

FOOD POLICY UPDATE

FROM ROME

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Outcomes of the 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security



I. CFS-led intergovernmental negotiations on the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGs) — 10-15 October

Food Policy Updates from Rome aims to provide an up-to-date information on the global food governance system and strategic activities of ActionAid.

Alberta Guerra
Food Policy Officer
Alberta.Guerra@actionaid.org
Skype: albertaguerra
Tel: +39 393 9848224

Youjin Brigitte Chung
Right to Food Team
Communications Assistant
Youjin.Chung@actionaid.org
Skype: aai_youjin
Tel: +44 (0)20 3122 0740

www.ifsn-actionaid.net
www.actionaid.org



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CSO participants at the VGs negotiations © Alberta Guerra

The intergovernmental negotiations on the VGs took place at the FAO Headquarters with the aim of finalising the text for its adoption at the 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 37). The negotiations were attended by approximately 70 Member States, 45 civil society organisations (CSOs), and one private sector organisation.

The intense negotiations ended with 75% of the text agreed, which is not a bad outcome considering that the 'Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security' took ten years to adopt, and the overall negotiations were held in a positive, constructive and inclusive manner.

CSOs worked together to propose alternative wordings in the text, and successfully managed to introduce some strong language to a number of important issues such as gender, the principle of free, prior informed consent (FPIC) for indigenous communities, the principle of consultation and participation of individuals and groups in associated decision-making processes, and the principle that agricultural investments have to primarily support smallholder farmers.

In addition, the VGs are now robustly anchored in human rights language and principles. Under strong CSO pressure, the VGs now guarantee: the recognition and protection of customary tenure of land, fisheries and forests; the protection of the

defenders of the rights of peasants, farmers, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, women, pastoralists, nomadic and landless peoples; and the commitment to not criminalise the social struggles undertaken to defend their natural resources. The responsibility of non-state actors has also been recognised and gender equality now forms one of the principles of implementation which will guide and inspire the future text of the VGs.

The adoption of the proposal to give priority to existing users/rights holders and to safeguard legitimate tenure rights even when they are not legally recognised was a major win for the marginalised poor, and more so for women who rarely have legally recognised rights to land and other natural resources. The proposal also includes the need to take into account gendered differentiated impacts on food security and poverty alleviation in monitoring the outcomes of land tenure allocation programmes. Regarding land tenure governance, it was agreed that the procedures need to be simple in clear, accessible and comprehensible format for local communities. Another major gain is that the consultation process on the responsible agricultural investment principles will not resume until the VGs have been finalised. This is to ensure that the human rights-based VGs will serve as a reference for the consultation process. CSOs are hoping that this will speed up the VGs negotiations.

Ultimately, however, the negotiations were not completed in time for the adoption at the CFS 37, mainly due to the complexity of the issues. Several controversial topics, such as those relating to investments in agriculture, remain open and have faced strong resistance from several governments.

The CFS in its final report, acknowledged the substantial progress gained so far on the VGs and recommended building on this solid base while concentrating on the remaining paragraphs. It also mandated the CFS Bureau, in consultation with the Advisory Group and the Secretariat, to call for an additional negotiation session with the intent of finalising the guidelines as soon as possible, taking into consideration the CFS' overall work programme and available resources. Several governments have already committed to this additional negotiation session.

Next steps

Our task now is to get in contact with respective governments and **push for the conclusion of the VGs negotiations**, particularly addressing the following:

- We urge the CFS and its Member States to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible in order to provide a comprehensive international agreement that prevents land grabs. There should be a clear mandate to officially adopt the VGs immediately *after the end of negotiation*, or with an *extraordinary CFS Session* having the mandate to adopt it.
- We recommend governments to provide urgently the financial resources needed to organise the last round of negotiations
- We recommend governments to not reopen the agreed text in order to not jeopardise the delicate compromise language achieved
- We recommend governments to focus on remaining paragraphs, particularly on the provisions on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the VGs at the country level.

Further reading:

- [Latest draft of the VGs](#) (641 KB, PDF)
- [CSO Statement on the VGs Negotiations](#) (71 KB, PDF)

The handover of the Dakar Appeal against land grabbing

During the negotiations, CSOs and peasants' movements took action and handed over the [Dakar Appeal against the land grab](#). The Appeal, signed by 870 organisations around the world including ActionAid, was prepared and endorsed at the World Social Forum earlier this year in Dakar, Senegal. It is now in the hands of the Chair of the CFS and the Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group who led the negotiations on the VGs.



Mr Mamadou Ba (centre), president of Senegal's National Rural Exchange and Cooperation Council (CNCR), hands over the Dakar Appeal to the Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group, Gregory Myers (left) and the Chair of the CFS, Noel de Luna (right)
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Mr Mamadou Ba, president of Senegal's National Rural Exchange and Cooperation Council (CNCR), read a statement affirming the daily struggles of farmers, women, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and fisher-folks in defending their land tenure rights. He

stressed how land is the most important resource for their livelihoods; however, land grabbing resulting from aggressive corporate investments is displacing communities from their land as most do not have registered nor secure land tenure. He emphasized that this is a major loophole that has been exploited by corporates and governments to evict rural communities from their land without any compensation.

The Dakar Appeal has been an important step forward in exposing the reality on the ground and bringing to the fore the discussion around human rights, human dignity, food and livelihoods into the VGs negotiations. Social movements and CSOs are calling for the text of this appeal to be incorporated in the future negotiations and for a worldwide ban on land grabbing so that small-scale producers can reclaim control over their local food production systems.

2. Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) Forum — 15-16 October

The CSM organised its annual Forum the weekend prior to the CFS 37 at the IFAD Headquarters in Rome. The objectives of the forum were to: 1) develop common policy positions and lobbying strategies for the CFS 37; and 2) select the new CSO members of the CFS Advisory Group.

The plenary and working group discussions helped participants coming from various constituencies to share their perspectives, prioritise issues and to work towards the development of a united voice on the agricultural investments, gender, and food price volatility. During the Forum, IFSN presented the draft 'CSM Guide' which was drafted through active collaboration among CSM members, with the aim of providing clear and easily accessible information on the CFS in order to facilitate greater participation of CSOs at the national level.

The four new CSO members of the CFS Advisory Group will work alongside the Bureau from one CFS Plenary to another and negotiate with Governments by bringing the views of the civil society.

The new members elected are:

- **Jorge Stanley Icaza** – Indigenous Caucus, Panama
- **Margaret Nakato** – The World Forum of Fish Harvesters & Fishworkers (WFF), Uganda
- **George Dixon Fernandez** – Mouvement International de la Jeunesse Agricole (MIJARC), Brussels/India
- **Lalji Desai** – The World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), India

Considering the inclusive nature of the CSM, it was decided that the following additional four members would serve as alternates for the 2011/12 year and would subsequently be appointed as the new Advisory Group members for 2012/13.

- **Svetlana Boincean** – International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF), Moldova
- **Maria Noel Salgado** – Movimiento Agroecológico de América Latina (MAELA), Uruguay
- **Ibrahim Coulibaly** – La Via Campesina, Mali
- **Kalissa Regier** – La Via Campesina, Canada

The report of the CSM Forum will be available soon.

3. CFS 37 Plenary Session — 17-22 October

The CFS 37, held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, aimed to tackle three important policy issues affecting food security: investment in smallholder agriculture; gender, food security and nutrition; and food price volatility. During the Plenary, Mr Yaya Olaniran of Nigeria was elected as the new CFS Chair for a two year term to succeed Mr Noel De Luna of the Philippines.

ActionAid and IFSN delegates attending the CFS 37 participated actively in all CSO working groups for the Policy Roundtables and in negotiations with Governments. CSOs face many challenges and responsibilities ahead, including the continued engagement in and strengthening of the CFS, as well as the commitment to support the most vulnerable groups so that their voices can be heard in international policy-making spaces.

Further reading:

- [Final Report of the CFS 37](#) (188 KB, PDF)

Policy Roundtable #1: How to increase Food Security and Smallholder-sensitive Investments in Agriculture



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In its final report, the CFS recognised smallholder farmers – the majority of whom are women – as primary agricultural investors, and that they play a central role in producing the food consumed locally in developing regions. The CFS recommended that public investments should give due priority to enabling, supporting and complementing smallholders' own investments with particular attention to women food producers, and that any partnership among agricultural investors should serve and preserve smallholders. In line with this recommendation, the CFS urged the explicit recognition of smallholder-sensitive investment

among the criteria for characterising “responsible corporate investment in agriculture”, and that the definition of this term to be specifically addressed in the consultation on responsible investment in agriculture.

Furthermore, the CFS stressed that agricultural policies and public investment should give priority to food production and nutrition and increase the resilience of local and traditional food systems and biodiversity, with a focus on strengthening sustainable smallholder food production and fostering smallholder-inclusive local, national and regional food markets including transportation, storage and processing.

Policy Roundtable #2: Gender, Food Security and Nutrition



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The CFS has made ambitious commitments for promoting gender equality in agriculture. The CFS recognised that achieving food security and adequate nutrition for women, men and their families are inter-linked and urged all stakeholders to take concrete actions to improve women's health, educational and nutritional status. This is a positive recognition considering that women make up more than 40 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries and play a crucial role in ensuring food and nutrition security of their families.

The CFS also affirmed that women smallholders should be given equal treatment in agricultural programming as a matter of human rights and in promoting socio-economic development. Furthermore, the Committee urged Member States to take affirmative action to ensure women's meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making processes and in the control over natural resources, and to actively promote women's leadership and capacity for collective organising especially in the rural sector. With regards to agricultural investments, the CFS recommended Member States to take into account the specific needs of women, bearing in mind that investments in land and other natural resources have impact on women's food security.

Policy Roundtable #3: Food Price Volatility

The weakest recommendations came from the Roundtable on food price volatility, which only served to reinforce the G20 Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture, while failing to address the root causes of food price volatility. In fact, CSOs walked out of the negotiations in protest of systematic marginalisation. Negotiations on major issues such as trade, biofuels and food reserves have been cut off despite persistent civil society interventions and the decision box was recreated in a way that failed to address the main drivers of food crises.

In line with the G20 Action Plan, the CFS urged major food producing and consuming countries to participate in the new Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) established by the G20 and collaborate towards providing the international community with high-quality and timely market information products, as well as the establishment of the AMIS Rapid Response Forum (RRF) with appropriate link between that Forum and the CFS.

Apart from welcoming the G20 Action Plan, the only new recommendation from the CFS were to: a) increase stable and sustainable public and private investments to strengthen smallholder production systems, boost agricultural productivity, foster rural development and increase resilience with particular attention to smallholder agriculture; and b) request relevant international organisations in consultation with relevant stakeholders to assess the constraints and effectiveness of local, national and regional food reserves.

The recommendation on biofuels was disappointing as it watered down the language of dropping mandates and targets as outlined in the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) studies, and instead requested the HLPE to conduct a new "science-based comparative literature analysis, taking into consideration the work produced by the



President of the National Coordination of Peasant Organisations of Mali (CNOP), Ibrahim Coulibaly, addresses the CFS 37 at the Policy Roundtable on Food Price Volatility.
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FAO and the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), of the positive and negative effects of biofuels on food". CSOs in their [joint statement](#) (33 KB, DOC) called on the CFS to respect the autonomy of the HLPE to conduct its study independently without specifying which report it should consider.

Global Strategic Framework on Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)

The CFS is in the process of developing the GSF. The purpose of the GSF is to improve the coordination and guide synchronised action by a wide range of stakeholders on hunger and malnutrition at the international, regional and national levels, and in line with the promotion and protection of the right to adequate food. This process should be completed by October 2012, when the first version of the GSF is presented to and approved by the 38th Session of the CFS, after a series of consultations in the Regional FAO Conferences from February to April 2012.

Since September 2011, the CSM working group on the GSF has been facilitating the preparation of a civil society document that will serve as a basis for the consultation process. The first draft has been circulated and comments are requested by 15 November. The consolidated document will be used as a CSO contribution for both the FAO Regional Conferences and the CFS drafting process of the GSF.

Further reading:

- First draft of the GSF ([EN](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#), 52 KBPDF)

Roundtable to Review Methods to Estimate the Number of Hungry



Following the request of the CFS 36, the FAO hosted a Roundtable on 12-13 September 2011 to review the methods used to estimate the number of hungry people. The conclusions of this roundtable were presented to and endorsed by the Member States at the CFS 37.

The CFS endorsed the proposal of creating a suite of core food security indicators including the development, adoption and promotion of internationally accepted standards. The Committee also encouraged the FAO and other agencies to strengthen

their capacity development efforts to improve both basic food and agricultural statistics and food security monitoring systems at the country level.

The FAO and its partners will produce a report on the progress towards the core set of indicators at the 38th Session of the CFS in 2012. A technical group, led by FAO/ESS (Statistics Division), will be established to draft a proposal for a set of core food security indicators to be submitted for consideration and endorsement by the UN Statistical Commission. Key data producers will be invited to be part of the technical group to ensure mainstreaming the core indicators into major existing food security related data collection programmes.

Further reading:

- [Final outcome of the Roundtable](#) (188 KB, PDF)
- For more information, visit: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfsroundtable/cfsroundtable-home/en/>

4. IFSN Side Event: Financing Small Food Producers - Successful financial and rural development models from small food producers — 19 October



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During the CFS 37, IFSN organised a side event with ROPPA (Network of West African Farmer and Producer Organisations), La Via Campesina, and the Food Security Network in Cambodia to present successful initiatives of agro-ecological food production undertaken by smallholder farmers in different regions. The case studies from Indonesia and Cambodia, which were extracted from IFSN's ongoing research, demonstrated how smallholder farmers are producing food for their families and domestic markets, earning profits and income, and reinvesting in their own production systems. They also showed how small food producers have been able to protect the agro-ecosystem, adapt to climate change, and reap higher yields with lower inputs compared to industrial farms. Furthermore, the cases showed how smallholder farmers have been able to sustainably reinvest in their production systems through small loans from cooperatives and farmers' organisations.



Kimtheng Sen, ActionAid Cambodia / Food Security Network in Cambodia, speaking at the IFSN side event. ©FAO News

The event concluded with the following **demands to policymakers**:

- 1) Increase support to and investment in small-scale climate resilient agriculture;
- 2) Support the strengthening of farmers' organisations and their capacity to engage and negotiate with governments; and
- 3) Address issues such as corporate-control of the food system and land grabs.



Mamadou Cissokho, Honorary President of the of ROPPA ©FAO News

5. Meeting with David Nabarro, Coordinator of the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) — 20 October

During the week of the CFS 37, ActionAid and IFSN organised a meeting with David Nabarro which was open to all interested NGOs. The meeting allowed for the sharing of perspectives on the CFS negotiations as well as expectations for its progress in the future. David Nabarro agreed that the CFS is the foremost platform for sharing and coordinating all stakeholders and their activities on food security. He also highlighted that the work of the CFS - through its sessions and the work of the HLPE - contributes thought leadership which can help governments move towards new food and agricultural policies to be realised at the G20 and/or the UN General Assembly. However, he believes that the capacity of the CFS needs to be strengthened in order to become the ultimate governance authority on food security policies. In order to do so, all stakeholders need to respect, endorse and commit to its policy recommendations so that they can guide international, regional and national agendas on food security and nutrition.

Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER

- **Innovations in Extension and Advisory Services - International Conference**
<http://extensionconference2011.cta.int/>
 15-18 November, Nairobi, Kenya
- **International Peasant Conference: Stop the Land Grab**
 Organised by La Via Campesina and the National Coordination of Farming Organisations in Mali
<http://bit.ly/nbM2uN>
 17-19 November, Bamako, Mali
- **Policies Against Hunger Conference: Food security and access to natural resource**
 Organised by the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection
<http://www.policies-against-hunger.de/en>
 21-22 November, Berlin, Germany
- **World Food Programme (WFP) / NGO Annual Forum**
 30 November - 1 December, WFP Headquarters, Rome, Italy
- **FAO Council**
 28 November - 2 December, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy
- **COP 17 - United Nations Climate Change Conference**
<http://www.cop17-cmp7durban.com/>
 28 November - 9 December, Durban, South Africa

