C20 Brazil 2024 Working Group 2 - Food Systems, Hunger and Poverty

Concept Note

1. Context Civil20 is one of the Engagement groups of the G20 process. The purpose of Civil20 (C20) is to bring together voices, ideas and solutions from civil societies across the Globe. The C20 group leverages the diverse spectrum of our society and is expected to channelize the G20 process towards being inclusive, people-centric, democratic and better informed. In C20 2023, India had created 14 working groups covering various aspects that civil societies work on. LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) was identified as a significant working group along with Health, culture, Women-led development etc.

2. About Food. The Human Right to Adequate Food – DHAA - inherent to all people and internationally recognized since 1948, involves factors ranging from access to food, quantity and quality to the living conditions of these people.

The then United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, summarized the definition of the right to food “The right to food is the right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear”.

To assure food for all, it is not enough to secure food in terms of quantity of energy or calories, but to secure food quality, nutritive and socio-cultural aspects, guaranteeing peoples self-determination and autonomy. Towards achieving food security the involvement of governments and states is essential, prioritizing the construction and implementation of public policies for food and nutritional sovereignty and security, agrarian reform, decent work, employment, and housing. We apply here the concept of real food - food that meets not only our nutritional needs, but also respects the psychosocial, cultural and environmental demands.

Public policies regarding the subject should be formulated to ensure equitable access to healthy food, backed by sufficient data and impact analysis on their effects.

People and local communities are central agents to raise the voice for alleviating poverty and hunger. This requires strong local communities - including indigenous peoples, traditional communities and similar groups – and protecting their right to produce and consume before marketing the surplus. The autonomy and objective conditions for the use of local resources, and reforms in the agrarian structure and a collective approach to territories, including the rights of peasant communities to use, save and exchange seeds need to be considered.

Food sovereignty, connected to the concept of food security, acknowledges people’s rights to produce, consume and distribute healthy and nutritious food. It ensures agro-ecological production cycles, respecting the climatic and cultural diversity of each community. Social peace, social justice, gender justice, racial justice and solidarity economy are essential for making Food Sovereignty a reality. It demands an international trading order based on cooperation and compassion in the face of competition and coercion. It demands a society that rejects discrimination in all its forms (class, race and gender). Food Sovereignty, as defined by
the social movements of the 1990s and later by the Nyeleni Forum in Mali in 2007 is being acknowledged.

3. The Global issue of hunger and food and nutrition security. Agrifood systems remain highly vulnerable to shocks and disruptions arising from conflict, climate variability and extremes, and economic contraction. These factors, combined with growing inequities, keep challenging the capacity of agrifood systems to deliver nutritious, safe and affordable diets for all. (FAO, SOFI 2023)

Hunger is not due to the scarcity of food produced, but also due to globalization that has conditioned the geography of the production process and the market for agri-food products. Concentration in a few companies and crops/commodities, extensive monoculture production, intense and inefficient exploitation of natural resources, unequal distribution of food, and high rates of food loss and waste has resulted in a dysfunctional food system.

4. Definition of food systems. The concept of a “food system” represents a contrast to notions of agriculture and food production and consumption as a simple, linear chain from farm to plate. Food systems are complex networks that include all the inputs and outputs associated with agricultural and food production and consumption. Food systems can vary substantially from geographies and over time, depending on location specific conditions. The food systems concept is a framework to assess the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) describes food systems as “Food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded. The food system is composed of subsystems (e.g. farming system, waste management system, input supply system, etc.) and interacts with other key systems (e.g. energy system, trade system, health system, etc.).

5. Food systems must be sustainable. The hegemonic model of agriculture, based on concentration of land, intensive monoculture production, large estates, deforestation, and the abusive use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers and fossil fuels, with long global chains and lack of adequate logistic infrastructure, has already proven to be unsustainable, both environmentally and economically.

The World Bank report “Roadmap for Climate Action in Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2025”, for example, shows that the agricultural sector, together with changes in land use and deforestation, accounts for 47% of emissions in the Latin America and the Caribbean, well above the global average of 19%”.

Unsustainable food systems worldwide continue to cause the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem functions, contributing strongly to climate change, which, in turn, more negatively affects family and peasant farmers, especially in developing countries.

A transformative, holistic and integrated approach to strengthen value chains, explore the newest pro-sustainability business models is required. This model calls for paradigm shift, change in public and institutional policy and may require incentives and financing to further explore it.
Food security and sustainable agriculture depends not just on good fertile soil/land but it also requires water as available in natural water bodies. Thus, conserving water for agriculture is crucial.

To that purpose we adopt the High Level Panel of Experts of the Committee on World Food Security concept of sustainable food systems: Sustainable food systems embody qualities that support the six dimensions of food security. Sustainable food systems are: productive and prosperous (to ensure the availability of sufficient food); equitable and inclusive (to ensure access for all people to food and to livelihoods within that system); empowering and respectful (to ensure agency for all people and groups, including those who are most vulnerable and marginalized to make choices and exercise voice in shaping that system); resilient (to ensure stability in the face of shocks and crises); regenerative (to ensure sustainability in all its dimensions, including soil health); and healthy and nutritious (to ensure nutrient uptake and utilization).

6. Sustainable Agriculture. There is increased awareness of the relationship between farming and ecological systems, that has led to growing support for innovation for sustainable modes of agricultural production. Several types of innovation for sustainable agriculture have been experimented. Agroecology, which has a long history, has gained significant ground over the past decade, with a growing number of movements, governments and institutions, are engaging in research on this type of farming.

Agroecological farming methods incorporate a range of key principles designed to improve resource efficiency (such as recycling and input reduction), strengthen resilience of ecosystems (such as building soil and animal health, enhancing biodiversity, fostering positive synergies and economic diversification) and build social equity (such as co-creation of knowledge, incorporating social values into food systems and strengthening participation and governance).

Communities around the world have practiced sustainable farming systems for generations. Their farming systems have evolved over generations to optimize sufficient food production under the given physical and climatic conditions of a place. The rituals imbibe sustainable practices into our actions, reminding us to ‘nurture the nature’ around us. The festivals, on the other hand, celebrate the wellbeing and prosperity which comes from our efforts and thoughtful actions. Such rituals and festivals can be noted in all nature worshipping cultures around the globe. Understanding the agro-ecology, respecting local traditions, being ‘vocal for local’, promoting ‘from the region-for the region’ may help us churn out some solutions towards issues of the modern world.

Therefore, the way food is produced should highlight and respect agrobiodiversity, cultural approaches to food, specificities of the territory and its geography, and give priority to the needs of domestic food supply. It is critical that small farm holder farmers’, women secure tenure rights to allow a transition to a sustainable agriculture production.

7. Poverty, Economy, Governance and Inequality. Recognizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of rural and urban communities and the unequal distribution of resources it is essential to address various aspects of unequal economies, both locally and globally. The key to facing the challenges is the development of integrated solutions through efficient public policies adapted to local realities, which are in accordance with standards established by international
agreements, multilateral collaborations and cross-border cooperation to promote systemic transformations related to good governance, financial sustainability, democratization of access to public facilities and circular economy.

8. Socio-spatial inequalities. It is essential to focus on the multidimensional aspects of poverty in both urban and rural contexts. The inequalities are based on age group, race, gender and territory. These inequalities are reflected in access to social rights, essential services, cultural and material goods, all fundamental resources for maintaining life in basic and dignified conditions, especially in peripheral regions of the cities, around the world. It also induces violence, housing insecurity, the water and basic sanitation infrastructure crisis, obstacles to mobility and access to quality public transport and public policies, as well as the lack of public health, education, culture and social assistance facilities. In turn, women, children, the elderly, racialized minorities, and people with disabilities around the world are disproportionately affected by these critical socio-spatial issues. The interconnection of territories is essential to promote food security and guarantee equitable access for communities to public food distribution infrastructure. Public transport networks, particularly powered by renewable and clean energy sources, play a fundamental role in guaranteeing the right to healthy and dignified food.

9. Three pillars approach to enable multi stakeholder dialogue. There are various complex approaches and divergent interpretations on food system sustainability. To enable such an inter-community dialogue, with multiple stakeholders, three main thematic areas proposed under the food system security:

1. Food Systems, Agriculture & Ecology
2. Social, Cultural & Spiritual Aspects of food systems
3. Poverty, Economy, Governance & Inequality

These three thematic areas will cover the fundamentals, drivers, food system governance and actors. Deliberations under these themes will ensure discussion on roles, responsibilities, of different, formal and informal, public and private actors.

10. Objectives and expected outcome of WG2 - Food Systems, Hunger and Poverty

A. Calibrating the approach at the issue of hunger, poverty, food and nutrition security, food sovereignty and sustainable food systems.
B. Streamlining the role and responsibility of the civil society in ensuring food and nutrition security, food sovereignty, and sustainable food systems.
C. Enabling the dialogue with civil society groups from especially the three domains, agriculture and ecology, social, cultural, health and spirituality, and economics and food system governance.
D. Deliberating the existing public policy and governance frameworks for food and nutrition security and for promoting sustainable food systems.
E. Understanding the special cultural nuances and underpinnings of food systems and ways to include these in policy frameworks.
F. Guaranteeing the means of transition to a sustainable food system, specially through access to credit, land tenure rights and the right to seed.

G. Together with advocacy for shaping and promoting public policy, creating and strengthening channels, forums for communities towards food and nutrition security and for promoting sustainable food systems.

11. **Programs and partners engagement to achieve goals.** The objectives will be realized through meetings, FGDs, roundtable discussions, with all possible stakeholders and actors from all the relevant domains. The working group will act as a facilitator for enabling the deliberation in stakeholders, consolidating the policy documents and frameworks. It will also formulate and execute the policy advocacy strategies. The working group will serve as anchor and agent for continuity for the deliberation on food system security in G20+ countries.