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# An ActionAid and IFSN Briefing on the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the CFS

October 2011

# Introduction to the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

The 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) will take place from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2011 at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Headquarters in Rome. As the session draws near, ActionAid, IFSN and other civil society organisations (CSOs) are putting final pressures on CFS Member States for action-oriented policy recommendations aimed at reducing global hunger and food insecurity.

The three key issues that will be discussed at the Policy Roundtables are:

1. Food Price Volatility
2. How to increase Food Security and Smallholder-sensitive Investments in Agriculture
3. Gender, Food Security and Nutrition

Based on these policy discussions, 192 CFS Member States will adopt the final recommendations which will shape the plan of action for the CFS in year 2012.

## What ActionAid and IFSN expect from the CFS 37

- CFS' policy recommendations must be supported by strong moral authority and clear political mandates from Member States.
- The CFS should agree on a plan of action which addresses national policies and international responses to the causes and impacts of food price volatility, strengthening the resilience of local communities and small food producers.
- The CFS should seriously address the challenges and opportunities for smallholder farmers and put them at the centre of agricultural policies and market development, in order to improve their livelihoods and support them to feed the world in a sustainable way. Discussions on agricultural investments should start from the point of view of smallholder farmers (with a special focus on women smallholders) and the CFS should refrain from approaches that champion corporate interests at the expense of small-scale agriculture.
- The CFS should mainstream gender and in all its activities, policy discussions and decisions, and go beyond the Policy Roundtable on Gender, Food Security and Nutrition. Gender should be a cross-cutting issue and be adequately addressed in the Roundtables on Food Price Volatility and Agricultural Investments.

## Our top line messages

### Policy Roundtable 1: Food Price Volatility

#### ***Scale up food reserves***

Beside the risk of suffering localised food shortages or food emergencies caused by floods, droughts, conflict, or natural disasters, many poor and 'low-income food-deficit' countries are also highly vulnerable to global food price spikes and increasingly volatile global food prices.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this context, the G20 Action Plan agreed during the Agriculture Ministers meeting in June, did not adequately address how to prevent and reduce the negative impacts of volatile food prices on developing countries. Market-based instruments are not the most appropriate where the market itself has failed to guarantee stable food prices. In this light, the CFS should go beyond the G20 Action Plan, and build upon the study of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), which adopts a more long-term perspective on addressing food price volatility<sup>2</sup>.

In tackling food price and market volatility, both buffer stocks and emergency humanitarian reserves are essential. Many existing national food reserves have been successful in reaching millions of poor people during the 2007-2008 food crisis, and many of them are proving to be flexible, effective, and progressive public policy tools.<sup>3</sup>

For the Policy Roundtable on Food Price Volatility, the CFS currently seems to give priority to what was agreed by the G20 Agriculture Ministers in June, including the proposal for an emergency humanitarian food reserves system. Indeed, emergency food reserves are indispensable in crisis situations. However, focusing the debate around them at the expense of buffer stocks will do little to address the issue of long-term price volatility, nor will it help stabilise prices during food price surges or shocks.

- ✓ **CFS Member States should discuss a new generation of clearly mandated, well governed, efficient and cost-effective national and regional food reserves.**
- ✓ **The CFS should start investigating the feasibility of establishing pro-poor food reserve systems at the national and regional levels**

#### ***Make the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and the Rapid Response Forum (RRF) transparent, inclusive and accountable to the CFS***

The G20 Agriculture Ministers agreed in June to set up a shared central database of food production and price information, known as the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) to improve transparency in agricultural markets. The Rapid Response Forum (RRF) was also set up by the G20 as a platform for senior officials to share views and plans for immediate actions in order to prevent or mitigate global food price crises. According to the G20 Action Plan, the AMIS secretariat is to be housed at the FAO.

Following up on the June meeting, advisors to the G20 Agriculture Ministers met in Rome in September to agree on a Terms of Reference for the AMIS and to discuss the guidelines for the functioning of the RRF. The CFS Member States are currently proposing to adopt the AMIS and the RRF in its policy recommendations.

Although such mechanisms have the potential to ensure timely measures to prevent food crises, ActionAid and IFSN believe that their effectiveness, legitimacy and relevance will depend on fair, transparent and inclusive representation of all stakeholders - in particular those countries and communities that are vulnerable to food price shocks. Likewise, the CFS should not simply endorse such mechanisms from the standpoint of an implementing agency, but encourage a wider discussion among its members and recommend the inclusion of developing countries in designing the proposal.

- ✓ **AMIS and RRF should be accountable to the CFS, as it is the only legitimate and relevant forum to discuss and coordinate food and agriculture policy responses.**
- ✓ **The CFS should ensure that the vulnerable countries and CSOs are included in the designing of the AMIS and the RRF.**

## **Policy Roundtable 2: How to Increase Food Security and Smallholder-Sensitive Investment in Agriculture**

### ***Prioritize investments in smallholder-led climate resilient sustainable agriculture***

Three-quarters of the world's poor and 70 per cent of hungry people live in rural communities where small-scale farming is the predominant livelihood and source of food. Smallholder farmers provide more than half of the world's food supply, and they contribute over 90 per cent of Africa's agricultural production and the majority of the maize, beans and potatoes for domestic consumption in Latin America.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, the current food system only rewards homogenized, top-down, uniform solutions that can achieve scale and are commercially viable, and several national and international policies continue to favour large farms, specialized production, crop monocultures, and mechanization which bring negative impacts on the environment and the lives of smallholder farmers. In addition, volatile food prices, recurrent droughts, floods, soil and water degradation, and land grabs are some of the multiple challenges faced by smallholders in developing countries.

ActionAid and IFSN believe that smallholder sustainable agriculture is the most efficient and socially just way to increase productivity, build resilience to climate change, increase household incomes, create jobs, empower women, regenerate land and other natural resources, and improve household food security. Sustainable agriculture is an approach derived from the recognition of people's right to food. It is a way of life based on self-reliant and agro-ecological systems which encompass all forms of livelihoods for smallholder

farmers, farm workers, landless people, pastoralists, livestock farmers, fisheries and hunter-gatherer societies.<sup>5</sup>

During the Policy Roundtable on Agricultural Investments, the CFS will discuss how to support public and private investments that are sensitive to smallholder farmers' needs in order to achieve sustainable food production. Although ActionAid and IFSN welcome this discussion, we find that the background document on this roundtable only provides a vague picture, without critically highlighting the constraints smallholder farmers face in access to natural resources, adequate financial resources and public policies, as well as their increasing vulnerability in vertically-integrated markets which lead to monopolistic and oligopolistic control by transnational corporations.

- ✓ **The CFS should adequately address the constraints smallholders face in order to find transformative solutions to support their sustainable food production systems**
- ✓ **The CFS, through the HLPE, should continue to explore the current gaps in investments in smallholder agriculture, including conducting a comparative assessment of different strategies for linking smallholder producers to markets.**
- ✓ **The CFS should ensure donors to deliver on their commitments to the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (AFSI) and the Global Agriculture & Food Security Program (GAFSP). A major portion of these funds should target smallholder-led climate resilient sustainable agriculture.**
- ✓ **The CFS should urge Member States to prioritize investments in climate resilient sustainable agriculture, ensuring public research, extension and finance, particularly for women farmers. The research, including that of the CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) system, should support and build on initiatives by farming communities and the civil society.**

## ***Stop land grabbing and eliminate targets on biofuels***

Security of land tenure is a vital precondition for farmers to grow their food and to have a sustainable environment for their investments. However, the expansion of industrial biofuel production has put great pressures on land rights and land use – both direct and indirect. In many parts of the world, the phenomena of land grabbing and land use change have brought about negative consequences for food stocks, leading to rising prices and declining food security.<sup>6</sup> This negative chain of events affects women disproportionately, as they have less access to natural and productive resources and opportunities compared to men.

Many CFS Member States have an important role to play in ensuring that global biofuels production and consumption do not encourage land grabs, threaten food security, and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. The report on food price volatility prepared by the FAO, the World Bank and other inter-governmental agencies at the request of the G20, and the two HLPE reports on food price volatility and land tenure - all take a firm position against

the expansion of biofuels production and the use of mandates and financial incentives that encourage the growth of the industry.

Nonetheless, this important issue is not adequately dealt with in the background paper to the Roundtable on Smallholder-Sensitive Investment in Agriculture. In fact, it devotes disproportionate attention to “win-win” public-private partnerships and corporate investments without considering the real consequences of industrial agriculture and corporate-controlled value chains on the lives and livelihoods of smallholders and the environment.

With nearly one billion people already hungry around the world, governments need to ensure that the global energy needs are not met in ways that worsen the plight of the poor and malnourished. Phasing out blending targets and financial incentives for biofuels is one way to achieve this.

**The CFS should adopt strong recommendations and urge Member States to:**

- ✓ **Consider the negative social, economic and environmental impacts of land-based investments and large-scale acquisitions of farm land on the livelihoods of smallholder farmers**
- ✓ **Eliminate targets, mandates and financial incentives (such as subsidies and tax exemptions) that encourage the expansion of unsustainable industrial biofuels production as the HLPE reports clearly state**
- ✓ **Ensure that all biofuels, whether domestically produced or imported, meet strict social and environmental sustainability criteria that ensure that their production and consumption do not compromise food, land and workers' rights and that they result in lower net greenhouse gas emissions than fossil fuels when considering the full life-cycle of the biofuel production process.**

### **Policy Roundtable 3: Gender, Food Security and Nutrition**

#### ***Recognize women as farmers and set specific and measurable targets to translate actions into policies and spending plans***

Women smallholders comprise an average of 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force of developing countries. Of those women in the least developed countries who report being economically active, 79% of them report agriculture as their primary economic activity; the global figure is 48%.<sup>7</sup> Despite the vital role of women in agriculture, women farmers struggle with a severe lack of extension services, credit, inputs, and productive assets.

Furthermore, women tend to be invisible to policy makers because they are not seen as ‘productive’ farmers. They often are expected to provide unpaid farm work<sup>8</sup>, and bear a disproportionate burden of care and reproductive roles within the family and community. They are deprived of access to markets, key assets, and inputs, and are frequently excluded from decision-making. And women are even disproportionately impacted by poverty and hunger - including having less access to education and health care facilities.

The FAO confirms that if women farmers had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 - 30 per cent. This in turn could raise the total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 – 4 per cent, and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 - 17 percent.<sup>9</sup>

The Policy Roundtable on Gender, Food Security and Nutrition provides a great momentum for taking forward the aforementioned issues. Policy recommendations that result from this roundtable should focus on empowering women farmers and recognising their unique roles, needs and constraints in ensuring food security.

**To facilitate rather than undermine their work, the CFS should endorse the following :**

- ✓ **Recognize women as farmers and support measures that address their unique needs, constraints and their multiple roles in food production and provisioning. These should include: access to adequate public financial services; guaranteeing secure access, use and control over good quality agricultural land and other productive resources, including appropriate seeds; and providing women-targeted agricultural research and extension services.**
- ✓ **Set specific and measurable targets for translating actions to support women farmers into policies and spending plans. This would include gender-targeted budgeting as well as collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.**

## **Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)**

The CFS Secretariat launched a consultative process to develop the GSF by October 2012. From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2011, over 30 CSOs – through the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) of the CFS – launched their own consultation with a view to influence the outcome of what would become the framework to coordinate and guide synchronized action by a wide range of stakeholders regarding food policies at the global, regional and national level.

One of the key concerns raised about the CFS Secretariat-led consultative process was that it is concentrated at the global level with very limited consultations at the national level. The online nature of the consultation was also mentioned as a factor impeding the broader inclusive participation of all players across all levels. Some of the issues identified with regards to the content of the draft were: a) the structure of the draft annotated GSF, b) the inconsistency in the language, and c) the weakness in the presentation of some issues like nutrition.

To overcome these deficiencies, the CSOs agreed to develop an alternative framework that will capture their aspirations and views, and present a consolidated political statement during the CFS 37. The launch of the alternative framework will be targeted for the FAO regional meetings in 2012 where the first draft of the GSF would be discussed.

## Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGs)

The CFS is expected to adopt the VGs on 17 October 2011, based upon successful Intergovernmental Negotiations from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Land is central to the lives and livelihoods of poor people everywhere. ActionAid and IFSN call on Member States to ensure that the negotiations result in a strong land governance system which is in accordance with human rights and reflects the needs of the poorest and the most marginalized groups.

**Considering the importance of the implementation and monitoring of the system, we ask the CFS Member States to:**

- ✓ **Adopt the VGs which defend the application of Free Prior and Informed Consent and are against large-scale land acquisitions and in favour of. Member States should avoid watering down important positions already agreed like those on redistributive policies, and continue to support the use of human rights language, particularly with regards to Indigenous Peoples.**
- ✓ **Develop a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance of the VGs at the national and international level. The establishment of independent national and multi-actor bodies to observe compliance should be encouraged. Regional and international institutions, and especially international financial institutions (IFIs), must be required to incorporate the VGs in their operational policies and directives as a means to avoid supporting private or public projects, programmes or measures that violate human rights.**
- ✓ **Effectively implement the VGs through participatory and transparent approaches at the national level, as an integral component of national strategies for the progressive realization of the Right to Food. In this regard, Member States should be encouraged to develop indicators and benchmarks based on the following objectives:**
  - a) **recognition and security of tenure and use rights to land, natural resources and urban spaces by indigenous people, nomadic pastoralists, peasant, forest, fisherfolk, workers, as well as other local and traditional communities in rural and urban areas;**
  - b) **tenure and use rights redistribution where necessary to different constituencies, with particular attention to the rights of women and young people;**
  - c) **based on the above, recovering, reestablishment and respect for the commons, for collective rights and local self-governance of natural resources;**
  - d) **restoration of degraded ecosystems through appropriate actions with the full approval and participation of local communities.**
- ✓ **Develop a mechanism to monitor progress with respect to gender in the implementation of the VGs**

## Key moments for civil society at the CFS 37

### ActionAid & IFSN Side Event: Financing Smallholder Agriculture

ActionAid and IFSN will facilitate the side event on financing smallholder agriculture, collaborating with farmers' associations, other interested NGOs and CSOs. The side event will present successful agroecological initiatives undertaken by smallholder food producers in different regions, whereby they are producing food for household consumption and domestic markets, earning profits and income, and reinvesting in their own production systems. The discussion will draw decisions-makers' attention to the documentation of best practices on how small food producers are able to sustain themselves, funded themselves and contribute to rural development. Finally, it will draw attention to the kinds of support and investments small food producers require.

Representatives from IFSN, ROPPA (Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa) and La Via Campesina will speak at the event sharing their experiences.

### The Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) Forum

More than 100 civil society representatives – including social movements, small food producers, landless movements and NGOs will gather in IFAD for the CSM Forum just prior to the CFS 37. During the Forum, delegates will discuss the policy roundtable items and will formulate a consolidated CSM position to bring to the Plenary. Delegates will also discuss the functioning of the CSM with the aim of learning from the past year's experience and developing strategies for 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Huchet-Bourdon, M. (2011) *Developments in commodity price volatility*, OECD Food agriculture and fisheries working paper – cited in ActionAid (2011) No More Food Crises: The Indispensable Role of Food Reserves, *ActionAid Policy Briefing*: available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/no-more-food-crises-indispensable-role-food-reserves>

<sup>2</sup> FAO (2009) Country responses to the food security crisis: nature and preliminary implications of the policies pursued, Initiative on soaring food prices, Rome: FAO– cited in ActionAid (2011) No More Food Crises: The Indispensable Role of Food Reserves, *ActionAid International Policy Briefing*: available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/no-more-food-crises-indispensable-role-food-reserves>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> For complete list of sources: ActionAid (2011) Smallholder-led Sustainable Agriculture, *ActionAid International Policy Briefing*. Available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/smallholder-led-sustainable-agriculture-actionaid-international-briefing>

<sup>5</sup> ActionAid (forthcoming) Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture Toolkit.

<sup>6</sup> ActionAid (2011) Biofuels at the G20, *ActionAid International Policy Brief*. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/policy\\_briefing\\_biofuels.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/policy_briefing_biofuels.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see: ActionAid (2011) Investing in Women Smallholder Farmers, *ActionAid International Policy Briefing*. Available at: [http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/policy\\_briefing\\_investing\\_in\\_women\\_smallholder\\_farmers.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/policy_briefing_investing_in_women_smallholder_farmers.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Because of their limited access to essential production resources, such as land, labour, and inputs, women's role in crop agriculture is often restricted to producing subsistence food crops with low potential to generate income. Women farmers are more likely to be asset-poor subsistence farmers. See World Bank. 2010. *Gender in Crop Agriculture – Overview*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank. Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENAGRLIVSOUBOOK/.../Module12.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> FAO (2011) The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA). Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>