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The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE)

Key Elements

Why the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) ?

Food insecurity is a global and persistent issue, recurrently highlighted by crises. It manifests itself in various ways in the different regions of the world and it has a vast variety of complex and interdependent underlying causes. It has many facets and is interlinked with many other problems and factors from local to international levels, from social security related issues to development issues. To address food insecurity requires an integrated approach. It requires interventions and strong policies from local to global levels.

The reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is a fundamental change in the international governance of food security and nutrition. The CFS is the central international and intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition, where policies can be designed, interventions can be coordinated, options can be shared and decisions at different levels can be prepared.

Decisions in the reformed CFS are taken by Member States in co-construction with various stakeholders, in particular CSOs, NGOs and the private sector, to ensure that these decisions gain resonance and efficiency on the ground.

Decisions need often to be taken in spite of a vast field of uncertainties regarding both the knowledge base, and potential effects of policies on the ground. There is also a need to overcome the fact that at the negotiation table, competing interest often confront different streams of information leading to acute controversies, and that the fragmentation of expert debates by academic disciplines and by knowledge sources is often detrimental to strong and effective policy decisions.

Therefore Member States have decided that decisions in the reformed CFS shall be informed by shared, independent and comprehensive advice.

This is why, in October 2009, the High Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) was created as an essential element of the reform of CFS, and as the scientific and knowledge-based pillar of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

Indeed, the provision of shared and independent advice is generally a condition to reaching political consensus, and in turn, political decisions are more robust, and keener to be pursued in continuity, from the short term to the long term, if they are founded on comprehensive assessments. The HLPE therefore aims to improve the robustness of the policy making, which is essential for actions needing to be pursued in continuity on the ground.

Key functions of the HLPE as stated in the CFS reform document are

As directed by the CFS Plenary and Bureau, the HLPE will:

- i. Assess and analyze the current state of food security and nutrition and its underlying causes.
- ii. Provide scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues, utilizing existing high quality research, data and technical studies.
- iii. Identify emerging issues, and help members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas.

What are the specificities of the HLPE with respect to other expert processes?

First, the HLPE is directly linked to the foremost international policy platform for food security and nutrition, the CFS. The design of the HLPE process, its rules and procedures, the composition of the Steering Committee and the commissioning of studies is decided by the CFS. The HLPE is therefore created and entrusted by the CFS, and reports to it. This ensures the legitimacy and relevance of the studies undertaken, and their insertion in a concrete political agenda at international level.

Second, in creating the HLPE, governments decided to let the Panel produce its recommendations and advice independently from governmental positions, in order to enrich discussions and debates at CFS. Thus, the internal process and its results guarantee the independence of the HLPE.

Third, the HLPE aims to help CFS to better understand the diversity of issues and rationales when dealing with food and nutrition insecurity. To do so, it will thrive to clarify contradictory information and knowledge, elicit the backgrounds and rationales of controversies, and identify emerging issues. This will among others build upon the diversity of disciplines, backgrounds and regional origins of the Steering Committee members and of Project Teams.

Fourth, the HLPE is not mandated to conduct new research. The HLPE will draw its studies based on existing research and knowledge already conducted by various expertise-providing institutions (universities, research institutes, international organizations etc), and adding value by global, multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary analysis.

Last, HLPE recommendations and studies will combine scientific knowledge with experiences from the ground, in a same rigorous process. The HLPE will translate the richness and variety of forms of expert knowledge from many actors (knowledge of local implementation, knowledge based on global research and knowledge of “best practice”) that draw on both local and global sources, into policy-related forms of knowledge.

The Rules and Procedures of the HLPE were specifically designed so that the whole process is undertaken in a credible, relevant and legitimate way.

What is the structure of the HLPE?

The HLPE has a two-tier structure (see Figure 1) :

- A Steering Committee composed of 15 internationally recognized experts in a variety of food security and nutrition related fields.
- Project Teams acting on a project specific basis, selected and managed by the StC to analyze/report on specific issues.

Who serves in the HLPE Steering Committee?

15 world-renowned experts have been appointed by the Bureau of the CFS in July 2010 to serve as members of the Steering Committee of the HLPE until CFS Plenary 2012. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson have been designated by the 15 members of the HLPE Steering Committee at their first meeting, 16-17 September 2010.

Chairperson:

Monkombu Sambasivan Swaminathan (India), Agricultural scientist acclaimed by TIME magazine as one of the 20 most influential Asians of the 20th century.

Vice-Chairperson:

Maryam Rahmanian (Iran), Research associate at the Centre for Sustainable Development in Iran.

Members:

Catherine Bertini (United States of America), former Executive Director, World Food Programme.

Derek Byerlee (Australia), Chairman of the Standing Panel on Impact Evaluation of the Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Tewelde Berhan Gebre Egziabher (Ethiopia), Director General of the Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia.

Lawrence Haddad (United Kingdom), Director of the UK Institute of Development Studies.

Sheryl Lee Hendriks (South Africa), Researcher at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

Alain de Janvry (France), Professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

Renato Maluf (Brazil), Associate Professor at the Federal Rural University of Rio Janeiro and President of the National Council of Food and Nutrition Security in Brazil.

Mona Mehrez Aly (Egypt), Director of the Animal Health Research Institute of Egypt.

Carlos Perez del Castillo (Uruguay), Chairman of the Consortium of CGIAR centres.

Roelof Rabbinge (Netherlands), Professor at the Wageningen University in the Netherlands and Outgoing Chairman of the Science Council of the CGIAR.

Huajun Tang (China), Research Professor and Vice-President of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

Igor Tikhonovich (Russia), Director of the All-Russia Research Institute for Agricultural Microbiology at the Russian Federation.

Niracha Wongchinda (Thailand), Senior fishery expert.

The selection of the 15 experts was done by the Bureau of the CFS following a call for nominations and the review of candidatures and a proposition by an ad-hoc technical selection committee comprised of members of FAO, WFP, IFAD, Bioversity International (CGIAR) and a representative of the CSO/NGO Community.

They encompass a variety of backgrounds, disciplines and regions of the world.

HLPE Steering Committee members participate in their individual capacities, and not as representatives of their respective governments, institutions or organizations.

How is the HLPE commissioned?

The CFS or its Bureau commissions studies to be undertaken by the HLPE. This ensures the relevance of the studies undertaken, and their insertion in a concrete political need and agenda at international level.

How are HLPE reports approved?

HLPE reports, studies and recommendations are approved by the HLPE Steering Committee only.

This guarantees that the views expressed in the reports are independent from the positions of member states and other stakeholders. This also enables the HLPE to better tackle potentially controversial issues, in the respect of the principle of sound, balanced and comprehensive assessments.

How do HLPE reports feed back into CFS?

HLPE reports are forwarded to the CFS to inform debates, or suggest deliberations.

The CFS Bureau, in consultation with the Advisory Group and Secretariat, determines the best ways to take forward the process of developing recommendations or options to be discussed at CFS.

The HLPE is therefore a tool to provide state-of-the art, independent expertise to the CFS to improve decision making at all levels.

What is the HLPE Work Program and mandate received from CFS 36?

The CFS, at its 36th session (11-16 October 2010) has entrusted the HLPE with a strong mandate, requesting it to undertake studies and present policy recommendations on a wide range of outstanding issues for the world's food and nutrition security, including **land tenure and international investments in agriculture, price volatility, social safety nets and climate change** (*see box below*).

In addition, the HLPE may provide input on priority issues identified by the CFS in the consultative process that CFS 36 agreed to launch with the aim to develop the first version of **the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF)**.

Finally, the CFS Bureau has requested the HLPE to be consulted in 2011 in the process of elaboration of the **draft Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and Other Natural Resources**.

Verbatim from the CFS 36 final report, paragraphs 26-27

The Committee requested the HLPE to undertake studies, to be presented at the 37th Session of the CFS, on the following important issues, in accordance with the CFS reform document agreed in 2009, and the Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE:

Land tenure and international investment in agriculture :

- the respective roles of large-scale plantations and of small-scale farming, including economic, social, gender and environmental impacts;
- review of the existing tools allowing the mapping of available land;

- comparative analysis of tools to align large scale investments with country food security strategies

Price volatility:

all of its causes and consequences, including market distorting practices and links to financial markets, and appropriate and coherent policies, actions, tools and institutions to manage the risks linked to excessive price volatility in agriculture. This should include prevention and mitigation for vulnerable producers, and consumers, particularly the poor, women and children, that are appropriate to different levels (local, national, regional and international) and are based on a review of existing studies. The study should consider how vulnerable nations and populations can ensure access to food when volatility causes market disruptions.

Social protection:

ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety nets programs and policies with respect to food and nutritional security, taking into consideration differing conditions across countries and regions. This should include a review of the impact of existing policies for the improvement of living conditions and resilience of vulnerable populations, especially small scale rural producers, urban and rural poor as well as women and children. It should also take into account benefits for improving local production and livelihoods and promoting better nutrition.

Climate change:

review existing assessments and initiatives on the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition, with a focus on the most affected and vulnerable regions and populations and the interface between climate change and agricultural productivity, including the challenges and opportunities of adaptation and mitigation policies and actions for food security and nutrition.

What are the next steps for the HLPE Process in 2010-2011?

The Steering Committee of the HLPE had its first meeting in 16-17 September 2010. It also met with the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group. The Chair of the Steering Committee of the HLPE delivered a keynote speech at the 36th Session of CFS.

The second meeting of the Steering Committee took place on 13-15 December 2010. Progress was made on the calendar of the HLPE, the scoping of the reports in the framework of the request of the CFS, and internal methodological issues, such as the decision to launch an open expert public consultation to help the Steering Committee finalize the terms of reference for the Project Teams.

At this meeting, the Steering Committee had a joint session with the CFS Bureau and it was agreed that the HLPE will fully report for CFS 37 (October 2011) on the two studies on price volatility and on land tenure and international investments in agriculture. The HLPE process for other studies on Climate Change and on Social Protection will also be launched and the HLPE will make intermediate progress reporting for October 2011.

The HLPE StC has decided to launch an open consultation to help it finalize the terms of Reference given to the Project Teams. This consultation takes place from 24 January to 6 February 2011 through the FSN Forum: <http://km.fao.org/fsn>.

Project Teams will be selected and mandated by the Steering Committee. They are expected to start their work by February 2011. Within this process, a second consultation will be

organized in April 2011 to help Project Teams finalize the draft report for the Steering Committee. The draft report will then be put into external review and the Steering Committee will meet to finalize and approve the final report in July 2011

HLPE reports are expected to be published 6 weeks before the CFS plenary. Currently, CFS Plenaries are organized mid-October, and HLPE reports are expected to be delivered early September.

How is the HLPE supported?

The HLPE is exclusively funded through a voluntary trust fund based at FAO. This trust fund covers the costs of the preparation of reports, Steering Committee and Project Teams meetings, translation and publication of reports, and minimal Secretariat support.

HLPE Steering Committee members and experts involved in the process are not financially compensated for their work or time, a standard practise in all international expert panels.

The HLPE Secretariat is part of the CFS Secretariat. It shall assist the work of the HLPE StC and its Chair. Its functions include, though are not limited to:

- i) assist with the preparation of working budget and establishment of trust funds,
- ii) maintain a roster of experts,
- iii) organize meetings of the HLPE StC and assist Project Teams, as needed,
- iv) assist with the preparation of other support documentation,
- v) liaise as appropriate between the CFS Bureau and the HLPE Steering Committee,
- vi) maintain a system of communications, including posting of relevant reports and analyses.

The annual budget for the HLPE is projected to approximately 1 Million USD. The HLPE Trust Fund has received so far contributions from France (300 000 USD) and pledges from the European Union (150 000 EUR), Switzerland (200 000 CHF) and Spain (150 000 EUR).

References

- CFS Reform document adopted at the 35th session of the CFS (2009)
- Rules and Procedures for the work of the HLPE (27 January 2010)
- These documents and other information can be found on the HLPE website www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-hlpe

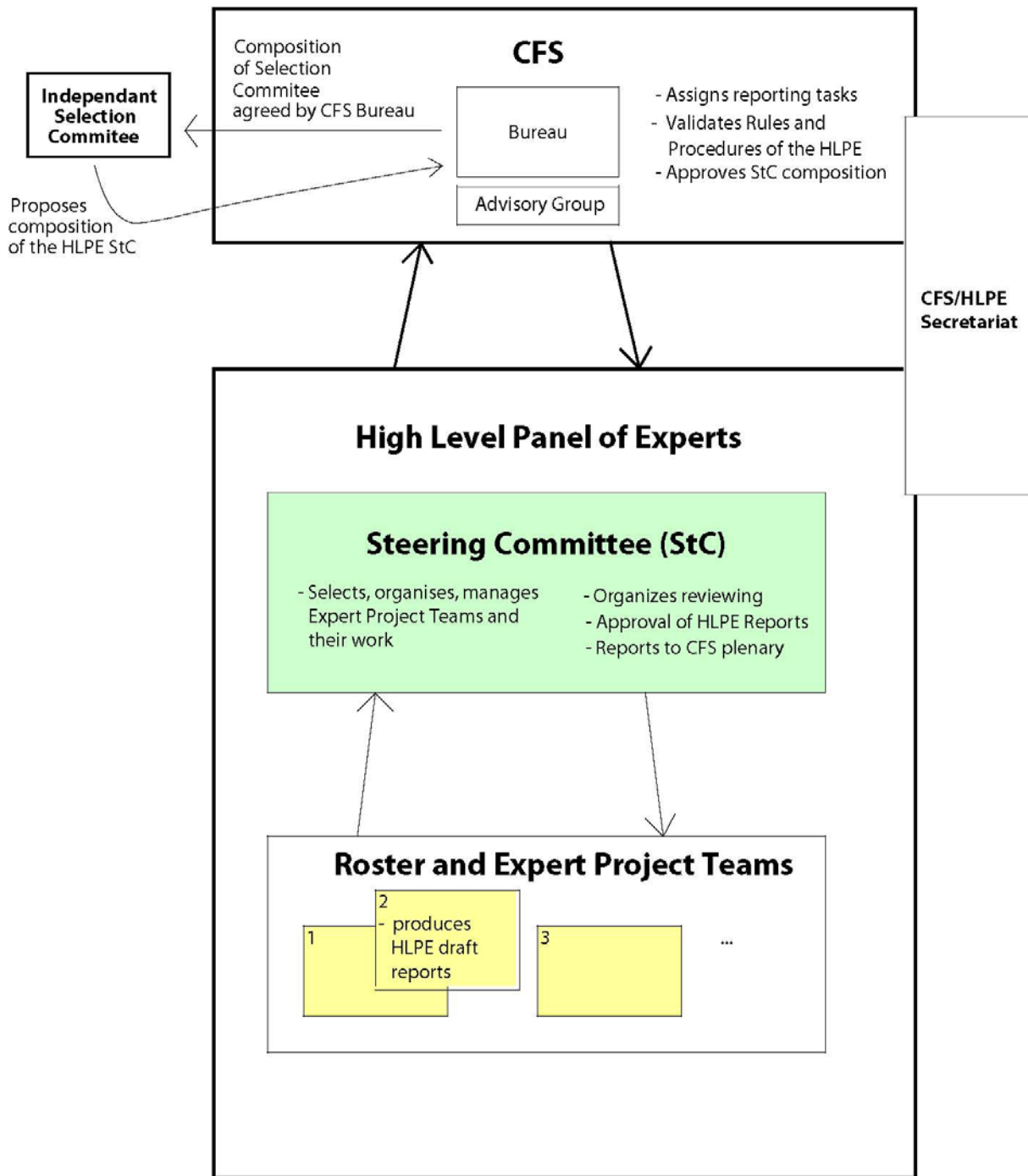


Figure 1. Schematic Illustration of the HLPE Structure and its relationship to CFS