



## BRIEF MARCH 2011

### What is the Committee on World Food Security and why does it matter?

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#### Food Security

*Food security exists "when when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life". This definition, adopted during the World Food Summit of 1996, understands access as both physical and economic access.*

#### Structure

The CFS is the most inclusive international and intergovernmental platform to facilitate and coordinate work to ensure food security and nutrition for all.

#### History

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was established upon recommendation from the 1974 World Food Conference. It was set up in response to the food crisis of the early 1970s.

#### Reform

During the 2007-2008 food price spikes, food security received renewed attention as concerns around food and nutrition security rose worldwide. There were calls to restructure global food security governance and to reform existing institutions. In 2008, the FAO began reforming the CFS with the goal of focusing its role in the coordination of efforts to ensure universal food security. The reforms have sought to make the CFS more effective by including a wider range of stakeholders, paying particular attention to those most affected by food insecurity. The reforms of the CFS are outlined in the Reform Document adopted in 2009. Civil society organizations, along with other stakeholders, participated in the reform process as part of the Contact Group established by the Bureau (described below).

#### Purpose

The Renewed CFS maintains political centrality within the UN system. The reform positions the CFS as the central decision-making and discussion forum for food security within the UN. The Renewed CFS aims to give voice to stakeholders in the world food system, encourage the exchange of experience, knowledge, evidence and scientific analysis. It is also charged with monitoring the effectiveness of actions taken to improve food security.

#### Meetings

The CFS meets as a whole once a year for an annual plenary Session. The 36th Session (2010) was the first after the reforms. The reform has given a much greater role to the continuity of the CFS's work during the inter-sessional period through regular meetings of the Bureau and Advisory Group.

#### Key actors

- › The Committee on World Food Security is made up of 192 Member Governments, participants (including International Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, NGOs and the Private Sector) and observers, and they in turn make up the Plenary. The CFS is supported by several key bodies:

- › *Bureau*: This is the executive arm of the CFS (it has the responsibility for the administration of the CFS) and is made up of 12 member countries (2 per each Regional Group).
- › *Advisory Group*: This group supports the Bureau to advance the objectives of the CFS, particularly to ensure linkages with stakeholders at all levels to support two-way exchange of information. The Advisory Group is made from representatives from UN bodies, CSOs and NGOs, international agricultural research bodies, international financial and trade organizations, the private sector and philanthropic bodies.
- › *High Level Panel of Experts*: The HLPE has an independent steering committee of experts who are to provide advice on policy as well as technical and scientific issues. The HLPE has an international Roster of Experts that it can draw upon to support their work.
- › *Secretariat*: The Secretariat supports the Plenary, the Bureau, the Advisory Group and the HLPE and is housed in the FAO.
- › *Civil Society Mechanism*: The purpose of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) is to facilitate the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs in the CFS, including input in negotiations and decision-making while providing a space for dialogue between a wide-range of civil society actors.

**Sub-Regions** (Total of 16, x1 focal point each)

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North America	South East Asia
Central America & Caribbean	Central Asia
Andean Region	Oceania and Pacific
Southern Cone	Southern Africa
Western Europe	West Africa
Eastern Europe	East Africa
West Asia	Central Africa
South Asia	North Africa

**Constituencies** (Total of 24, x2 focal points each)

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Agricultural & food workers	NGOs
Artisanal fisherfolk	Smallholder family farmers (4 focal points)
Consumers	Urban poor
Pastoralists	Women
Indigenous Peoples	Youth
Landless	

The CSM is made up of a Coordination Committee (CC) comprised of 40 focal points (members) from 11 constituencies (key stakeholder groups) and 16 sub-regions.

Small-scale farmers make up the largest constituency of the CC as they represent the majority of the world's hungry and also produce the largest proportion of the world's food. Gender and geographic balance are ensured in the CSM Coordination Committee.

The first Focal Points will hold the function for one year (2011-2012) after which the Mechanism will be evaluated and new members will be selected for a period of two years thereafter. From the Coordination Committee, four focal points to the CFS Advisory Group are chosen.

### **Key issues addressed by the CFS**

At the 36th Session of the CFS (October 2010), 3 policy roundtables were presented:

- › Addressing Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises: Issues and Challenges;
- › Land Tenure and International Investment in Agriculture; and,
- › Managing Vulnerability and risk to promote better food security and nutrition.

The Land Policy Roundtable has led to the decisions which prompted CFS to support the continuation of the development of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and Other Natural Resources, and to start an inclusive process of consideration of the principles within the CFS. The CFS also called for consistency and complementarity in the drafting of these principles and guidelines.

For the 2010-2011 year, the HLPE will undertake studies on the following issues:

- › Land tenure and international investment in agriculture;
- › Price volatility;

### **Why does CFS matter?**

We are facing a global food security governance crisis and the Renewed CFS arguably offers the most transparent and democratic mechanism for the discussion, coordination and advancement of world food security policy and can be viewed as a model for harmonization and participation at the global level. It's restructuring gives voice and access to civil society and other key stakeholders, while ensuring that decision making remains in the hands of nation states through the UN principle of one-country-one-vote.

### **Challenges**

For the CFS to realize its full potential, countries need to buy in to the process and greater resources are needed to support the work and participation of the Bureau, the HLPE, poor countries and civil society organizations.

The CFS is designed to be a forum for review and follow-up on food security policies and thus needs to work in tandem with other organizations and institutions dedicated to advancing world food security.

### **Get involved**

You can get involved in the CFS through the Civil Society Mechanism. Check out <http://cso4cfs.org/> to connect with your constituency and sub-regional focal points.

There are several debates and discussions related to the CFS and food security taking place at <http://foodnutgov.ning.com/>. Your experiences and perspective is most welcome.

**Find out more:**

- › Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Home Page: <http://www.fao.org/cfs/en/>
- › Reform Document of the CFS: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs0910/ReformDoc/CFS\\_2009\\_2\\_Rev\\_2\\_E\\_K7197.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs0910/ReformDoc/CFS_2009_2_Rev_2_E_K7197.pdf)
- › Civil Society for the Committee on World Food Security (CFS4CSO): <http://cso4cfs.org/>
- › Global Food Security and Nutrition Dialogue: <http://foodnutgov.ning.com/>
- › Civil Society Mechanism: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/019/k9215e.pdf>
- › Report on the Civil Society Consultation (with an explanation of the CSM): [http://cso4cfs.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/cso-final-report\\_-\\_en1.pdf](http://cso4cfs.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/cso-final-report_-_en1.pdf)

