



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Fifty-second Session
***"50 Years of CFS:
Acting Together for a world free from hunger and malnutrition"***

Rome, Italy, 21-25 October 2024

**FORUM ON UPTAKE OF THE CFS VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON
GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT
IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION –
CONCEPT NOTE**

Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment (GEWGE) is fundamental to human rights, and it is critical to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. GEWGE is also essential to achieving all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 5.

GEWGE and food security and nutrition have mutually reinforcing links. GEWGE are essential to poverty reduction, economic growth, social wellbeing, access to and management of natural resources, climate change adaptation and mitigation and ecosystem and biodiversity protection, conservation, and sustainable use.

The reversal in progress and the significant increases in hunger and food insecurity in recent years have exacerbated gender inequality and disproportionately affected women and girls, particularly those in vulnerable situations. A comparison of the food insecurity status of men and women shows that the prevalence of food insecurity has remained consistently higher among women than among men, globally and in all regions, since data first became available in 2015¹. Research has shown that women are more affected by food insecurity even when taking income, education level and demographic factors into account, suggesting that

¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2024. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms](#). Rome.

prevailing gender norms and women's limited access to resources are key factors². At the same time, discrimination and inequalities worsen food insecurity and various forms of malnutrition.

Despite some progress made over decades, many women and girls continue to face violence, discrimination and inequality worldwide, manifested through multiple challenges. These include barriers to decision-making processes; unequal access to, and control over, key productive resources, assets, technologies, education, financial services, and economic opportunities; unequal access to social protection; unbalanced and unrecognized responsibilities in unpaid care and domestic work; and limited access to essential health-care services, among others.

Findings of an econometric model simulation of the potential macrolevel benefits for the economy and food security, if gender gaps in farm productivity and wages within agrifood systems were closed, suggest that addressing these disparities could result in an approximate USD 1 trillion increase in global gross domestic product and lift approximately 45 million people out of food insecurity. Eliminating these gender disparities could reduce the current gap in food insecurity between women and men by at least 57 percent.³

While 75 percent of policy documents relating to agriculture and rural development from 68 countries recognize women's roles and/or women's challenges in agriculture and rural development, only 19 percent include policy goals related to gender.⁴

To reverse these trends in this challenging global context and unlock the potential for significant economic benefits of closing these gender gaps, countries need to develop policies and undertake actions by transforming their food systems to address gender inequality and achieve the realization of women's and girls' rights. This is urgent and more important than ever to achieve food security and nutrition for all.

To provide Members and other stakeholders with policy guidance on how to address gender disparities comprehensively within the context of food security and nutrition, and advance towards GEWGE, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), as the UN's foremost and inclusive body for policy convergence on food security and nutrition, endorsed the "Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition" at its 51th Plenary Session, as the result of an inclusive multi-stakeholder consultation and negotiation process.

The Guidelines are the first inter-governmental and multi-stakeholder negotiated global policy agreement in which CFS Members commit to tackling gender inequalities and promote women's and girls' empowerment, and to foster greater policy coherence among GEWGE and food security and nutrition agendas, and to support mutually reinforcing policy measures.

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CFS's work continues beyond the approval of its policy tools. CFS Members and stakeholders are voluntarily responsible for ensuring that such policy instruments endorsed at global level are converted into concrete actions at regional, national and local levels. Successful implementation of the Guidelines will require sustained commitment from all stakeholders, along with adequate resources and supportive policies and programmes.

² *ibidem*

³ Mane, E., Giaquinto, A.M., Cafiero, C., Viviani, S. & Anriquez, G. 2024. [Why are women more food insecure than men? Exploring socioeconomic drivers and the role of COVID-19 in widening the global gender gap – Background paper for The status of women in agrifood systems](#). Rome, FAO.

⁴ FAO. 2023. [The status of women in agrifood systems – Overview](#). Rome.

As foreseen in the CFS Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) 2024-2027, a forum on the uptake of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment is scheduled to take place on Thursday 24 October during the 52nd plenary session of CFS.

This forum will provide an opportunity to discuss and mobilize political commitments by governments, donors, civil society, private sector, and the UN system for further promotion and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment. This forum can also help translating other commitments into action, considering that in 2025, the global community will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)⁵, and noting the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly to declare 2026 as International Year of the Woman Farmer⁶.

The forum will bring together different food systems and nutrition actors to:

- Share plans and ideas concerning uptake of the Voluntary Guidelines;
- Focus on how the Guidelines present a useful tool in the hands of policy makers and development partners;
- Explore how the Guidelines can be used at regional, country, and local levels;
- Discuss the role of different stakeholders and coordination mechanisms in promoting their uptake;
- Discuss how to mobilize commitment of stakeholders to drive the uptake and context-specific operationalization of the Voluntary Guidelines.

More information on the format and roll-out of the forum is provided in the Guide to CFS 52 (CFS 2024/52/Inf.2).

⁵ [Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action](#) adopted unanimously by 189 countries at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

⁶ UNGA Res. A/78/L.59