

Chapitre 3. Le Comité de la sécurité alimentaire mondiale dix ans après la réforme

Un monde sans faim

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The Committee on World Food Security: Advances and challenges 10 years after the reform

Comité de Sécurité Alimentaire Mondiale des Nations Unies: avancées et limites 10 ans après la réforme

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Abstract

The reform of the UN's Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2009 was widely regarded as a key moment in the re-organization of global food security governance processes. This was due to the implementation of a novel approach to participation in policy-making that prioritize the voices of those most affected by food insecurity. The reformed CFS is part of a broader architecture of global food security governance that is increasingly anti-political: that is, it is increasingly organized in ways that minimise, avoid, or conceal the relations of power and conflictual dimensions inherent to policy-making. In this chapter, we present an overview of the reform of the CFS, highlighting, in particular, the roles and structure of the CFS. We then focus on how the participation of non-state actors, notably civil society, is coordinated. We end with an assessment of the relevance and impact of the CFS, and identify three main tendencies that may limit the future impact of the CFS on the global governance of food security.

Key words: food security, global governance, participation, policy, Committee on World Food Security, most affected

Introduction

When food prices spiked in 2007/08, 50 million people were estimated to have been pushed into poverty due to the higher cost of food (FAO 2011; World Bank 2011), making the total number of undernourished people one billion, or one sixth of humanity (Demeke, Pangrazio, and Maetz 2009; FAO 2009, 2011). Rising food costs led to food riots and civil unrest in more than 60 countries (FAO 2011; Zaman et al. 2008), and generated appeals for food aid from 36 countries (U.S. Department of State 2011). Countries that had long been considered food secure faced the threat of limited food imports as a result of protectionist export restrictions put in place by some food exporting countries (DEFRA 2010; Sharma 2010). This food price crisis, which was amplified by the global economic crisis and ongoing environmental crisis, challenged dominant assumptions about food security, agriculture and development. Policy makers were left to make sense of an increasing number of variables including environmental challenges, demographic shifts, rising energy prices, demand for biofuels, depreciation of the U.S. dollar, unfavourable weather and trade shocks, panic purchases, and export restrictions (Headey, Malaiyandi, and Shenggen 2009).

There was an international effort to respond to the crisis and, as a result, a number of initiatives were launched and existing organisations were reformed (Duncan and Barling 2012). One of the most significant reforms was that of the United Nation's Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Through this reform the CFS set out to transform itself from, "the most boring UN body of all" (interview 2012), to the "foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for policy coordination for food security" (CFS 2009b, para. 4). A novel approach to the participation of "stakeholders" opened up intergovernmental negotiations to non-state actors, with an explicit commitment to prioritizing 'the voices of those most affected'.

A decade after the reform of the CFS, it is important to reflect on what it has, or has not achieved. Such a review is timely. Hunger had been steadily declining for over a decade, but in 2016 the trend reversed, and the number of hungry increased to 815 million people, or 11 per cent of the global population (FAO et al. 2017). However, addressing food security, and in turn, assessing the impact of the CFS, is easier said than done. As we discuss in this paper, there is a discrepancy between what the CFS is supposed to achieve, and what it is designed to do. Further, food security presents policy problems for which there are no neutral or scientific diagnosis, and no agreement on the pathways for solutions (Duncan and Bailey, 2016). Although one of the roles of the CFS is to generate policy convergence, the impact of its policy recommendations has been uneven, and the uptake of its outputs by national governments has been low. At the same time, the CFS has received considerable attention for its participatory structures, that give priority voices to those most affected by food insecurity, and has been praised for its ability to enable divergent views to be expressed and deliberations to take place. In short, its emphasis on stakeholder participation has made it both dynamic and fragile.

In this chapter, we offer an overview of the reform of the CFS, highlighting, in particular, the roles the CFS is supposed to play and how it is structured. In the second section, we look at how the participation of non-state actors is coordinated, comparing that of civil society and private sector actors. In the third section, we discuss how negotiations take place at CFS and what policy recommendations have come out, and assess the relevance and impact of the CFS. In the fourth section, we identify three main tendencies that may limit the impact of the CFS on the global governance of food security, namely: changes to how CFS policies and recommendations are

negotiated; changing dynamics of representation; and changes in the role of rights-based approaches in policy debates. We conclude by highlighting the importance of defending the CFS as a body where real and meaningful participation of the affected can take place, and where debate and conflict can be made visible.

Reform of the CFS

In 1974, amidst a global food world crisis state leaders met at the first World Food Conference. One outcome of the Conference was an agreement on the need to establish a Committee on World Food Security ‘in order to provide a forum for regular intergovernmental consultations and to carry out the functions proposed by the World Food (FAO 1975: IV.43). The CFS was originally envisioned as a forum for consultation, with a monitoring function to review international grains arrangements and policies including: current and prospective demand; supply and stock position for basic food-stuffs; the adequacy of current and prospective stock levels in exporting and importing countries; and, steps taken by governments to implement the International Undertaking on World Food Security.

At its inception, the CFS was designed as a Category 1 governing and statutory body, meaning that it was to host intergovernmental meetings to which Member Governments were to send official delegations. The Terms of Reference clarified that the CFS would be open to all Member Nations of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and UN. Following the World Food Summit in 1996, the function of the CFS was changed, and its focus shifted to monitoring the implementation of the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit. Still, between 1974 and 1997, the CFS acted as a rather benign Committee. Jacques Diouf, former Director-General of the FAO, noted that despite “its intergovernmental nature as a forum of sovereign States, its universal composition and its neutrality” (CFS 2009a, 13), the CFS failed in its mission to monitor food security for five key reasons:

1. The Committee lacked a high-level international policy-making body in the sectors of international cooperation and of food and agriculture;
2. It did not have an integrated framework for short, medium, or long-term scientific advice;
3. It lacked the authority to evaluate and coordinate policies affecting world food security, notably with regards to production, agroindustry, trade, social safety nets and financing;
4. The Committee lacked an effective mechanism to follow-up on food security decisions and actions taken at national and regional level; and,
5. It lacked the financial resources needed to carry out its mandate (CFS 2009a, 13).

In October 2008, faced with a growing food security crisis, a history of ineffectiveness, limited authority and the threat of becoming increasingly irrelevant in a changing architecture of global food security governance, the CFS launched a reform process that would move it away from a monitoring and follow-up body. But the price crisis and the broader context within which the crisis was embedded were not the only factors in prompting reform of the CFS. The CFS reform was also facilitated “by the fact that the member states of the FAO were just emerging from an extensive process to reform the FAO itself, and were, therefore, ‘reform ready’” (Brem-Wilson 2014:5). Further still, civil society organizations (CSOs), led predominantly by the International Planning Committee for

Food Sovereignty (IPC)¹ had been actively lobbying for reform for years, in an effort to advance their food sovereignty agenda at the UN (Claeys and Duncan 2018b; Duncan 2015).

In October 2009, after lengthy and sometimes heated discussions, representatives from 101 countries met at the headquarters of the FAO to approve reforms to the CFS so that the Committee could “fully play its vital role in the area of food security and nutrition, including international coordination” (FAO 2013, 207). The reform aimed to re-define and re-position the fledgling Committee within a fast-changing architecture of global food security governance. As such, the reformed CFS was expected to:

Constitute *the* foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger and ensuring food security and nutrition for all human beings (CFS 2009b, para. 4b emphasis added).

The CFS reform vision was framed around increasing participation, coordination, and outputs. The reform was further legitimised by the adoption of the UN’s commitment to one country-one vote. Though the reform of the CFS did not make international headlines, there was widespread recognition of its significance (Duncan 2015; De Schutter 2014).

The reformed CFS is made up of Members, Participants and Observers. Membership is open to all member states of the United Nations. Participants include representatives of UN agencies and bodies with mandates in the field of food security, international agricultural research centres, international and regional financial institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations, representatives of the private sector, and importantly civil society and non-governmental organizations, with particular attention to organizations representing smallholder family farmers, Indigenous Peoples, the urban poor and others most impacted by food insecurity. Observers are other entities and individuals who can request to be invited to observe entire sessions or specific agenda items. The CFS is further comprised of a Bureau, Advisory Group, Plenary, Secretariat, and a High-Level Panel of Experts (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The Bureau is the executive arm of the CFS and is made up of a Chairperson and twelve member countries: two each from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Near East and Latin America and one each from North America and South West Pacific. As the name suggests, the Advisory Group, made up of representatives from the official Participants, advises and supports the Bureau to advance the objectives of the Committee.

¹ The IPC is an international network representing farmers, fisherfolk, and small- and medium-scale farmers, agricultural workers and indigenous peoples, as well as NGOs. It plays the role of facilitating the discussions between NGOs, social organizations and movements, as well as facilitating dialogue with FAO.

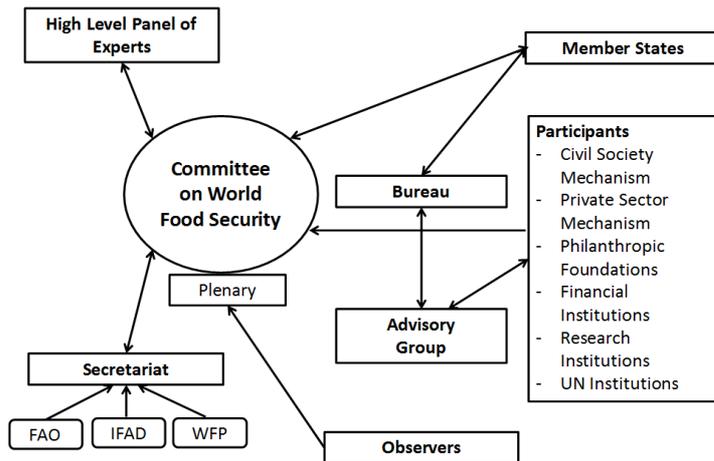


Figure 1: Structure of the Committee on World Food Security

Source: Duncan 2016

The High-Level Plan of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, established in 2010, is the science-policy interface of the CFS. It is tasked with assessing and analysing the “current state of food security and nutrition and its underlying causes”, providing “scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues, utilizing high quality research, data and technical studies” and identifying “emerging issues” to help “members prioritize future actions and attentions on key focal areas” (CFS 2009b). The Panel is made up of a steering committee of internationally recognized experts in food security and nutrition-related fields as well as ad hoc project teams comprised of experts working on a project-specific basis.

CFS plenary sessions are held annually and are made up of all Members and all Participants as well Observers. Plenary is the central body for decision-taking, debate, coordination, lesson-learning and convergence by all stakeholders at a global level on food security issues. During Plenary there are negotiations on policy issues with relevance to food security. In these negotiations, Participants have full right to engage. The chairs of the negotiations work towards consensus, with the final right to decision-making lying with the member states. The CFS has a permanent Secretariat made up of staff from the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It works to support the Plenary, the Bureau and Advisory Group and the High-Level Panel of Experts. It is currently hosted at FAO in Rome.

The reform process also identified six roles for the CFS (CFS 2009b, para. 5). The first role is coordination at a global level. Specifically, the CFS is now tasked with providing:

a platform for discussion and coordination to strengthen collaborative action among governments, regional organizations, international organizations and agencies, NGOs, CSOs, food producers’ organizations, private sector organizations, philanthropic organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, in a manner that is in alignment with each country’s specific context and needs (CFS 2009b, para. 5.i).

The key aspects of the first role relate to strengthening collaborative action aligned with country specific needs.²

The CFS's second role relates to policy convergence, and specifically to:

promote greater policy convergence and coordination, including through the development of international strategies and voluntary guidelines on food security and nutrition on the basis of best practices, lessons learned from local experience, inputs received from the national and regional levels, and expert advice and opinions from different stakeholders (CFS 2009b, para. 5.ii).

Policy convergence, and in turn coherence, is widely recognised as central to progressing towards food security (De Schutter 2014). While no definition of convergence is provided by the CFS, we understand policy convergence to be “the tendency for policies to grow more alike in the form of increasing similarity in structures, processes and performances” (Drezner 2001, 53). As we discuss below, this normative and policy guidance role of the CFS has been predominant in the last decade.

The CFS's third role is to provide support and advice to countries, specifically:

At country and/or region request, facilitate support and/or advice in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their nationally and regionally owned plans of action for the elimination of hunger, the achievement of food security and the practical application of the “Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Food” that shall be based on the principles of participation, transparency and accountability (CFS 2009b, para. 5.iii).

The rights-based approach and related principles are reinforced as part of the CFS's role to provide support to countries. However, it should be noted that the CFS has so far not received any requests to provide advice to specific countries and regions (Bester et al. 2017, viii). This is not surprising considering the fact that the CFS is a political and not a technical body, and that the FAO is identified as the body with the mandate, skills, and resources to play this support role.

The fourth role of the CFS links to coordination at national and regional levels. In this regard, the CFS is to “[s]erve as a platform to promote greater coordination and alignment of actions in the field, encourage more efficient use of resources and identify resource gaps” (CFS 2009b, para. 6.i). With respect to providing coordination of food security governance at national and regional levels, there is evidence that the CFS has attempted to build linkages through the plenary and related activities, as well as by being present at FAO Regional Conferences. However, most of the coordination has fallen to the Chairs.

² We note that the focus on country's specific context and needs is negotiated language, pushed through at the request of states to maintain sovereignty, and not to ensure country-specific policies (which would be in line with the plurality of political processes endorsed by our analytic approach). Rather, it was a tactic to effectively weaken implications of potential outcomes and provide states the possibility to opt out of Committee outputs. As such, it relates to one of the trends in de-politicization identified by Flinders and Woods (2014) where in politicians and governments pursue a depoliticisation strategy in order to strengthen their position by, for example, reducing their own accountability in the process.

The fifth role of the CFS is to promote accountability and the sharing of experiences at all levels. For the CFS, this is to be achieved by helping:

countries and regions, as appropriate, address the questions of whether objectives are being achieved and how food insecurity and malnutrition can be reduced more quickly and effectively. This will entail developing an innovative mechanism, including the definition of common indicators, to monitor progress towards these agreed upon objectives and actions taking into account lessons learned from previous CFS and other monitoring attempts (CFS 2009b, para. 6.ii).

To date, the CFS has not developed common indicators, for lack of technical expertise and resources. In terms of its own accountability, monitoring and evaluation remain limited, although an independent evaluation was conducted and released in 2017 and the CFS has begun monitoring the use and application of its policy outputs at the national level, with annual events and processes since 2016.

The final role of the CFS is to develop a flexible Global Strategic Framework for food security and nutrition (GSF):

in order to improve coordination and guide synchronized action by a wide range of stakeholders. The Global Strategic Framework will be flexible so that it can be adjusted as priorities change (CFS 2009b, para. 6.iii).

This role was accomplished in 2012 and the document has been updated annually. The 2016 version is a 77 pages organised around six chapters. Chapter four on “Policy, programme and other recommendations” includes all of the CFS policy decisions. The CFS is aware of the limitations of the GSF in its current form and the Open-Ended Working Group on the GSF has been tasked with developing a communication plan to increase awareness.

From this review of the six roles, it is clear that the CFS was predominantly expected to play a coordination and convergence role around food security and nutrition policy. However, it was also expected to play a technical role, such as providing advice and supporting countries with national and regional food security strategies. In our view, this technical role is ill-suited to a political committee like the CFS, which was never given the necessary means or support to be able to play this function.

In many ways, the CFS has failed to achieve its roles due to lack of political will, limited budget and by extension, limited capacity. As a result, there is considerable scepticism around the capacity of the CFS, or its outputs, to promote coherent policies, let alone to reduce hunger and support progress on the realisation of the right to adequate food (Fieldwork, CFS, 2014-2017). And rightly so. The Committee’s failure to address issues related to trade – with some influential states maintaining that trade is the jurisdiction of the WTO – suggests that strong, integrated and coherent policies will be hard to come by (Clapp and Murphy 2013). From a global governance perspective, informed by critical political theory, the CFS is however playing a unique and important function in the broader global food security governance architecture as an explicitly participatory body.

Participation in the CFS

As noted above, the reform of the CFS opened intergovernmental negotiations to non-state actors (the inclusiveness dimension). More specifically, and as outlined above, the reform of the CFS gave participation rights to five categories of non-state actors.. With the official designation of “Participants”, these actors were given the right to “take part in the work of the Committee with the right to intervene in plenary and breakout discussions to contribute to preparation of meeting documents and agendas, submit and present documents and formal proposals” (CFS 2009b, para. 12). The formalization of such high-level participation in food security governance was unprecedented within the UN system and beyond.

Beyond opening up to participation, the CFS adopted a ‘most-affected’ principle, giving priority voice in the policy-making process to those most affected by hunger and food insecurity (Duncan and Claeys 2018). As written in the reform document, the composition of the CFS should ‘ensure that the voices of all relevant stakeholders – *particularly those most affected by food insecurity* - are heard’ (CFS 2009b, para. 7 emphasis added). In this way, the CFS set out to account explicitly for different experiences and power relations between and across participant categories, rather than trying to level the so-called playing field. The reform principle of prioritizing the voices of those most affected is anchored in the governance structure of the CFS, and its added value is well recognized by many member states (Claeys and Duncan 2018c). CFS processes should include a variety of different civil society constituencies and achieve gender and geographic balance in civil society representation (CFS 2009b, para. 11). These constituencies – e.g., small-holder farmers, fishers, Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists, agricultural workers, NGOs, etc. –, are at the core of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples’ Mechanism (CSM) that facilitates participation of CSOs in the work of the CFS (Claeys and Duncan 2018b). The CFS commitment to prioritizing the voices of those most affected is further expressed through a number of informal, but widely used, practices such as: the allocation of speaking time to CSM participating organizations in Plenary, the choice of keynote speakers from the CSM, and the selection and training of Technical Task Team coordinators coming from the CSM.

The role of participants is to introduce a diversity of perspectives, ideas, visions, examples and solutions that can inform policy recommendations. The CFS works towards consensus of all participants as well as country delegations (members) but seeks consensus from member states (who maintain the right to vote under CFS rules and procedures) when it cannot reach an agreement that suits all actors. This point is significant. Participants, particularly civil society actors (albeit after much deliberation), supported the idea that only states should have decision-making rights. Inspired by a human rights approach to governance, they insisted that states are to be ultimately held accountable for CFS decisions, not participants.

The various participants from civil society and the private sector self-organize to facilitate and streamline contributions into CFS processes. In what follows we describe the two mechanisms these non-state actors have developed to facilitate their participation in the CFS: the CSM, and the Private Sector Mechanism (PSM).

Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples’ Mechanism

The CSM for relations with the CFS (the civil society arm) claims to be the largest international space for CSOs working to eradicate food insecurity and malnutrition. It is committed to the principles of pluralism, autonomy,

diversity, and self-organisation. The CSM is not a representative space, it is a facilitation space. This means that actors who participate in the CFS, by way of the CSM, are meant to represent themselves and articulate positions together with others in the CSM (CSM 2016). This also means that the CSM does not have official members, but is made of organizations that engage as it suits them. International organizations that have been engaged in the CSM over the longer term, and who engage in the governance and leadership of the CSM, include: La Via Campesina (LVC), the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), the World Alliance for Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). As for sub-Regional Coordinators, they must be representatives from national or regional organizations, such as the West African network of peasants and small food producers ROPPA (Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (original name in French)) or the Latin American agroecological movement MAELA (Movimiento Agroecológico Latinoamericano y del Caribe (original name in Spanish)).

Actors in the CSM are organised around 11 constituencies: smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, agricultural and food workers, landless, women, youth, consumers, urban food insecure and NGOs. Actors are also organised in terms of 17 sub-regions. The policy work of the CSM takes place in thematic working groups which are open to anyone who wishes to participate. They are led by social movement actors, and often supported/facilitated by NGO actors who play technical support roles. This structure is deliberate and politically motivated. The CSM is organised to prioritise and give leadership roles to social movements over NGOs. It has developed complex governance mechanisms to try to ensure a balance of constituencies, gender, and regions in all aspects of its work (Claeys and Duncan 2018b). To facilitate the participation of organizations representing the most affected, the CSM has secured specific institutional resources enabling civil society representatives to travel to Rome, and access the translation and interpretation services they need to internally discuss and develop shared policy positions.

Within the CFS, the CSM was granted more seats on the Advisory Group to the CFS Bureau than other participants. This decision was justified not only by the argument that civil society actors represent those most affected by food insecurity, but also in recognition of the diversity of actors across civil society. The CSM has four seats, while the other participant categories only have one seat each. The biannual composition of the Advisory Group for 2016-17 was: FAO (1 seat), WFP (1 seat), IFAD (1 seat), Special Rapporteur on the right to food (1 seat), UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food and Nutrition Security (1 seat), UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (1 seat), World Bank (1 seat), Civil Society Mechanism (4 seats), Private Sector Mechanism (1 seat), CGIAR (1 seat), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (1 seat) as well as two Ad hoc seats for WHO (1 seat) and World Farmers Organization (1 seat).

The CSM is supported by a stable and highly competent Secretariat and has managed to secure a relatively substantial budget (725,489 euros in 2018). The budget for 2018 was spent on: CSM consultations at sub-regional or constituency level 23%; Annual Forum of the CSM 21%; Secretariat and monitoring 20%; Policy Working Groups of the CSM 17%; Participation in meetings of the Committee's Advisory Group 11%; and Accountability, audit and administrative costs 8%. Given that the CFS is a public body, the CSM has the goal of 100% public funding from member states. Over the years, the CSM has succeeded in increasing its share of public funding.

Between 2011 and 2016, 84% of the total budget of the CSM came from governments and international organizations and 16% from NGOs and CSOs, with these figures reaching 91% and 9% respectively in 2017 (Claeys and Duncan 2019). However, the financial situation of the CSM remains precarious and year after year the functioning of the CSM is affected by lack or instability of funds.

Private Sector Mechanism

The private sector also developed a mechanism to facilitate its participation. The Private Sector Mechanism (PSM), led by the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN), is a platform for private enterprises across the agri-food value chain. The PSM is open to those involved in addressing agriculture, food security and nutrition from a business point of view – including farmers, input providers, cooperatives, processors, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), food companies (PSM 2017). In 2019, supporters of the PSM included: Bayer; Cargill; Danone - Early Life Nutrition; Global Agribusiness Alliance; International Dairy Federation; Mead Johnson Nutrition; Nestle; Syngenta Crop Protection; and, Yara International. The PSM has 2 types of members: supporting members (i.e., paying) and non-paying. The PSM relies on member contributions, but participation of non-paying members is welcome in the work of the PSM, including in membership of macro-committees (see below). However, sponsorship of optional programmes and special projects are available only to private sector actors who have paid voluntary fees to support the overall work of the PSM. All members receive information updates and are invited to participate in the annual meeting of the PSM. Input into the PSM is welcome regardless of membership status. The governance guidelines of the PSM note that a Focal Point, which must be an international association, will be elected every two years. The Focal Point will also serve as the chair of the PSM. Memberships automatically renews unless notice is given. In 2019, the approved budget of the PSM was 280,000 euros with received member contributions amounting to 267,493 (slightly less than the 286,044 that members had committed). That year, the PSM had total expenses reaching 274,314 euros.

In 2018, the PSM consolidated its working groups into three Macro-committees to streamline resources and to better focus on high-priority items within the CFS. These macro-committees are: Nutrition / Monitoring / Right to Food; SDGs / Partnerships / Multi-Year Plan of Work (MYPoW) / Agroecology; and, Urbanization / Youth / Global Strategic Framework.

While the CSM has been very present and active since the reform, the PSM developed more slowly. However, their presence at the CFS, and in turn their influence, has been increasing annually. In 2011, they had 37 members present at the annual session, compared to 170 in 2017 (PSM 2017).

Impact of Non-State Actors

Through their participation, non-state actors have shaped the outcomes of the CFS. However, they have done so towards different ends. The CSM has worked to advance rights-based approaches and align policy outputs with the political frameworks of the right to food and food sovereignty. It has successfully pushed for the recognition of collective land tenure rights and territorial markets. The CSM has also been instrumental in advancing recognition of the connection between food systems and nutrition – and the embedding of nutrition in a system approach - and in pushing discussions about women's rights, beyond narratives of empowerment and equality. The private sector has focused on innovation and the role of the commercial sector and actors in food system governance. The PSM has been instrumental in pushing forward discussions, but also narratives, on youth at the

CFS, focusing specifically on innovation as a pathway to engage youth in agriculture and food production. For example, the PSM was instrumental in getting the High-Level Panel of Expert's report on agroecology to be expanded to include other 'innovative approaches'. This change was not supported by the CSM and was interpreted as a way to weaken the CFS's stance on agroecology (Duncan and Claeys 2018).

The relevance and impact of the CFS

Having described mechanisms for participation of two key non-state participants in the CFS, we now turn to the way in which these participants contribute to the development of so-called CFS "products": in effect, intergovernmentally approved policy recommendations developed through participatory negotiation processes. As discussed above, the second role of the CFS is to promote greater policy convergence and coordination, notably through the development of international strategies and voluntary guidelines. In line with this role, the CFS has formulated a considerable list of policy recommendations over the last ten years, which are collated in the Global Strategic Framework (GSF). In this section, we explain how policy recommendations are negotiated at the CFS, and present an overview of the CFS products. We then provide a preliminary assessment of the impact of the CFS in terms of promoting greater global policy convergence on matters relating to food security.

In the years directly following the reform, the CFS would identify a theme and task the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) to produce a related report with recommendations. The CFS also formed Task Teams that drafted discussion papers and compiled "decision boxes" informed by the report of the HLPE. Decision boxes (sets of actionable policy recommendations) prefaced the discussion papers and formed the starting point of the policy negotiations that took place during annual sessions of the CFS. Open-Ended Working Groups (OEWG) were also formed wherein interested parties would start negotiating the recommendations in the inter-sessional periods to prepare for the larger and ideally final negotiations at the annual sessions. When it came to the annual sessions, each plenary roundtable began with a panel of experts, including experts identified by civil society and private sector actors. The negotiations were facilitated by a Chair (a country delegate) and chronicled by a Rapporteur (usually a volunteer from country delegations or experts in the area), and a scribe. The Rapporteur was responsible for identifying key outcomes, points of agreement and advancing recommendations.

As per the CFS reform, all member countries and participants – civil society, the private sector, and others— would then start discussing the decision box text or the draft recommendations. During the negotiations, member states and participants would identify themselves to the Chair if they wanted to speak and the Chair would call on them to make interventions in the order seen. The text being negotiated was projected onto a large screen in the plenary hall. The scribe would use Microsoft Word track changes to note the contributions and changes raised by all speakers. The work was always done in English, leading to inevitable challenges for a number of member states and participants. The Chair would facilitate the negotiations with the members and participants in an effort to come to consensus. Contentious issues were sent to an impromptu Friends of the Chair committee where interested parties could work specifically on the issues that mattered to them. When consensus on the text was reached, the roundtable would be concluded and the negotiated decisions would be submitted to the Plenary for approval. This approach to policy roundtables was prevalent from CFS36 (2010) to CFS41 (2014) but in 2015, the roundtable format was dropped as focussed turned to intersessional negotiations.

Table 1 provides an overview of the themes of the policy negotiations that have taken place during the plenary session since the reform. The so-called flagship products have been identified in bold in the table but for reasons of time and space we cannot elaborate on these specific negotiation processes.³

CFS	Issue
36 (2010)	Addressing food insecurity in protracted crises: Issues and challenges
	Land tenure and international investment in agriculture
	Managing vulnerability and risk to promote better food security and nutrition
37 (2011)	How to increase food security and smallholder-sensitive investment in agriculture
	Gender, Food Security and Nutrition
	Food Price Volatility
	Land tenure and international investments in agriculture
38 (2012) Special session	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security
39 (2012)	Climate Change
	Social Protection
	Global Strategic Framework
	Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment
40 (2013)	Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food Security and Nutrition
	Biofuels and Food Security
41 (2014)	The role of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for food security and nutrition
	Food losses and waste in the context of sustainable food systems
42 (2015)	Water for Food Security and Nutrition
	The Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises
43 (2016)	Sustainable agricultural development for Food Security and Nutrition: what roles for livestock?
	Connecting smallholders to markets
44 (2017)	Sustainable Forestry for Food Security and Nutrition
45 (2018)	Multistakeholder Partnerships to Finance and Improve Food Security and Nutrition in the Framework of the 2030 Agenda

Table 1 Overview of CFS policy products (2011-2018)

Source: adapted from (Duncan 2016), flagship products as identified by the CFS (2017b) in bold

It is most difficult to assess the influence of these policy recommendations on the global governance of food security and nutrition and on policy developments at the national, regional or local level because of the lack of monitoring and evaluation processes in place and the difficulty in documenting slow and subtle discursive/policy shifts. The CFS is aware of this and has established a Monitoring Working Group. In what follows, we highlight some inroads we feel the CFS has made, while acknowledging there has been very limited use and application of CFS outputs on the ground and even fewer tangible changes in the lives of the food insecure.

First, the CFS has played a role in providing and legitimizing alternative narratives to global food insecurity from the dominant productionist model (N. Lambek 2018). In particular, the CFS has contributed to discussions on the role of smallholder farmers in ensuring food security (both with respect to the role of smallholders in providing food, and the particularly challenges smallholders face to achieving their own food security). The CFS has

³ A more detailed review of the CFS negotiation process, and specifically the negotiations around the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security and the Global Strategic Framework are detailed in Duncan (2015).

negotiated a number of policy outputs addressing issues facing smallholders, including Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food Security and Nutrition (2013), Sustainable agricultural development for Food Security and Nutrition: what roles for livestock? (2016) and Connecting Smallholders to Markets (2016). Through these policy outputs, the CFS has reaffirmed that smallholders are a heterogeneous group that supplies 70% of overall food production, challenging the previously dominant narrative that big scale farmers feed the world and adding to the case for investing in small(er)-scale solutions. The use and application of these three policy outputs will be monitored at CFS 46, in October 2019. While the outputs have had little uptake at the national level by states, civil society groups have used them in their advocacy work (CFS 2019). For example, ROPPA has used all three policy outputs in its advocacy work with ECOWAS as well as at the national level.

The CFS has also influenced narratives around access to land and tenure rights, particularly for smallholders. Indeed, where the CFS has undisputedly had the most impact is around the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (VGGT). The VGGT set out principles and internationally accepted standards for responsible land tenure practices that can be used in the development of strategies, policies, legislation, programs and other activities. Since their endorsement, their implementation has been encouraged by the G20, Rio+20, the Francophone Assembly of Parliamentarians, and the UN General Assembly (Duncan 2015; Seufert 2013; Windfuhr 2017).

The CSM has developed a People's Manual to serve as a pedagogical and didactic guide, which aims to make it easier to understand the Guidelines and to provide a practical approach to people on how to use them in their struggles. Coca Cola and Pepsi Co have also publicly committed to apply the VGGTs. As noted in an independent evaluation of the CFS:

The VGGT has been used and applied at national, regional and global levels; initiatives reported in the stock-taking exercise reflect a variety of approaches, including awareness-raising, setting up multi-stakeholder platforms, and practical application through conflict mapping, land mapping and new land registration systems (Bester et al. 2017, ES10).

Second, the CFS, has played an important role in highlighting challenges, often before they have been identified elsewhere. For example, the CFS was working on issues of protracted crisis (see table 1) before the crisis was linked to rising food insecurity in 2017 (FAO et al. 2017). This ability of the CFS to initiate discussions on issues that are not yet on the international agenda is closely related to the participation of representatives from grassroots organizations, who are able to point to real life problems experienced by people in their communities but also to solutions they have been experimenting with on the ground (Claeys and Duncan 2018c).

Third, some CFS outputs have been influential in shaping international human rights instruments and other UN processes. For example, the VGGTs were instrumental in the drafting and negotiating of the *Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas*, a new international legal instrument that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2018 and that recognizes, for the first time, the human right to land, seeds and other natural resources. Specific language from the VGGTs was used to give substance to the right to land, notably the language that concerned the obligation of states to hold 'consultation in good faith', in Article 2.3 of the Declaration (Golay 2019). The CFS has also influenced the UN Decade of Family Farming,

launched in 2019. CFS HLPE reports provided evidence for the Decade's focus on family farmers. The Global Action Plan for the Decade cites a number of HLPE Reports as sources for the proposition that “[f]amily farmers, including peasants, Indigenous peoples, traditional communities, pastoralists, fishers, mountain farmers, and many other groups of food producers, hold unique potential to promote transformative changes in how food is grown, produced, processed and distributed ...”(FAO and IFAD 2019). The Plan calls for increasing “the use of global policy instruments and guidelines relevant to family farming” and makes multiple references to CFS policy recommendations, as an action towards increasing coherence and integration of family farming-related policies and legislations.

Fourth, the CFS's model of participatory policy-making has started to emulate beyond Rome. At a regional level, the Food and Nutrition Security Council of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) was partly inspired by the CFS reform in its creation of a civil society mechanism. Similarly, in 2013, the FAO Guidelines for Ensuring Balanced Representation of Civil Society describe constituencies as one of four main ways to ensure balanced representativeness, according to geography, gender and groups (referring to the types of constituencies). Claeys and Duncan (2018a) have shown how the CSM model has inspired the elaboration of these Guidelines, which adopt the political arguments of the CSM (and others) when they note the relevance of bottom-up solutions developed by the hungry and poor themselves as a rationale for prioritizing their voices in policy-making.

Finally, the CFS has been influential in shaping thinking and action around the right to food. In a 2018 report to the CFS, monitoring national implementation of the *Right to Food Guidelines*, members of the CSM highlighted the role the CFS has played in advancing the normative elaboration of the right to food. Specifically, the report highlighted how CFS outputs have encouraged and elaborated holistic approaches to right to food realization, focused on smallholders (who are globally the most food insecure), democratic accountability (including affirming the importance of participation in policy- and law-making), multipronged approaches to addressing protracted crises, conflicts and natural disasters, and integrating peoples' sovereignty over and rights to natural resources and livelihoods as part of the right to food (CSM 2018).

Ongoing and futures challenges facing the CFS

While the CFS has had limited policy-level impact, its participatory mechanisms have received a lot of attention. This is because the participation of the affected has served to politicize the CFS in important ways (Duncan and Claeys 2018), in a context where most policy processes are organised in ways that have de-politicising effects (Clarke 2011; Fawcett and Marsh 2014; Mouffe 2005; Swyngedouw 2011). By this we mean that complex and normative policy processes are increasingly organized in ways that minimise, avoid, or conceal the relations of power and conflictual dimensions inherent to them, and reflective of the antagonisms inherent in human society (Mouffe 1995, 262–63). Concerns around processes of de-politicisation have been raised in social science circles, and with relation to food more specifically (Duncan 2016; Duncan and Claeys 2018; Moragues-Faus 2017), as part of a critique of the maintenance of elite power, globalization and neoliberalism in global governance. In what follows we identify three main tendencies that threaten to limit the potential of the CFS to operate as a politicized body, specifically: changes to how policies are negotiated; changing dynamics of representation; and changes in the role of rights-based approaches in policy debates.

Changes to Negotiations

As the reformed CFS has matured, there have been changes to the way in which the Committee negotiates policy recommendations (Duncan and Alves Zanella 2016b). In contrast to the process described above, since 2016 there have been no negotiations during the annual session. Instead, the negotiations took place entirely in the Open-Ended Working Groups during the intersessional period, so that the CFS plenary only needed to approve them. The change in process presents opportunities as well as trade-offs from the point of view of politicization.

First, a clear impact of this new approach is that having negotiations during the year restricts, for time and financial reasons, the number of actors (including members and participants) that can participate in the negotiations. While this could challenge the inclusive vision of the CFS, it could also mean more committed participation (discussed below). Second, the intersessional negotiations limit the visibility of the negotiation process. When policies are negotiated during the CFS, all participants and observers can watch, understand and react to the negotiations. Moving to a format focused on inter-sessional negotiations might limit the visibility of these political dynamics. Negotiations in Plenary also provided a higher level of transparency.

Third, the changes in the negotiation format may have negative impacts on the engagement of actors at the CFS. We note that if there are less opportunities to influence policy outcomes at the CFS sessions, political engagement might also be reduced. This is particularly important because engagement is key to the uptake of CFS outputs. By having a wider group of actors involved in the negotiations more organizations become aware and invested in the outcome. The debates and discussion are also central for members and participants to gain insight into the politics and concerns embedded within the policy recommendations. This insight and enhanced awareness, we argue, is key to ensuring that these policies move beyond the CFS. We question for example the value members and participants will ascribe to taking part in the CFS annual sessions if political negotiations are left to inter-sessional activities. We see the possibility of participants shifting their attention from the political negotiations (during the year) to side-events and networking activities (at annual sessions).

Beyond the changing dynamics of negotiation, shifts in decision-making processes have implications for how member-states representatives understand interactions with non-state actors, as each year, new negotiators come to the CFS. These new government representatives may not be completely aware of CFS processes. The opportunity to engage in the policy roundtables presents in some ways a “crash course” in the relatively inclusive and deliberative methods employed by the CFS to arrive at decisions. Through our field work we have heard time and again how negotiators can experience this as a very frustrating process (especially, for those who are not used to being challenged by non-state actors), but we have also seen that many of these individuals come to see its value. We have seen and interviewed diplomats who express deep frustration at their first CFS event, only to become proponents of the CFS and its participatory approach at a later stage, once they have seen the benefits of greater interaction.

On the other hand, changes in the negotiation structure and the move to intersessional negotiations have some benefits with respect to engagement. It is possible that such an approach would result in a more efficient and reliable plenary. Following the reform, though not in recent years, it was common that policy negotiations would go on late into the night. This was certainly exhausting for the participants, leaving some unable to engage in the CFS plenary the following day (a key issue for countries with small delegations). Additionally, it was exhausting

for the budget of the CFS, as interpreters and staff must be paid and the building needs to be kept open when a session is extended. Completing negotiations in advance of the annual session might result in a more reliable schedule and reduced costs for the Annual Plenary. Intersessional negotiations could lead to increased commitment. It is expected that those participating in Open-Ended Working Groups are invested in the process and there is reduced risk that participants who were not part of the intersessional negotiations might arrive at the CFS annual session and raise objections to recommendations that were already crafted through careful negotiation and consensus.

Another possible opportunity is that negotiations taking place at a smaller-scale might create more opportunity for the development of deeper trust, understanding and willingness to listen and learn. It might also allow people to ask more questions and move away from defensive positions. The longer time periods and the ability to take time to think and consult is also an important consideration that is less available when negotiations are tied to the annual sessions. Finally, the time that is freed up in the agenda from not having to be preparing for negotiations during the annual session can actually provide more opportunities for civil society to strategize and organize.

In summary, we see opportunities and limitations to this new approach and recognise that the intersessional negotiations are the most likely pathway forward, particularly given current budgetary limitations. Despite these potential opportunities, we conclude that this process of intersessional negotiations is likely to limit the political potential of the Committee by restricting participation and by conducting negotiations in a less open and transparent way. Further, we worry that by using the plenary as a space to endorse policy recommendations, rather than to negotiate them, the CFS is likely to transition away from a space where politics takes place towards a depoliticised meeting place.

Changing Representation of Actors

The CFS reform saw an explicit prioritization of civil society voices not only in plenary but also in the Advisory Group. This decision was justified not only by the argument that these actors best represent those most affected by food insecurity, but also in recognition of the diversity across civil society and challenges related to limited resources. Post-reform, the active organisation and participation of the CSM served to further maintain this balance of power. In recent years, however, the governance tools designed to maintain this balance of power amongst participants have been put under strong pressure, with implications for politics at the CFS.

One of the direct causes of this pressure has been the rapid development of the PSM, which has grown in size since the reform and is now very active in policy processes and side events.⁴ The growth of the PSM can serve to enhance politics at the CFS insofar as a broader range of diverse and even antagonistic views are represented. We would welcome this. However, we see that in practice, the PSM is using its influence to restructure the participation structure of the CFS in ways that reorder the balance of power away from the prioritization of civil society. At CFS 43 (2016), the PSM sought parity with the CSM in terms of the number of seats on the Advisory

⁴ As McKeon (2017, n. 11) notes “[o]ne of the six key unresolved issues at the very eve of adoption of the reform [of the CFS] was whether private sector associations should be full participants or observers. Only strong insistence by the US pushed them into the participant category.

Group. Further, the PSM supported efforts of the World Farmers Organization (WFO)⁵ in a call for a farmer's mechanism (like the existing CSM and PSM) which would facilitate the explicit participation of farmers' organizations in CFS activities. The PSM and the WFO argued that farmers were not adequately represented in the CFS. As a result, the WFO secured *ad hoc* status in the CFS Advisory Group, shifting the balance of power in the Advisory Group in favour of the private sector. Through our fieldwork, we have observed a high level of coherence, collaboration and cooperation between the PSM and the WFO leading to very little distinction between their positions and the content of their interventions (Duncan and Alves Zanella 2016a). Further, in the recent evaluation of the CFS, evaluators noted that they were "not persuaded" by the arguments advanced by the WFO and the PSM on the need for a farmers' mechanism. More specifically, evaluators did not agree that farmers were not well represented in the CFS "as there are farmers in both [the civil society and private sector] mechanisms" (Bester et al. 2017, xix). Thus, while the space for doing politics at the CFS remains, there are clear efforts underway to shift the balance of power away from civil society and towards "parity" between civil society and the private sector.

At the heart of these trends are divergent views on the virtues and dangers of multi-stakeholder dialogue. The CFS has declared itself to be a "multistakeholder platform that enables all viewpoints to be considered" (CFS 2011). However, at CFS 43 (2016), the CSM made strong statements contesting this vision, and arguing that the CFS should not aim for multistakeholder governance, but rather "multi-actor governance" (Gaarde 2017; McKeon 2016). For many in the CFS, the term 'stakeholder' alludes to the idea that all stakeholders share the same stakes, thereby ignoring power dynamic, impacts and mandates (Duncan and Alves Zanella 2016b; Gaarde 2017). By contrast, CSOs proposed the more political notion of multi-actor governance that differentiates relations of power and prioritises, as do CFS rules, the voices of those most affected. For the CSM, the term multi-actor also emphasizes that while all members and participants have the right to discuss and contribute, only states have the right to decide and can therefore be held accountable (CFS 2009b).

The Changing Role of Human Rights

The use of human rights (as a frame or approach) can be both politicizing and de-politicizing. On the one hand, social movements and civil society increasingly turn to human rights as a political tool that helps legitimize their claims by stressing the universalism and urgency of their cause (Claeys 2014). At CFS, for example, CSM actors have framed their claims in human rights terms to call for increased participation of those who are most affected or marginalized in policy making processes, and to emphasize governmental accountability (as human rights place positive obligations on the state to take particular actions and negative obligations to refrain from taking others). On the other hand, as human rights gain more traction as basic and fundamental grounding for policy making, and are increasingly mainstreamed and codified in ways that do not necessarily challenge existing power structures, they are at risk of losing their subversive/political potential (Stammers 2009).

At the CFS, human rights have had an interesting and varied trajectory. The CFS reform document explicitly laid out a role for the CFS to promote and work towards the realization of the right to food as a means of achieving a

⁵ The World Farmers' Association is an international organization of farmers. The organization represents "nano, small, medium and large-scale farmers" and advocates "on behalf of farmers in global policy forums" in an effort to "create the conditions for the adoption of policies aimed to improve the economic environment and livelihood of producers, their families, and rural communities" (WFO 2017)..

“world free from hunger” (CFS 2009b).⁶ This emphasis on the right to food was the result of strong involvement and insistence by civil society actors. Despite inclusion of human rights in the reform document, the role of human rights as a basic policy making frame at the CFS has been increasingly contested, suggesting a politicized function for human rights, albeit an often frustrating one for civil society groups who constantly need to reassert it. One example relates to the position that Russia has taken over the past few years.⁷ Russia has frequently voiced disapproval of including rights-based language into CFS policy recommendations, or the recognition of human rights in CFS outputs, stating that human rights fall under the ambit of other UN agencies, namely the UN Human Rights Council, and not of the Rome based agencies, such as the CFS (CFS 2017a Appendix D). While Russia has not blocked consensus to date, its statements weaken the rights-based approach within the CFS. At CFS 44, the US gave indications that it may reject language on women’s rights (opting for referring only to “women’s empowerment” and “equality”). This prompted the CSM to engage in significant efforts to protect ground already won. In the end, the US did not red line language on women’s rights, but having to address this potential threat considerably limited the CSM’s ability to move its agenda forward.

Over the last years, we have also observed increased references to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, at the expense of human rights as basic and fundamental grounding for policy making. The SDGs have become a repeated framing rhetoric for states, international organizations and the private sector mechanism in their plenary interventions. While the preamble of SDGs does contain some rights-based language, this language is not translated into the goals themselves, despite important efforts put into the SDG process by the human rights community. In SDG2 for example (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture) human rights, and the right to food, are not mentioned. It is worth recalling here that the human rights and SDG approaches are very much at odds with one another. The SDGs consist of staggered targets and indicators (i.e. practices associated with de-politicization) aimed at measuring progress towards the 17 goals. In contrast, a rights-based approach represents a longer-term and more structural approach to addressing food insecurity and malnutrition that places states as the primary duty bearers (rather than a multi-stakeholder platform), encourages the adoption of legislation and national policies, and calls for the establishment of recourse mechanisms to hold the state accountable. In our view, the increased prominence of SDGs is having a depoliticizing impact on the CFS negotiation space as it shifts practices towards technocratic benchmarking rather than addressing structural concerns and ensuring participation of the most marginalized.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we reviewed the reform of the CFS and its reform roles. We identified coherence, convergence and intergovernmentally negotiated policy products as central objectives of the reform of the CFS. We also argued that the technical roles ascribed to the CFS were ill-conceived and poorly supported, acknowledging that this has fostered some scepticism around the utility and “value-added” of the CFS. An examination of the mechanisms

⁶ The Voluntary Guidelines for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security were adopted by the 127th Session of the FAO Council in November 2004. At the time, the CFS was identified as the place where states “could report on a voluntary basis on relevant activities and progress achieved in implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on the progressive realization of the right to adequate food” (FAO 2004).

⁷ Russia is not alone. Canada and the United States for example have also rejected human-rights language at the CFS (Duncan 2015, 197).

and processes of policy negotiation revealed the CFS to be a space where diverse participants and perspectives can meet, be heard, and influence outcomes, and where political contestation can take place.

We have shown that at the heart of the reformed CFS is the implementation of a novel approach to participation that opens intergovernmental negotiations to non-state actors while simultaneously taking an explicitly normative position on the need to prioritise the voices of those most affected. This stance has been backed by mechanisms and processes that until now, have ensured a stronger voice for civil society (conforming to the multi-actor approach). Again, this was not a random occurrence. Civil society organizations have made explicit attempts to politicise participation in food security policy and demanded the prioritization of the voices of those “most affected”. Nowhere have they been more successful within formal intergovernmental policy organizations than through the reform of the CFS. Yet, we have also shown how the potential for politics in the CFS is under threat by the shift from plenary negotiations to intersessional negotiations, by the strengthening of the private sector presence and its effort to balance participation with that of civil society, and with the aligning of CFS activities and outcomes with the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

We conclude that this reformed Committee has the potential to challenge the status quo that sustains existing relations of power and influence (Duncan and Claeys 2018). It is thus not surprising that powerful actors are cautious, even antagonistic, about the CFS. However, we argue that participation, particularly of those most affected, and debate, are fundamental to the future of food security and that in turn, the CFS is worth defending.

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