



COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Forty-eighth (Special) Session
"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"

4 June 2021

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF
THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL OF EXPERTS (HLPE)**

Excellencies, Chair – Thanawat –, distinguished Delegates,

It is a pleasure to add my perspective to introduce this important session.

I would really like to add my congratulations to this group with respect to these policy recommendations. As you have heard, they are incredibly important and timely with the challenges that we are facing globally.

Policy convergence is particularly complex, given that agroecology is both a science, a set of practices and also a social movement.

This is my second term with the HLPE, so I have had the pleasure – and pleasure is a strong word, I think – of following this one all the way through the process of the HLPE report elaboration. As we have heard, it is very much a team effort, but I would like to draw your attention to the fantastic role of both Fergus Lloyd Sinclair as the project team leader and Ambassador Yaya Olaniran have had in this process, both really for their patience, dedication and many, many hours of toil to get this to where we are now. I have seen Fergus Sinclair wrestle with the HLPE report process, with the e-consultation, the peer review and all of that, and I have seen another complex process now with the policy convergence process. So: fantastic, amazing work!

As we have said, the issues we are facing is that there are really no borders these days, so international collaboration is absolutely crucial.

You have heard, I think, recent calls, asking: “Can we set up a completely different science-policy interface?”

You might have seen the HLPE op-ed and our open letter in response to that: I cannot imagine any other organization being able to handle something as complex as agroecological and other innovations in such an inclusive way as HLPE and CFS do . .

This is a forum of policy innovation. It is a multi stakeholder business, science-informed. It is a deliberate body that has impact internationally and nationally.

We, of course, as you have heard, need to always look at how we can move faster, but together, without leaving anybody behind. I think that the way this Committee and the HLPE adapted to the current COVID-19 situation is a good testament of that.

I have been asked to share a few perspectives on innovation, and I think they match quite closely to some of the previous remarks, so I might just share a few slides if I may, Chair.

(Presentation starts)

Just a few points about innovation:

My favourite definition of innovation is this one: “the process by which individuals or organizations master or implement the design and production of goods and services that are new to them, irrespective of whether they are new to their competitors, their country or the world” (FAO, 2016).

As a scientist, my glass is actually half full: I am always optimistic that we have amazing innovative solutions, we have amazing technology throughout the value chain. But that is not what it is about: really, innovation is not just about science and invention; most importantly, it is about implementation.

So this particular area that we are looking at in these recommendations, particularly the challenge of how we do that at all scales and leave nobody behind, how we take the principles of agroecology, how we scale those and bring technology to bear in that space, and how we implement those principles in sustainable intensified agriculture.

I think one of the roles of HLPE reports is really to help members and participants to understand where they agree. We cannot solve all of the questions, we do not have all the answers, but we certainly have richer questions: How do we bring innovative solutions to both small- and large-scale farms? How can modern biotechnology be brought to bear, and digital technology?

As you have heard from previous speakers, in particular from Ismahane Elouafi on this slide, we really and obviously need to not just be looking at technological innovation: we need to be looking at agroecology, supply chains and the resilience, policy, social and financial aspects. We need to be really looking at how we accelerate innovation, but in a way that leaves nobody behind.

Finally, allow me to remind you the framework proposed in the global narrative, taking stock of ten years of work: there are four policy drivers around moving from just to focus on production, to food systems, viewing food security and nutrition as a system of interconnected sectors – COVID-19 has

certainly taught us that; our agriculture department needs to be taken with our trade and our innovation departments; we need to be focusing all on the broader issue of food and health, not just on hunger, and then we need to recognize that, in different parts of the world, the solutions need to be context specific.

Under enabling conditions, I think there is now a good recognition that we need to build-in our ability to model and to monitor progress to SDGs. We need to use those models for scenario-planning and testing different policy options.

Underpinning that, we need to accelerate what we are doing.

To finish up, just a reminder that we do have quite a busy plate with the HLPE: we are now using those principles from the latest HLPE “Global Narrative” report (2020) in all of our work. We have got a really good progress with the youth engagement report, we have defined the scope on the Data collection and analysis tools report, and I am very pleased to welcome Carlo Cafiero as its Project Team Leader. We are going to hold a side-event which shall help us update the COVID-19 issues paper, and then we shall be starting the report on inequalities.

Again, let me add my sincere congratulations to this group, this is a complex process, but it is really important stuff and it is fundamental that we move together in an inclusive way with these issues.

Thank you, Thanawat.