

WORLDWIDE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS DENOUNCE US GOVERNMENT OBSTRUCTION OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY (CFS) POLICY CONVERGENCE PROCESS FOR SOLUTIONS TO FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION CRISIS

While the world is experiencing a new rise in hunger and malnutrition for the third consecutive year after decades of decline, the US government is aiming at systematically undermining the role of the CFS as the foremost inclusive intergovernmental and international political platform to address the food security and nutrition crisis. By doing so, the US is obstructing the ability of the international community to identify and implement urgently needed solutions for the intertwined food, ecological, livelihoods and social crises.

With this letter we publicly denounce the attempts of the US to attack Agroecology within the CFS, while welcoming the engagement of other CFS Members States in defending the process. In view of the upcoming CFS Plenary Session (14-18 October 2019) and subsequent policy negotiations, we call on all Governments to constructively engage in exploring the critical importance of agroecology in defining new policy pathways that can simultaneously address multiple development challenges.

As a response to the call by small-scale food producers, international experts, academics, UN Agencies and a number of Governments, the Committee on World Food Security agreed to put agroecology on its agenda, commissioning a report from the CFS High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) on Food Security and Nutrition — [“Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition”](#) — in order to pave the way for a political discussion that will culminate in the adoption of CFS policy recommendations.

However, the process, expected to culminate with policy recommendations to be endorsed at the CFS 47th Plenary Session in October 2020, is at serious risk due to the continued obstacles generated by the US Government. Not only is US obstructionism undermining well-established and agreed-on procedures and protocols of the CFS, it is also preventing the timely utilization of the HLPE’s findings on agroecology in the development of the Food Systems and Nutrition Guidelines which are currently being negotiated by the CFS.

In the most recent example of unilateral obstructionism, the US Government stalled the process for over four months by objecting the appointment of the Permanent Representative of Iran (Chair of the FAO Committee on Agriculture) as Rapporteur of the Policy Convergence on purely geopolitical grounds. Other Members States clarified that a Rapporteur of a CFS policy negotiation process is selected in his or her personal capacity and defended the CFS and the agroecology process against the aggressive position of the US. When the US found itself isolated, it finally accepted, on 20 September, the appointment of the Rapporteur and the definition of the negotiation schedule, while continuing to express its disagreement, therefore eliciting serious concerns on the non-constructive attitude that it may feature in the actual negotiations.

This approach is utterly unacceptable. Firstly, the CFS is not the space where countries play out their political tensions. While the UN Security Council is the assigned place to do that, the CFS is the multilateral, multi-actor and democratic space to deal with food security and nutrition. But it is also not acceptable that an extremely relevant topic such as agroecology can be temporarily blocked by just one country’s unwillingness to discuss it.

Against these political plays, today not only do 820 million people go hungry, over two billion people do not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food, including 8 percent of the population in Northern America and Europe ([SOFI 2019](#)). In addition to conflicts, climate disasters, and economic downturns, increased inequality is exacerbating food insecurity with the most vulnerable suffering the most.

Agriculture represents the primary source of livelihoods for millions in the world, especially for the most vulnerable. Although small scale farmers produce much of the world’s food, they are the most food insecure due to poverty and insecure access to land, water and seed — resources increasingly captured by corporate actors and wealthy elites. Amidst these challenges, rural communities face the additional threat

of severe environmental stresses associated with climate change and biodiversity loss. Industrial agriculture is one of the main emitters of GHG, and it's largely to blame for these impacts due to large-scale land degradation and deforestation associated with mass production, widespread use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides that also harm human health and the environment.

Globally, we are exploiting natural resources well beyond the capacity of our planet to regenerate, while those who mobilize to defend their land, water and rights, are persecuted and even killed. Many more people are dying from lack of food or exposure to chemicals, as more and more land and other resources are taken from communities by industrial agri-corporations to grow animal feed and biofuels to meet the demands of industrial meat and dairy sectors as well as that of affluent societies, especially in developed countries.

Against this alarming trend, small scale food producers have been practicing agroecology for centuries, building on millennia of local and Indigenous knowledge, while continually adapting and evolving practices to meet the challenges of today. Agroecology allows peasants, indigenous peoples and family farmers to produce healthy, nutritious food while respecting and sustaining the ecosystem; regenerating the natural resource base; protecting biodiversity; mitigating agriculture's contribution to climate change by progressively phasing out chemical fertilizers and pesticides while also sequestering carbon in the soil through diversified, ecological farming practices that simultaneously increase farmers' resilience and adaptiveness; and finally and critically, building a more equal and fair society through promoting social, economic and environmental justice.

From being practiced at the local level for decades, agroecology is now getting attention in the international community because of the urgent need to shift the way we produce, trade and consume our food. UN Agencies call for moving away from industrial agriculture towards more sustainable, equitable, nutritious and climate-resilient food systems. FAO itself has recently convened two international and several regional symposia to start collecting and building a solid evidence base on agroecology to assist countries in their transition to it. In October last year, FAO's Committee on Agriculture decided to support agroecology as a key approach for sustainable agriculture and food systems (FAO [2018 COAG/2018/5](#)).

With the availability now of this new and extensive report from the UN High Level Panel of Experts on Agroecology the international community must move decisively to bring the report's findings forward and expedite a timely policy convergence process.

The undersigned cannot accept that the obstruction of a single country can again block the overall CFS process. We most strongly condemn this disruptive attitude that undermines a political discussion so urgently needed now, thereby posing a serious risk to multilateralism in the UN and the inclusive global governance structure of the CFS.

We endorse this letter to publicly denounce such attacks on Agroecology and the CFS, and we call on all Governments to ensure that the policy convergence process on agroecology within the CFS moves forward without further delay or impediment.