

A message from the SUN Movement Secretariat

Upcoming negotiations at the
Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to
develop

Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition

11-15 May and 22-24 July 2020 in Rome



Dear members of the SUN Networks,

The [Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\)](#) is undertaking a policy process to develop '**Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition**', with the aim of **promoting sustainable food systems that improve nutrition and enable healthy diets**. This is a process that is of great importance to the SUN Movement, which is aiming to further address malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive and sustainable food systems.

How will the voluntary guidelines be used?

The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition are intended as a guiding reference document. **It informs and brings together governments, specialized institutions and other stakeholders on policies, investments and institutional arrangements needed to address key causes of malnutrition in all its forms and ensure healthy diets for everyone.** A comprehensive and systemic approach can help to address policy fragmentation and to foster policy coherence between sectors (particularly the food, agriculture and health sector), while also addressing livelihood and sustainability challenges. Altogether, this shall help to improve food systems which contribute to healthy diets.

How can you participate?

The upcoming negotiations are a final opportunity to reflect stakeholders and country's perspectives and expertise on food systems and nutrition to advance policy convergence and shape a useful and pragmatic policy instrument through this global debate. **Many SUN Movement Network members have already been engaged in this CFS process and we strongly encourage you to remain engaged in this critical last phase**, either through the Civil Society Mechanism, the Private Sector Mechanism or directly as a CFS stakeholder. Countries are primarily engaged through their Permanent Mission or Embassy to the United Nations in Rome.

Where are we in the process?

In 2018, the CFS committed to develop the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition. Building on the first discussions of the CFS Open-Ended Working Group on Nutrition, a zero draft was released in May 2019. From July to October, regional and online consultations took place. In December 2019 the first draft was released, and in January 2020 stakeholder provided feedback, including SUN countries such as [Costa Rica, Mali, Philippines and Senegal](#). The [draft for](#)

[negotiations](#) was released mid-March 2020. Negotiations of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition are planned in Rome in May and July 2020, with a view to submitting the final guidelines to the 47th CFS plenary for endorsement in October 2020.

Relevant issues in the negotiations

When discussing the first draft, CFS stakeholders provided overall positive feedback. While we recommend you analyze the final draft and prepare inputs and concerns from your perspective for the upcoming negotiations, we would like to flag some issues that are critical from a SUN Movement approach perspective to develop guidelines which effectively address all forms of malnutrition. You may wish to emphasize the importance of the following aspects:

- (1) From a SUN Movement perspective, the sections on ‘Promoting policy coherence by integrating nutrition in national development’ (3.1.1) and ‘Strengthening multi-sectoral coordination and actions’ (3.1.2) are essential, promoting key aspects of the SUN Movement approach, including fostering policy coherence across sectors, increasing budgetary allocations to improve nutrition and establishing multi-stakeholder mechanisms.
- (2) A comprehensive and systemic approach is critical to address policy fragmentation (para 25).
- (3) Institutional and behavioral change are needed to transform food systems to meet dietary needs of populations (para 14).
- (4) The use of the term “*sustainable healthy diets*” (Chapter 3.3. and definition 1.2(21)) is being discussed controversially. Alternatively, countries urge for “nutritious/healthy diets” which would *not* incorporate a holistic and global approach to nutrition and the food system connecting it to climate change and global inequalities. The term “sustainable healthy diets” was agreed on by FAO and WHO in their [guiding principles](#).
- (5) The importance of facilitating exclusive breastfeeding (3.6.3), including the need for policies and labor laws which protect women’s rights and income during breastfeeding is currently included in the document. The same applies to the regulation of marketing for Breast Milk Substitutes (3.5.1.c). These are important gender equality and nutrition elements of a food systems approach.
- (6) There is a discussion ongoing about the extent to which healthy diets are an individual responsibility rather than a wider shared responsibility. It is important to take an equity perspective to make sure “no one is left behind” in the guidelines.
- (7) Overall there is disagreement whether the Voluntary Guidelines should include a chapter on Food Systems for Nutrition in Humanitarian Contexts (3.7), which is important to protect vulnerable groups.

For further information, please find here relevant background documents:

- [Final Draft Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition \(EN\) – other languages available mid-April](#)
- [Workplan of CFS workstream on Food Systems and Nutrition](#)

- [HLPE Report on Nutrition and Food Systems](#)
- [Terms of Reference for the preparation of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition](#)

Background on the CFS

The CFS is an inclusive intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together in a coordinated way to ensure food security and nutrition for all. Member State governments, civil society organizations, private sector entities, farmer organizations, UN agencies, research institutions, philanthropic foundations and other stakeholder groups come together to debate and endorse policy guidance on food security and nutrition issues which they commit to implementing in their countries.

We strongly encourage your participation in the negotiations to ensure the Voluntary Guidelines will be a useful tool to transform food systems for better nutrition. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact marlen.schuepbach@scalingupnutrition.org or directly the CFS Secretariat (cfs@fao.org).

With best regards,
SUN Movement Secretariat