production systems. For cases and policy and practice recommendations on agroecology and agroforestry, see e.g. Agroforestry Network, 2020. Agroforestry, food security and nutrition (https://agroforestrynetwork.org/database_post/agroforestry-food-security-and-nutrition/) and Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa <https://afsafrica.org/case-studies-agroecology/>
- We appreciate the important recognition of valuing **diverse knowledge systems** in the report. In order for **Indigenous and local knowledge and perspectives** to be adequately included, valued and also supported in the context of this study, we recommend working with existing approaches, tools and methods and consultation with Indigenous and local knowledge holders be prioritised. Some examples of methods and tools for multi stakeholder engagements and knowledge collaborations (referred to in Chapters 5) based on equity and usefulness for all involved include methods for multi-actor dialogues such as the Multiple Evidence Base approach for connecting across knowledge systems, and the Multi-Actor Dialogue methodology (see links below). Such methodologies are also useful for transformative social learning, conflict resolution and managing power relations in global negotiations. IPBES assessments such as the Global Assessment (2019) as well as resources such as the Local Biodiversity Outlooks, provide important insights into food systems and equitable livelihoods.

- Multiple Evidence Base approach (MEB) and Free, Prior and Informed Consent: <https://swed.bio/stories/a-multiple-evidence-base-approach-for-equity-across-knowledge-systems/> ; <https://swed.bio/about/guiding-principles-for-knowledge-collaboration/>
- Multi-actor dialogues: <https://swed.bio/focal-areas/approaches/dialogues-learning/multiactor-dialogues/> ; <https://swed.bio/reports/report/the-biggest-single-opportunity-we-have-is-dialogue/>
- Local Biodiversity Outlooks (LBO) 2: website: <https://lbo2.localbiodiversityoutlooks.net/> ; report: <https://www.cbd.int/gbo5/local-biodiversity-outlooks-2>

Additional **comments on specific sections** in the report:

- Given the unprecedented environmental crises we are facing, the section on **Sustainability** in Chapter 3 could be strengthened by broadening the discussion beyond issues of farm size and agricultural production methods to the overall threats to global food system sustainability posed by climate change and biodiversity loss. Issues such as who owns which land, and how productive is the land, should also be considered.
- We welcome Chapter 5, which highlights the need for **equity-sensitive policy processes** and mentions making nutrition-sensitive policies. Awareness of inequities, inequalities, and nutrition in relevant policies across sectors is critical. In addition, sensitive policies seek to do no harm. However, we would like to suggest drawing lessons from gender-responsive and -sensitive approaches. For a truly transformative change and to reduce inequalities for FSN, we see it is essential also to have responsive policies which recognize and react to inequities and inequalities in implementation. In addition, the section would gain in clarity if the discussion distinguished between the *content* of the formulated policies vs the *process* for policy formulation.
- Table 5.1: We lack framing these actions within a HRBA. As an example, instead of ‘Develop farmers’ organisations’ (which has a top-down connotation and raises questions about who develops them) the action should rather be about supporting constituencies’ own social movements and organisations based on their priorities, needs and rights.
- Chapter 6, p. 125-126 **Agroecology and food sovereignty**: We welcome the clear reference to agroecology as a structural reformation approach and the emphasis on maintaining the holistic perspective of agroecology as a rights-based, justice-centred approach. However, the section could be developed with regards to *how* to support a just transition to agroecology within food systems, such as supporting social movements in their struggles to advance agroecology and food sovereignty and maintaining the momentum that currently exists (e.g. through ongoing social movement processes such as the Nyeleni process [Nyéléni Process - International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty \(IPC\)](#)) and by supporting IPLCs in their efforts to maintain and revitalise indigenous and local food systems in support of local food security, food sovereignty and agroecology. Also, reference could be made e.g. to the FAO Scaling-up agroecology initiative or the application of the CFS Policy Recommendations on Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches and how these initiatives and instruments effectively can contribute to reducing inequalities for FSN outcomes.

Other relevant references:

- Haider, L.J, Boonstra, W.J., Peterson, W.J., Schluter, M., 2018. *Traps and sustainable development in rural areas: a review*. World Dev., 10, pp. 311-321.

Poverty arises from complex interactions between social and environmental factors that are rarely considered in development economics. A more integrated understanding of poverty traps can help to understand the interrelations between persistent poverty and key social and ecological factors, facilitating more effective development interventions.

- Lade, S, Haider, L.J, Engström, G., and Schlüter, M. 2017. *Resilience offers escape from trapped thinking on poverty alleviation*. Science Advances 3 (5) DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.1603043

The poverty trap concept strongly influences current research and policy on poverty alleviation. Financial or technological inputs intended to “push” the rural poor out of a poverty trap have had many successes but have also failed unexpectedly with serious ecological and social consequences that can reinforce poverty. Resilience thinking can help to (i) understand how these failures emerge from the complex relationships between humans and the ecosystems on which they depend and (ii) navigate diverse poverty alleviation strategies, such as transformative change, that may instead be required.

- FAO. 2022. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022. Towards Blue Transformation*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0461en>

- <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2021-10-20-why-the-blue-economy-is-at-a-tipping-point.html> Main points: 1) Private and public investors must collaborate with coastal communities and support locally led investable products and projects. 2) The ocean economy must be equitable, sustainable and diverse if it is to create true economic potential for Small Island States (SIDS) and those coastal Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which depend on the ocean for their lives and livelihoods, 3) Women hold the key to supporting coastal communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change and other ocean risks

- A Policy and legal diagnostic tool for sustainable small-scale fisheries: In support of the implementation of the voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication: <https://www.fao.org/3/cb8234en/cb8234en.pdf>

- SSF People-centred methodology to assess the voluntary guidelines for securing sustainable small scale fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/EN_People-centred-monitoring-of-the-implementation-of-the-SSF-Guidelines.pdf

- People-Centred assessment of the Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries: https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/TNI_report-EN_web.pdf

- IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S.

Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673>

- Forest Peoples Programme, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network, Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge and Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020) *Local Biodiversity Outlooks 2: The contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and to renewing nature and cultures. A complement to the fifth edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook*. Moreton-in-Marsh, England: Forest Peoples Programme. Available at: www.localbiodiversityoutlooks.net

This report elaborates on governance transitions towards inclusive decision-making and self-determined development, relevant e.g. for the section on addressing agency and power through inclusive governance in Chapter 6, and on revitalization of indigenous and local food systems for local food security, food sovereignty and agroecology as part of a just agricultural transition.