

## S.12 Putting the right to food at the heart of food systems

### **Background information on group and process**

This working group (WG) initially composed of Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and FAO, was convened by Lawrence Haddad, (GAIN and the leader of AT1) to bring a human rights vision to the UNFSS. Its objective, to strengthen human rights within a food systems context, highlighting violations, and making them a springboard to action. Principal challenges are: inequality is increasing because COVID-19 divides the world into people who can continue to work and those who cannot; a K-shaped recovery means some people and sectors face the prospect of a rapid upswing in fortunes, while others continue to decline; and an austerity response to the crisis would further exacerbate inequality. Strong food systems underpinned by rights are essential for a rapid recovery from COVID.

This was the initial task set for the WG to examine together with its consultation group, which subsequently included UN Special Rapporteurs (RtF), specialised human rights and right to food experts from International NGOs (AI and HRW), International Organizations (FAO), and academia (University of Colombia, University of California Santa Barbara, University of Oslo, Pace University, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)). Following small group consultations, including two roundtable meetings, a first proposal to action was drawn up which became known as: ***Putting the Right to Food at the Heart of Food Systems***. This was shared among experts for further brainstorming and comments. Feedback was identified, summarized and filtered into thematic areas, leading to the identification of a final game changing solution proposal, reached by consensus, and to work around the monitoring of specific indicators that are established, already agreed and signed up to by countries under the SDGs.

#### **1. What, in brief, is the solution?**

Food systems must integrate a human rights perspective in order to ensure that the fight against hunger and malnutrition affecting vulnerable groups in every society disproportionately – is effective, sustainable and just. For effective implementation, transparent, participatory and non-discriminatory monitoring systems must be in place that can provide specific information on some of the most overlooked vulnerable people and groups.

This solution is not creating a new framework for accountability. It is proposing to use existing indicators coming from the SDG framework and FAO which can shed the light on a few key structural issues and aspects of food systems that unless they are looked at more closely, food systems will not change - let alone become more sustainable. These issues are: household food insecurity, unpaid care and domestic work, sustainable agriculture, tenure rights, and violations against human rights defenders and the media. The data that these indicators can obtain, not only will aid decision-makers to put different issues together and therefore have a clearer picture of what are some of the blocks that make their food systems lag behind or even vulnerable. It will also greatly help provide public opinion, consumers, the *ordinary* people, with an easier-to-understand and usable framework of what factors are affecting their rights.

By using these established indicators, this solution emphasizes that to ensure the right to food is fully upheld in our food systems, other human rights must also be realized, because human rights, are universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent.

#### **2. What was/were the source(s) from which this solution emerged?**

See answer to 1 above. Members of the WG came up with this solution based on existing and agreed indicators derived from the SDGs.

### **3. What problem is it trying to address within food systems?**

Over 700 million people are going to bed hungry each day. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated hunger and malnutrition. The current food systems are not delivering what they are supposed to. Their policies avoid looking at the root causes of hunger and malnutrition affecting billions of people [2].

It is commonly observed that the food system reinforces longstanding existing inequalities, in particular pertaining to gender. The system is not stable. Hidden social and environmental costs; and asymmetries, including on gender roles, contribute to the illusion that the system is functioning. These power imbalances inherent in our current food systems also generate violence, which can be observed through violations of the human rights of unions, community leaders, defenders, advocates, etc.

This proposal seeks to increase duty-bearers' human rights knowledge and capacities and their accountability towards the most vulnerable, including about States' duty to protect against the abuses committed by third-party actors, such as agribusiness and other industries. It also aims at strengthening their commitment of achieving the 2030 Agenda and embracing their active role in the post-UNFSS2021.

### **4. Why is addressing that problem important for achieving the goal of your working group?**

Closely monitoring and tailoring solutions around the most vulnerable is a powerful tool to mainstream in recovery plans, emergency plans, and development plans to leave no one behind. This way, it will be possible to open the door for transformations into more inclusive and sustainable food systems that can benefit everyone.

### **5. How can this solution address that problem?**

The solution will provide member countries and other stakeholders, including food systems actors themselves, with a few already available indicators that, when used together and closely monitored, can provide better information on who are those in most need of attention and recurrently left behind, whether their rights are violated and move towards food systems that address root causes of food insecurity, discrimination, informality, and inequality. The following are the suggested indicators:

- SDG Indicator 2.1.2: Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES). Two FIES-based indicators, disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity ... These can be used for national and global monitoring purposes.
- SDG indicator 5.4.1 *Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location* which recognizes and values unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally.
- SDG indicator 2.4.1, *Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture*
- SDG indicator 1.4.2, *Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure* which ensures that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources.
- SDG indicator 16.10.1 or similar to ensure respect of human rights defenders and the media in food systems: *16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months (and find out how many of them relevant to food security)*

**6. Why does this solution align to the definition and criteria for a ‘game changing solution’ developed by the Summit?**

This proposal invites stakeholders to operate through a human rights-based approach and prioritize the most vulnerable in the food systems. While it has been recognized that monitoring is an effective solution to keep track of the progress towards the SDGs, not all the indicators are appropriate or effective to do so and not appropriately put into practice. The above indicators have been carefully selected as viable tools in a food system context to identify and monitor the most vulnerable. This game changing solution has impact potential at scale, it is easily actionable, and it is sustainable, aimed towards achievement of the SDGs and capable to keep delivering beyond. Moreover, it is innovative, with no overlap yet detected with any of the 1<sup>st</sup> Wave AT1 solutions proposed. None explicitly provides for monitoring on rights-based accountability criteria. This being the only AT1 solution put forward that explicitly refers to all human rights.

It also complements and has co-benefits with other proposals: This solution would serve to complement many of the existing solutions put forward across the ATs, which would benefit from a centralized monitoring capability that provided reliable information about indicators, or to promoting and implement right to food in general to enhance specific proposals in all game changers.

It finds particular resonance and synergies with AT4, which makes express reference to labour rights, to strengthening social dialogue and extending social protection coverage to all. There is the potential that future solutions presented to the AT5 may reveal some points of convergence with the proposed solution considering that one of the criteria sought is to identify solutions promoting universal access to food.

No specific reference is detected across the ATs expressly to the monitoring of Care as against SDG5.4.1, nor of human rights violations (media and HRDs) as against SDG16.10.1.

**7. What is the existing evidence supporting the argument that this solution will work, or at least that it will achieve the initial outcomes described above?**

These indicators are already being used, just not specifically together or in a food system context.

**8. What is the current and/or likely political support for this idea?**

There is strong demand and political commitment behind this solution. AT1 and other ATs are receiving increasing demands, not only by member countries but also by international experts, civil society and other groups, to ensure that human rights and in particular the right to food are clearly standing out in substantive discussions and actions leading up to and following the UNFSS2021. This solution will be greatly complemented by an active role played by UN Special Rapporteurs, independent experts, INGOs and civil society who can emphasize aspects related to how the inclusion of the most vulnerable and increased respect, protection, and fulfilment of their human rights, can ensure greater sustainability of our food systems. The proposed selected indicators serve to highlight structural inequalities that stakeholders have already agreed upon. They are easily accessible and understandable for non-experts.

**9. Are there certain contexts for which this solution is particularly well suited, or, conversely, contexts for which it is not well-suited at all?**

This solution is based on existing SDG monitoring targets and considered well suited to all contexts.

**10. Any other remarks or comments you would like reflected in AT1's report out on 'game changing' solutions (optional)**

This solution offers the opportunity to capitalize on existing forums, such as the UNGA or the CFS as platforms that can offer the space to discuss, share experiences, gather best practices and evidence on how states are performing against SDG indicators for the realization of the right to food and human rights. These forums can also offer an outlet and space where food systems are discussed systematically through a human rights lens.

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*[1] The final game changing solution proposal benefitted from the inputs of: Wenche Barth Eide (University of Oslo); Kaitlin Y. Cordes (University of Colombia); Lorenzo Cotula (IIED); Hilal Elver (University of Santa Barbara and UNSR RtF 2014-2020); Michael Fakhri (University of Oregon and UNSR RtF); Lawrence Haddad (GAIN); Smita Narula (Pace University); Kartik Raj (HRW); Juan Carlos Garcia y Cebolla, Serena Pepino, Sarah Brand, Marie-Lara Hubert Chartrier, Claire Mason, Marta Ramon (Right to Food Team FAO), and Margret Vidar – (Legal FAO). It was presented on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021, by Ms Hilal Elver at the AT1 Second Wave Public Forum with positive feedback.*

*[2] This statement points at the total number of people with malnutrition and hungry, including undernourished, overweight, obese, anaemic, food insecure (moderate, severe), etc.*