

DRAFT Civil Society Key Messages on Food and Agriculture (SDG2) at HLPF: Food systems transformation are a driver for the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and all SDGs

Context: Civil society, including small farmer organizations, non-governmental and research organizations, and other Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) were active participants in the negotiations of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and in the start of the follow up and review in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2016. Civil society and social movements have continued their active engagement in 2017 from participation in national review and planning processes to regional fora to inter-sessional events including the recent Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on SDG2 held in New York on 12-13 June. Perspectives of Civil Society are represented in the EGM Key Messages summary that was released on 7 July in advance of the 2017 HLPF when SDGs covering poverty, food, health, gender, infrastructure, oceans and the means of implementation are under review (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17).

Much in the ten key messages contain priorities that are shared by Civil Society, the Rome Based Agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP) and a number of participating Member States. However, there are perspectives and positions that for Civil Society go further than what could be included in the EGM outcome reports of the 2-page summary and the forthcoming full report. Related to a number of EGM key messages, these additional concerns are summarized below:

To reach SDG2, we need to recognize the critical interdependence of poverty and hunger: The EGM summary recognizes that the majority of the estimated 80% of the extreme poor living in rural areas are subsistence and smallholder family farms, landless farm and food workers, pastoralists, fishers and Indigenous Peoples who also make up a majority of the hungry and food insecure despite producing the majority of the food consumed. These rural peoples are recognized not only as beneficiaries of assistance but as *agents* of change. This recognition is important but even more important for Civil Society is to recognize and take action in regard to the extreme *power imbalances* that impact every aspect of SDG implementation. When powerful, increasingly consolidated corporate actors in food systems engage in policy and regulatory discussions and in the decisions of governments individually or collectively, there is a structural conflict of interest that cannot be brushed aside or softened with the language of private-public partnerships (PPP). Furthermore, both urban and rural poor consumers can also be change agents through their active participation in collective solutions to responsible production and consumption (SDG 12). These solutions are generally part of territorial food systems and involve short/direct producer to consumer food chains, where producers are able to make a decent living and consumers have access to affordable but nutritious healthy food.

Transformative change is necessary to reach SDG2: While the meaning of “transformative” is contentious among Member States, it is embedded in the language of SDG2 (in target 2.4 to “ensure sustainable food production systems”). Civil Society pushed hard for this word in SDG negotiations in 2015. Similar to struggles over the meaning of “sustainable” in relation to agriculture, the meaning of transformative is now in tension. The EGM summary does call for going beyond a focus on productivity and productionist approaches including going “beyond” the Green Revolution. Transformation requires more than incorporating social and environmental externalities in decision-making, important though this is. There is a need to reframe the technological and market-based approaches that continues to characterize much of agricultural development by governments, research organizations, philanthropic institutions and large scale agribusiness. This approach identifies constraints as separate issues -- typically input constraints -- and solves each separately; a need for better seed, for fertilizer, for draught power, for access to credit etc. It is a top-down approach where farmers are customers or clients buying or being given the necessary input(s). A growing consensus in Civil Society does not believe the linear, top-

down, individual input- output model can achieve resilient and sustainable food systems, even if it pays more attention to environmental and social costs. Just at the SDGs are to be implemented as a whole and not in parts, a holistic, integrated and farmer-centered approach is needed to reach SDG2.

Part of the transformative paradigm change also involves a new model that includes cooperative and other collective forms of producer-consumer relations that involve a different and more inclusive model of food production and consumption based on solidarity economy. This model focuses agroecology as the means systemic change to agricultural, environmental and social systems.

The interlinkages between SDG2 and the entire 2030 Agenda need to be understood: There is broad agreement across sectors that the food system can be a powerful integrator of many issues contained In the SDGs. The EGM summary calls for “macroeconomic frameworks that pursue equitable development, interlinkages among conflict, natural disasters and population movement. Civil society believes that these frameworks must be human rights-focused and enable more localized, place-based integrative and socially inclusive experiences of many actors in civil society working alongside local and subnational governments. The voice of those the poor and the hungry must be heard directly at the table, and they must remain key actors in enabling participatory solutions to be enacted. The macro and micro-economic frameworks must be integrated and support transversal approaches that empower local adaptation and implementation of the SDGs. Integrated management of the SDGs at all levels requires integrated, participatory and inclusive governance mechanisms, as called for in the EGM summary.

Diversity and diversification are key for achieving SDG2: The EGM summary reflects the many kinds of diversity needed to achieve SDG 2; from genetic, species and ecosystem diversity to diverse production models. It also notes the need for context-specific adaptation of social protection systems that support smallholder agriculture and fisheries while meeting the nutrition needs of both the urban and rural poor. However, the recognition of diversity as letting “a thousand flowers bloom” should not be used as a means to preserve dominant regime of productionist approach to food supply while giving smaller space to all other forms and alternatives. Civil Society rejects a dualistic model where industrial agriculture sits side by side with agroecological approaches and believes only a holistic, integrated approach will support achieving SDG2.

Agriculture will become more knowledge intensive: The EGM recognizes that development and monitoring of technology needs to be more responsive to local needs and demands and that a broader definition of innovation is required. Civil Society notes that agroecological solutions can provide many and more useful solutions to key issues such as climate change and at lower cost than “high-tech” approaches. In terms of technology assessment civil society would go further and calls for technology assessment to be an inclusive process, grounded in participation, welcoming diverse experiences (including the knowledge of women, children, marginalized groups, Indigenous Peoples, workers, and others) and accounting for diverse values and perspectives.

What “going beyond” means for Civil Society: Social movements, NGOs, researchers, supportive governments, donors and international organizations with more evidence and data are increasingly calling for replacement the productionist frame that identifies and addresses issues from the top down and in isolation from one another with a relational frame. The agro-ecological approach has a relational framing; it is holistic, farmer-centered, where production aligns with nature's restorative power. It accounts for the social, economic, environmental effects and recognizes the need to balance power relations. The agro-ecological approach and its relational frame seeks empower farmers and meet the food needs of all, enriching soil, maintaining and developing agricultural biodiversity, nutritional value and health of both producers and consumers, conserving water, and contributing to climate solutions.