

Preliminary Assessment of the GSF from a civil society perspective

Draft to be submitted for comments to the CSM Working Group on the GSF

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1. Introduction

The First Version of the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)¹ represents an important achievement of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and civil society organizations (CSOs), which have actively engaged in the reform process of the CFS. Indeed, one of the central demands of CSOs was the development of a GSF to become the primary global reference for coordination and coherence in decision making on food and agricultural issues. CSOs have engaged with the GSF process in the spirit of affirming it as the overarching global framework at the heart of the reformed CFS.

At the 39th session of the CFS Members States are expected to approve the first version of the GSF. The GSF is meant to enhance the role of the CFS as the most inclusive platform for global, regional and country-led food security and nutrition actions.

This note identifies the most important achievements for CSOs of the first version of the GSF, which we will use in our political struggles at national, regional and international levels. This note also identifies the main challenges that have not been included in the GSF first version due to the lack of international consensus on these topics; these have proved to be controversial but are nonetheless central to CSOs.

2. How can civil society organizations use the GSF?

Recognizing the **GSF** as an overarching framework for strategies, policies and actions on food security and nutrition (paragraph 7) constitutes **a step forward in promoting a new governance on food, agriculture and nutrition**, where States' obligations to protect, promote and fulfill (facilitate and provide) the right to food are reaffirmed. The GSF is mainly built on decisions taken in former the CFS Plenary sessions on various issues including, investment in agriculture, food price volatility, responsible tenure on land, etc... In addition, the GSF is complemented by recommendations for food security and nutrition strategies, policies and actions taken in multilateral spaces, which is also relevant for non-State actors. Policies from intergovernmental agencies like FAO,

¹ CFS, Reform of the Committee on World Food Security, Final Version, Thirty-fifth session of the CFS, 14,15 and 17th October 2009, Agenda Item III, CFS: 2009/2 Rev 2.

IFAD, WFP and CGIAR group, among others, should adhere to the GSF recommendations before their implementation in order to achieve coherence and adherence worldwide.

The **human rights approach** is one of the guiding principles of the CFS reform and thus, the GSF highlights the consensus and commitment to implement the human right to food and gives appropriate policy responses. Despite the fact that the GSF is not a legally binding document, (paragraph 8), the recognition of the Voluntary Guidelines of the right to food (paragraph 11),² the right to food definition given by the General Comment 12 (paragraph 13), and the seven practical steps to right to food development at national level (paragraph 75), reaffirms States' obligations to implement the human right to adequate food through national, regional and global policies. Although there seems to be international consensus on the right to adequate food and the implementation of the Right to Food Guidelines, there are still some governments who systematically try to limit the scope of the implications of a human rights approach in food and nutrition policies.

Following the general identification of the CFS in its reform document on those sectors most affected by hunger³, the **GSF proved to be a step forward** in building a holistic understanding of rights holders and the articulation of their right claims. It refers to **small-scale food producers as smallholder farmers, agriculture and food workers, artisanal fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous people and the landless, women and youth (C Definitions)**. GSF recognizes existing legal instruments that are important for small scale food producers, especially indigenous people, women and rural workers⁴. The GSF reference to the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) Report (paragraphs 27 and 54) gives special attention to small-scale food producers and this is much welcomed by CSOs. Another positive aspect of the negotiated GSF is the **recognition of agroecology** and its potential for improving agricultural sustainability and income generation as well as resilience in the face of climate change; calling for the elaboration of agroecology programs, policies and laws at local and national level (paragraph 16). Moreover it considers the ecosystem approach as a tool for agricultural management in order to achieve sustainable agriculture, including integrated pest management, organic agriculture, and other traditional and indigenous coping strategies (paragraph 53, m)

Especially, **rural workers** can refer to the GSF to strengthen their struggles. GSF mentions the deficit of decent work and insufficient purchasing power of low-wage

² Voluntary Guidelines for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/009/y9825e/y9825e00.htm>

³ CFS Reform Document, CFS:2009/2 Rev.2, p. 11, ii

⁴ such as UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People (paragraph 27), the ILO Convention 87, 98 and 169 (paragraph 27) that refers to rural workers rights, and several legal instrument for women rights such as the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes or Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (paragraph 27), among others

workers and the rural and urban poor as one of the root causes of hunger (paragraph 15). Based on international agreed framework, the GSF recommends including the payment of living wages to agricultural workers as a direct action to immediately tackle hunger for the most vulnerable (paragraph 30). The GSF also includes the need to promote decent employment as a requirement for medium and long-term actions to build resilience and address the root causes of hunger (paragraph 32). It states that “formal employment and the assurance of a minimum living wage are keys for workers food security and nutrition” (paragraph 34).

Regarding **women’s rights**, the GSF mentions the legal and cultural discrimination as a structural cause of hunger (paragraph 15, c. i), it gives particular attention to addressing the nutritional needs of women and girls (paragraph 31), and recognizes international legal frameworks of relevance for the achievement of women’s food security (paragraph 27). It also refers to the CFS 37 final report for specific policy recommendations, with considerations to women as key food producers, calling for the promotion of their leadership and involvement in decision-making processes, and equal access to productive resources and inheritance, protection from violence and discrimination, maternity/paternity legislation, gender analysis of food security policies and the promotion of girls’ rights (paragraph 47- 49)

The core message of the GSF on **nutrition** draws primarily on the Voluntary Guidelines for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, not on other sources or frameworks, such as SUN, which are indicated as not directly linked with the CFS (paragraphs 56 and 57. In line with the civil society demands, the GSF recommends, *inter alia*, to maintain, adapt or strengthen dietary diversity and healthy eating habits and food preparation, as well as feeding patterns, including breastfeeding; take steps, in particular through education, information and labelling regulations, to prevent overconsumption and unbalanced diets that may lead to malnutrition, obesity and degenerative diseases; involve all relevant stakeholders, in particular communities and local government, in the design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of programmes to increase the production and consumption of healthy and nutritious foods, especially those that are rich in micronutrients; address the specific food and nutritional needs of people living with HIV/AIDS or suffering from other epidemics; take appropriate measures to promote and encourage breastfeeding, in line with their cultures, the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent resolutions of the World Health Assembly; disseminate information on the feeding of infants and young children that is consistent and in line with current scientific knowledge and internationally accepted practices and to take steps to counteract misinformation on infant feeding (paragraph 56).

The GSF policy recommendations on tenure of land, fisheries and forest are now complemented by key principles as negotiated within the Voluntary Guidelines on Tenure of **Land, Fisheries and Forests** (VGGT) process, promoting the implementation of this important tool, together with the participation of social movements of small scale food producers to monitor and evaluate its impacts in the implementation of the right to food. This is reinforced by the inclusion of paragraph 15 of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (VGRtF), which call upon States to carry out land reform and other redistributive reforms consistent with their human rights obligations (paragraph 61).

Regarding **monitoring and accountability** (E Monitoring) of national and global policies on food security and nutrition, the GSF negotiations reached an important consensus that affirms that monitoring and accountability systems should be human-rights based, with particular reference to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. Considering the overall picture of the drafting process, the GSF first version has shown how far we have come with human rights in food security and nutrition policies, and where the challenges lie for the future

3. Challenges for future GSF versions?

GSF is a flexible, living, document that will be adjusted regularly to incorporate decisions and recommendations adopted by the CFS plenary and drawing upon relevant frameworks related to food and nutrition. The first GSF was the result of a process that included the participation of a wide range of actors, including civil society organizations. In future, we should aim for a GSF that is a binding document for governments and intergovernmental organizations, which means that they will be held accountable for its implementation. The following are challenges which will need further attention from CSOs, particularly smallholder food producer organizations:

States must be open to identify important issues for smallholder food producers and take the lead to facilitate discussion and debates on these during the construction of the GSF. The first GSF process has revealed the opposition (and fear) from certain governments to include the concept of **food sovereignty** in the text and to give it the space for further discussion in the CFS. Some government delegations have resisted even the discussion of what is meant by food sovereignty and its applicability to the realization of the right to adequate food.

In our view, the reformed CFS as the most-inclusive platform for food security and nutrition should not exclude issues that are contentious. CFS stakeholders should be rather keen to advance debates on those issues, particularly when they are brought up by governments and civil society from the Global South.

Identifying new relevant issues would be consistent with the CFS mandate to hear the voices of the most affected by hunger and would be in the spirit of the GSF to be a

dynamic and flexible document adjusted as priorities change. This would imply that States guarantee adequate time, a proper timetable and available resources as well as the requisite openness and willingness to discuss issues that are identified as important by the people most affected by food insecurity.

For example, the FAO Policies on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples must be reflected in the GSF to ensure that the needs and concerns of indigenous people are effectively considered. Also, the FAO Guidelines on Small Scale Fisheries is equally useful to guarantee and strengthen traditional fishing at local, national and international levels. Other relevant frameworks include, for instance, the International Code of Marketing of Breastfeeding and Milk Substitutes, the Protocol of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement (A/HR/4/18), Rio+20 “The Future We Want” (§ 8, 20, 52, 108–18, 158, 168–72, 190, 197, 205, 211), in order to uphold the legitimate tenure rights of refugees, displaced and indigenous people. Other standards are legally binding on states and, therefore, cannot be dismissed in the debate on, and measures to be taken in situations affecting food sovereignty. These include, *inter alia*, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—ICESCR (with 173 states parties), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—ICCPR (with 167 states) and binding Security Council resolutions, such as SC 1325 on women and peace and security.

Also scientific evidence or practical experiences important for small scale food producer need further attention by States as it strengthens the demand of small scale food producers which should be reflected in concrete policy recommendations. The first GSF version does not include policy options from the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) but it highlights the need to bring together several initiatives on agricultural productivity and reconciling relevant existing results. It is key that future GSF builds upon the findings and recommendations of this ground-breaking report.

States must not limit the scope of the implications of a treaty-bound human rights approach in food and nutrition policies. Nonetheless, States and other actors, including UN Charter-based organisations, remain particularly reluctant to accept the implications of the human rights approach when it comes to ensuring multi-sector coherence between programs and policies, or to recognize legal accountability mechanisms and effective remedies for those affected by persistent hunger. Rejection of the human rights framework was particularly apparent within discussions related to: the role of trade liberalization and investment agreements; public-private partnerships in the food and nutrition sector; and agro-fuel expansion and associated land and natural resources grabbing.

The lines above bring the issue of antagonistic power relationships and competing interest between small-scale food producers and private interest and powerful governments. Free trade policies as promoted within the Doha Round or initiatives such as SUN or AGRA should be discussed in-depth within the CFS multilateral forum before they are implemented by a few financially influential actors. They need to undergo the multilateral coherence check within the CFS, in order to prevent further damage for small-scale food producers, ensuring that they are heard not less than the economically more powerful actors.

There is a need to strengthen the efforts made in the different working groups facilitated by the CFS in order to give a stronger incidence in the CFS decisions, as the GSF text mainly consolidates the decisions and recommendations adopted by the CFS Plenary.

Furthermore, the GSF should further identify the roles and responsibilities of the wide range of actors influencing food security and nutrition, including international and regional intergovernmental organizations and the private sector.

Finally, the GSF will have no significance if it remains at the global level; hence the process of implementing of the GSF at national level is crucial. The ultimate goal is to achieve national ownership (understood as democratic ownership). States must guarantee funding for the implementation of the GSF and for its application at national and sub-national levels; and this must be secured as part of the approval of the final GSF.