

Mr Jean-Pierre Halkin
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CC: Ms Chantal Symoens, Head of Unit a.i. Unit C1 - Rural Development, Food Security & Nutrition

Dear Mr Jean-Pierre Halkin,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Western European member of the Coordination Committee of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) autonomously established by civil society to interface with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Members of the Western European CSM group, gathered in Brussels on 30th September to prepare for the upcoming CFS session, learned that the European authorities will be meeting on 4th October to finalize the positions that the EU will be taking during the crucial meetings in Rome from 10th to 22nd October. They have asked me to bring to you our concerns in time for you to take them into account in your deliberations.

First and foremost, we underline the extreme importance that we attach to the new CFS as the foremost, inclusive global platform on food issues with a mission of guaranteeing the right to food of the world's population. We hope and expect that the EU, as a powerful actor in the CFS, will do everything possible to defend this space and to strengthen its authority by demonstrating that it can, indeed, take significant decisions that could not be made elsewhere.

Over the past four months the Civil Society Mechanism has participated actively in the negotiation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure to Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Food Security and in preparing the discussions that will take place in the three policy roundtables and regarding the Global Strategic Framework. We would like to share with you some of our views in this regard.

Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure to Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Food Security

Civil society appreciated many of the positions taken by the EU delegation during the negotiation session in July. We urge the EU to not water down important positions already agreed like those on redistributive policies and to defend strong language against large-scale land acquisitions and in favor of the application of Free Prior and Informed consent. We also expect that you will continue to champion the use of human rights language in the Voluntary Guidelines, particularly regarding Indigenous Peoples. We would appreciate having a meeting with the EU delegation at the beginning of the final negotiation session, on the morning of 10 October.

How to increase food security and smallholder-sensitive investment in agriculture

We urge the EU delegation to bring the "EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges" to bear on this roundtable. The EU document highlights the importance of promoting sustainable smallholder food production and contains a careful discussion of the kinds of measures that are required to do so (section 2.1 in particular). In contrast we note an incoherence in the roundtable discussion paper. The paper recognizes that

the bulk of investment in agriculture is made by smallholders themselves, who are also responsible for producing up to 80% of the food consumed in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet it devotes disproportionate attention to corporate investment and private-public partnerships without any serious consideration of the impact of industrial models of agriculture and corporate-controlled value chains on men and women smallholders, food security and the environment. We urge the EU to push for action-oriented decisions that 1) establish a system for monitoring and reporting by national governments with multi-actor involvement and a defined role for the CFS secretariat and Advisory Group; 2) request the HLPE to undertake the study referred to in rec. vii. during 2012 so that it can accompany the CFS inclusive consultation process on principles for responsible agricultural investment; 3) maintain this process as described in recs. viii and ix on the CFS calendar for 2012, assuming that the Voluntary Guidelines are adopted on 17 October, and help to ensure that resources are made available to conduct the consultation.

Food Price Volatility

We urge the EU to prioritize the recommendations of the HLPE study on price volatility which the CFS itself requested the HLPE, an integral part of its architecture, to undertake. This study focuses on the long-term structural causes of price volatility that fall most appropriately within the purview of the CFS. In this connection we would like to draw particular attention to the role of strategic food reserves, the impact of biofuels, the need for market regulation and the importance of ensuring policy space for national governments and concerned actors to put together the packages of policies and measures that can most effectively address the challenges of price volatility in their particular contexts.

Gender, Food Security and Nutrition

While we welcome the roundtable and the development of the discussion paper, there are significant gaps in the latter. For example, it requires a stronger reference to the gender and nutritional impacts of global challenges such as those relating to trade and investment, price volatility and climate change. In addition an analysis of the 'model of production' best suited to provide nutritious food for women and their families and communities should be included and would serve to make the paper more robust. The paper misses reference to supporting and developing resilient local food webs with surpluses provided for the market. As the EU has agreed in the policy framework cited above: *"the EU and its Member States should: Improve smallholder resilience and rural livelihoods [with a] Focus on ecologically efficient agricultural intensification for smallholder farmers, and in particular women..."* (para 4.1). While the paper recognises the multiple roles of women, it is important that women are also recognised as 'farmers' in their own right, and that their practices are likely to be sustainable, ecological and resilient, not requiring the inputs favoured by industrial production. Finally we are concerned that the decision box does not include reference to the need for a refocus of policy and practice on nutrition-sensitive food and agriculture.

The Global Strategic Framework

We would like to emphasize the importance that civil society attaches to the GSF as a key instrument for the CFS. The GSF will constitute the overall framework within which reflections and recommendations regarding specific issues on the agenda, like price volatility and investment in agriculture, can meaningfully be situated. We hope and expect that the EU will defend the process and the timetable foreseen for the formulation of the GSF. We also hope that the EU will support the request of the CSM to report directly to the CFS plenary the results of its autonomous consultation on the GSF outline. This is in recognition of the status of the CSM within the new CFS

and the fact that it is the only available instrument to ensure that the views of organizations representing those most affected by food insecurity – for whom electronic consultations are not a viable option - are brought forward.

In conclusion, we recall that the vision of the new CFS foresees the replication at national and regional levels of the kind of multi-actor policy dialogue space that the global CFS has institutionalized. We regret that, undoubtedly due to the changes underway in the EC, it has not been possible thus far to arrange a face-to-face meeting with you to exchange views on the CFS agenda, as we did last year. We would appreciate having an opportunity to meet with the European delegation in Rome on 17 October, before the beginning of the substantive discussions.

Yours sincerely,

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