

## **CSIPM Comment to HLPE consultation on the scope of the upcoming report on “Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition”, 8 May 2022**

### **Overcoming Inequalities for Food Justice and Healthy, Sustainable Food Systems**

The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSIPM) recognizes the relevance of producing the report “Reducing Inequalities for food security and nutrition”, and we welcome therefore the fact that the CFS will address this issue, being informed by an HLPE report on this topic. We also recognize that the general direction of the consultation and the draft framing of the scope of the report underline the centrality and urgency of persisting and even growing inequalities which directly and severely affect the living conditions and rights of our constituencies.

We believe that the description, topics and questions included in the e-consultation are a substantial and promising basis for the further deliberations, and would like to contribute here with some suggestions of aspects and topics that should be central, or could be more emphasized/nuanced, or still included into the scope of the upcoming HLPE report.

Inequalities and inequities are factors that contribute to the violation of rights, in particular the human right to food and nutrition, and create and feed into the vicious circles of unjust food systems, hunger, exclusion, ecological destruction and climate crises.

Discriminations and prejudices turn differences into obstacles and into rights violations. The most severe form of discrimination results in persecution, oppression and even physical violence and death of individuals and groups.

The strong emphasis on human rights legal protections and frameworks is an important part of not only reducing inequalities, but in preventing them in the first place. This report can play an important role in better understanding the different ways human rights policies both directly related to food and agriculture as well as others, can work to create more equitable conditions for marginalized groups globally.

Inequalities exist on many levels, starting with inequalities between countries and within them. This essential and complex interconnection should be applied throughout the report. The dimension of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, caste, class, country of origin and the intersectionality between these factors are often negatively mobilized to create relations of power and segregation, which are reflected in daily and political life, revealing themselves in a structural manner.

Environmental racism, based on the supposed supremacy of human beings over other creatures and natural resources, and even among themselves, results in people, particularly women, Indigenous Peoples and people of color, to be more affected by food and water insecurity, impoverishment, displacement and victims of extreme socio-environmental events. Likewise, climate change affects countries at different speeds and magnitudes, with some countries that contribute disproportionately

to climate change less affected, and many others that have contributed less and are now among the most affected.

On the other hand, generational and gender discrimination place the responsibility of care work on women and girls, leading to greater inequality and inequity in women's access to education and professional qualification, inclusion and insertion in the labor market. These also produce disparities in income and in the quality of the jobs that women get.

The historical roots of these phenomena, sustained by colonialism and capitalism, should be included in the report, taking into account that neoliberalism has deepened inequalities of class, social status or caste within countries and has widened the gap among countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes it evident how current models of production and consumption are based on the concentration of wealth and income. While hunger and poverty are rampant and workers can take up to 20 years to recover the purchasing power of their wages, the wealthiest private sectors have made exorbitant profits. Since 1995, the top 1% have gained almost 20 times more of global wealth than the bottom 50% of humanity. Pandemic has worsened inequalities with wealth of 10 richest men has double while income of 99% of humanity are worse off. As a response, 73 countries face prospect of IMF backed austerity measures, risking worsening inequalities between countries and in countries.

Inequalities are the result of policy choices that have largely ignored or even promoted the inequalities in our food system driven by corporate power and the prevalence of economic interests over others, affecting negatively particularly small scale food producers and incentivizing large-scale investments and land grabbing processes. The striking inequalities in land distribution and, in general, in access to productive resources provide a drastic example for the historical and ongoing corporate concentration in food systems in the current and historical context.

Thus, it is essential to advance the discussion about the implementation of public policies in the perspective of the economic justice and social and solidarity economies that can effectively regulate markets and investments from a public interest perspective, promote structural redistribution of land through genuine agrarian reforms, and ensure income distribution in a more immediate way, while promoting the redistribution of wealth.

In light of increased inequalities in and between countries, the report should include as a central areas redistribution measures and fiscal policies. Important proposals and practices in this regard are debt cancellation, progressive taxes on capital and wealth, tax evasion, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, windfall taxes on exceptional profits in times of crises, subsidies, Overseas Development Aid, as well as measures to redistribute power in decision-making and power in the economy.

In this regard, it should be emphasized that the issue of unequal access should not overshadow the issue of universal access to adequate food. Indeed, even in rich countries the majority of the population does not eat adequately. For instance in Europe, malnutrition, expressed in situations of overweight and obesity, affects more than 50% of the population. Only 15% of Europeans eat the

recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. In the northern and southern regions of the Americas, the obesity epidemic also shows alarming figures.

Thus, while inequalities exacerbate access to food, they should not obscure the fact that the industrial food system generates and provides a vast variety of edibles which not necessarily can be called food. By default, industrial food is unhealthy for people and unhealthy for the planet, and there is the tendency that eating well and healthy foods is more and more becoming a privilege to those social classes that can afford them.

It is important to act systemically and considering intersectionality, with effective institutions capable of guaranteeing rights, particularly the human right to adequate food and nutrition, and of strengthening social protection, food reserves and other inclusive strategies. A comprehensive analysis of the institutional roles and responsibilities to ensure the realisation of human rights is required, from local authorities up to the global level, as well as between types of actors (executive, legislative and judiciary powers, rights holders), in which the strengthening the judiciary powers to protect rights has to be particularly considered.

Current production and financing models that impose the use of GMOs are also responsible for creating and accentuating inequality. They contribute to paradoxes of high prices and low food diversity, and low prices paid to farmers who then receive an inadequate compensation for their work. The responsibility then rests with food producers. The public sector, at different levels, has clear responsibilities to reduce inequality and must commit to the implementation of social protection policies, income and wealth redistribution.

It is necessary to consider the importance of formulating data and information based on adequate and inclusive methodologies that consider different social groups and realities in order to remove social, economic and political invisibility. There is a lack of reliable public information in countries and regions. Unfortunately, little is known about the realities of the most affected by hunger and malnutrition, especially indigenous peoples, women, LGBTQIA+, homeless, prisoners, migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and other people living under conflict, war and occupation or now severely affected by climate catastrophes.

Data is an important and powerful tool that can paint a picture of how a community, country, region, or even the global population stands vis-à-vis specific indicators. It can indicate progress, as well as failures in issues related to community and global development. However, numbers cannot tell the full story and cannot be separated from qualitative analysis and the lived experiences of people. Data on human rights violations are a good example for that. They are usually a complex, multidimensional documentation of evidence that is best known to the affected persons or communities. The report should therefore ask how to improve the documentation of human rights violations, especially of the right to food and nutrition, related to inequalities through more participatory methodologies that include the most affected people.

It is key to include the discussion about the obligations of the states to effectively regulate the private sectors in terms of preventing human rights abuses, discrimination and other outcomes of increased inequality. Why are these obligations not respected? Where is the accountability gap?

In the current context of rising food prices, public regulation is needed to prevent price volatility/shocks that deepen inequalities, through the effects of wars, lack of food stocks, food speculation, lack of market transparency, and pre-existing dependencies on food and other products.

The particular attention of the HLPE report about “agency” is highly appreciated. For the CSIPM, this is primarily central to fully take into account the diversity of its constituencies and regions. In that sense, we suggest the HLPE report paying particular attention to each of the most affected constituencies and their particular regional contexts.

The agency concept could also be applied to the most affected countries. The countries and regions most affected by multiple inequalities, becoming highly indebted and fragile in relation to the implementation of social protection, food and natural resource management policies, need to be better heard and considered in policy and coordination decision making. This point is crucial in the current context of rising prices for food, fuel and inputs, essentially for import-dependent low-income and low-income countries, especially the indebted countries. Their realities should play a central role in the HLPE report. Furthermore, a leading and more powerful participation of these countries in global political responses to the intertwined crises will be fundamental for reducing inequalities among and within countries.

Tackling inequalities requires making political and ethical decisions now and in the future, and we strongly hope that the HLPE report by itself, and through the subsequent CFS Policy Convergence process, can significantly contribute to overcoming Inequalities for Food Justice and Healthy, Sustainable Food Systems.