



## **Data collection and analysis tools for food security and nutrition - Online consultation on the V0 Draft of the Report proposed by the HLPE Steering Committee and the Project Team**

Comments by the World Farmers' Organisation

### **General Comments:**

- The zero draft touches upon the topic of food systems sustainability and the recognition by the UN system of the need to take actions on food systems. However, the draft doesn't consider the process of the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), called by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and implemented during 18 months between end of 2020 and September 2021, during which stakeholders have gathered in several sub-processes of UNFSS to pool resources and efforts towards food systems sustainability. The process is now in its implementation phase and should be taken into account.
  - It is of the utmost importance to involve farmers and their organised structures, namely farmers' organisations and agricultural cooperatives, in the debates on food security and nutrition. Indeed, the role of agriculture in tackling both nutrition and food security issues need to be emphasized. We need to highlight the potential of agriculture, as well as its contribution to the well-being of the entire society, cross cuttingly addressing the production of food, and nutrition and health challenges. Farmers are too often among those suffering food and nutrition insecurity around the globe, especially in developing Countries and remote rural areas. We need first to solve this paradox of food producers getting hungry and poor if we want to end food and nutrition insecurity. Investments are needed to support organised agriculture, to strengthen existing farmers' organisations and create new ones so to reach farmers on the ground and contribute to the development of rural areas. In fact, giving the multi-dimensional nature of agriculture, farmers' organisations and cooperatives contribute to the economic and social development of farming communities, providing services and infrastructure, facilitating farmers' access to markets, services, resources, training.
  - We need to invest in innovative business models to make sure that farmers receive a fair share of value added from food value chains, also by tackling the big elephant in the room that is the concentration of power along the value chain. Excessive concentration is a threat in value chains as well as for the farmers. It is necessary to ensure that farmers participate in the creation of value and that there is a fair share of value across the chain, and that farmers get rewarded for the risks they take and for the value they produce.
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- We need to work on the balance between long and short value chains in a way that they become complementary in a country wide food system, and healthy products become accessible and affordable. To create balance, we need to create standards and schemes that recognize the positive and negative impacts of both value chains on the diets of people. It is crucial to make sure that both long and short chains can create the condition for healthy food to be accessible, affordable but at the same time fair for the ones who produce it and buy it. On the one hand, we need to invest in local food production, shortening the chain so that food can have a shorter trip from farm to fork and therefore being also more accessible. On the other hand, we need to work on the longer value chains to make them more transparent and fairer and make sure that those value chains are integrating the real costs of productions. Most of the times, farmers bear the cost of adapting to standards without seeing a fair return on the price of their products. Also, we should bridge the gap between farmers and consumers to enhance the awareness about what it means to produce food and what a healthy and nutritious food look like which might be slightly different from what the consumers are sometimes expecting. We must promote innovative business models that improve the accessibility and affordability of healthy foods for healthy diets. Also, farmers need to be able to access markets: tackling the lack of infrastructures and information that hamper the access to markets, creating standards that allow food to be sold and creating innovative farmer – driven innovative business models that improve access to healthy food (structured farmers' markets; distribution of fresh agricultural products to schools).
  - In data collection, the barriers and bottlenecks faced by farmers have much to say, indicating where attention needs to be drawn. Therefore, an overview of complex food system challenges and a look from multiple perspectives and scales (local to regional) provide a more robust understanding of the leverage points and actions needed to overcome bottlenecks and barriers. In this sense, disarticulation at the intra- and inter-institutional level in both the private sector and government, poor communication, and lack of opportunities for farmers and other agricultural stakeholders to actively participate in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, plans, programs, and projects usually limit the scope and progress of transformation initiatives. Data collection (and use) should be farmer drive, taking into consideration the needs and expertise and concerns of farmers, including women and young farmers. This should lead also to development of farmer driven national development plans, policies, programs, and implementation strategies.
  - There is a lack of awareness and expertise that accompanies issues such as food security and nutrition, implying that a technical capacity gap can undermine the ability of local and national governments and farmer organizations, not only to successfully execute their plans or projects, but also to secure funding from the national and international community to support such initiatives. Increasing information sharing, harmonizing budget items and legal regulations, and most importantly, generating physical and virtual spaces to listen to and dialogue with farmer organizations are just a few entry points that can ultimately avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts by making efficient use of time, personnel,
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infrastructures, and scarce financial resources. This could also provide co-benefits: stimulate the process of mobilizing and channeling bilateral, multilateral and global funds effectively; safeguard the transparency of processes by reducing the risk of bias when there are agents with economic or political power to prevent the formulation or implementation of regulations and public policies related to agriculture; and make it easier to reach the most marginalised, including for example small-scale farmers in remote areas, who are underrepresented according to the zero draft.

- In addition, data aggregators should also ensure that the data, tools, methodologies, and metrics used are accessible and meaningful to farmers, adequately informing decision-making. The generation, analysis, and dissemination of information on food security and nutrition, also require open dialogue among actors, including farmers, in order to coordinate activities and ensure that end users, e.g., farmers and decision makers, can interpret those information and recommendations and translate them into clear practices in the field, such as climate-adapted crop calendars for timely planting and harvesting and efficient pest and disease management.
- Ownership of the data must be claimed. The use of data must involve not only those who are able to aggregate and manage it, but also those who produce it in the fields with their own machinery. It is fundamental to address the possible obstacles in adopting new technologies linked to the use of data. Often data management is done at the expense of farmers, who release information without consent and without full disclosure of the purpose of data collection. This stems from an imbalance along the food value chain that needs to be addressed. To enhance farmers' trust, it is vital to equip them with the necessary tools to interpret and use the data they provide and prior informed consent from farmers for accessing their data and information should be a requirement. In addition, many of the digital tools provided to collect data do not take into account farmers' needs or are not available in their native language.
- Also, new business models for data management are needed to make sure they take into account all the stages of agricultural data collection, processing and modelling in a way that benefits farmers. Farmers must be the owners of their data in all stages and the utilization of data collected on farms and farmers' activities must be useful firstly for farmers and not only serving technological and input providers to improve their products.

## Topic related comments

- Lack of data: one of the data gaps identified in the document is related to farmers' activities, mainly highlighting an over-representation of large farmers compared to the smaller ones in results of surveys. It is of the utmost importance that Farmers' Organisations, being
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them the organised voice of farmers across the globe, are involved in the retrieval of data to reach the farmers where they are based, even in the outermost rural areas.

- Research efforts: the prioritisation of food and nutrition security has been underlined as a key resource for data collection. In this regard we want to underline that it is necessary to invest in R&D from the farmers' perspectives, so that their very specific needs and expectations can be met, and the best available knowledge can reach each and every farmer on the ground.
- Digital technologies: In the framework of the opportunities provided by innovation processes, being them not only technological, it is recognised that digital technologies have tremendous potential to achieve the disruptive change required in agriculture and rural development. As highlighted in the document, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and many others have entered the debate around innovation in agriculture with the potential to shape its sustainability in an effective way, helping farmers to adapt to or mitigate the effects of climate change or supporting them in adopting a "smarter" use of natural resources, for example. However, their use puts several questions on the table, regarding the affordability and utilisation of those technologies by all farmers and the support needed to ensure that this happens. Within the promise of digitalisation, lies the challenge of building a system that puts farmers, from the smallest to the large-scale farmers, at the centre of the conception and scaling-up of appropriate technologies, to bridge the gap between technologies development and the effective use by farmers. The first and fundamental principle should be that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work with farmers and agriculture. It is equally fundamental to consider how farmers are already innovating themselves and how they are experimenting with their existing resources. Farmers are economic actors, resilient and innovators by nature, and when it comes to digital technologies, solution developers should demonstrate a return of investment of time and resources for farmers. Farming is a business, a job for the farmers, and one should never forget that for farming to be sustainable, it needs to be profitable for the farmers whose livelihoods and incomes depend on it.
- Data management: The document recognizes as one element of difficult access to data, the data protection of farmers. In this domain, we want to reiterate that new business models for data management are needed to make sure that they take into account all the stages of agricultural data collection, processing and modelling in a way that benefits farmers. Farmers must be the owners of their data in all stages and the utilization of data collected on farms and farmers' activities must be useful firstly for farmers and not only serving technological and input providers to improve their products.



- Collaboration among policy-making institutions or organizations, especially governmental organizations at country level, as well as the collaboration amongst the actors in the value chains, needs to always foresee farmers' engagement in designing and implementing policies for rural development, education programs for rural youth and women. Also, investments would be needed on the development of existing and creation of new rural infrastructure systems to engage local producers and connect them to markets, improve agricultural production at country level, in particular for small-scale farmers who are usually those left behind.
  - Lack of investment in national foundational data and statistics systems by countries: Many low- and lower-middle-income countries lack the financial resources to produce agri-food data and statistics, and donor organizations rarely prioritize this area as a political priority.
  - Effectiveness and sustainability challenges in food systems data and statistics investments: limited cooperation on agricultural data and statistics both internally and across development partners has resulted in a proliferation of programs and data collection operations that risk duplication or impair country-led attempts to use data to influence agri-food system policy decisions.
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