



REPORT

Virtual CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION prior to the FAO'S 32nd REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE (ERC) 21-23 October 2020

The CSO Consultation was aimed to strengthen linkages among key civil society regional networks/organizations, to improve coordination between different CSO platforms and networks in the region, to increase participation of CSOs at the FAO Regional Conference for Europe and broaden the range of civil society actors engaged in FAO's work at regional and national levels. As agreed, in frame of the policy discussions, different stakeholders presented their views, approaches, and opinion related the issues in the agenda. The CSO Consultation successfully fulfilled the aim to increase national and regional consultative mechanisms with the involvement a variety of CSO constituencies in order to act as an interface for policy discussion and implementation at regional, sub-regional and national levels.

This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic CSO Consultation has been held virtually. Based on this change and the need for a better discussion and participation, the ad-hoc steering Committee of the CSO Consultation has decided to hold two prior preparatory workshops open to the CSOs in the region, on 5 and 8 October 2020.

Ad-hoc STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE CSO CONSULTATION

The Secretariat of the Facilitation Committee of the CSOs in the Region (ECVC), by signing an LoA with the FAO REU office took the responsibility to make a call to the social movements from different constituencies, on behalf of the Facilitation Committee of the CSOs in the Region. The ad-hoc Steering Committee was composed by:

- *Elene Shatberashvili / Ramona Dumunicioiu*, European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)
- *Rodion Sulyandziga*, Centre for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North
- *Fernando Garcia*, European Shepherds Network (ESN) European Chapter of WAMIP - The World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples
- *Aida Jamangulova*, Agency of development Initiatives (ADI)
- *Andrea Ferrante*, Schola Campesina
- *Judith Hitchman*, The International Network of Community Supported Agriculture (URGENCI)

The ad-hoc Steering Committee was composed by mid-January 2020 after receiving responses from the social movements mentioned above, with the designated names to take part in the ad-hoc Steering Committee for the CSO Consultation and held the first face to face meeting in Budapest on the 4rd March in order to discuss and develop the Call and the draft Agenda of the Consultation.



Yet in that meeting due to the increasing risk of the COVID-19 pandemic, after holding a meeting with FAO REU responsible officers in Budapest, it was decided to delay the process and postpone the CSO Consultation to 3-4 May 2020. The announcement was made both by e-mail and by using social media on 11 March 2020. Following this postponement with mutual agreement with FAO, the CSO Consultation was postponed one more time on 1 April after the decision of the Director-General of FAO, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and discussion with the Regional Group. The dates were postponed to the second half of 2020 and this is also announced to the CSOs in the region along with the already registered participants.

For the region Europe and Central Asia, ECVC served as the secretariat of the ad hoc Steering Committee of the regional CSO Consultation process. This ad-hoc Steering Committee facilitated the participation of the various organizations and constituencies in the CSO Consultation in the region. The Call and the Draft agenda in 6 languages (EN, ES, FR, RU, TR and MON) were shared by the European and Central Asian networks like within the Nyéléni ECA participants list and also within the members lists of the social movements and organisations. The call and the draft agenda was also shared at the website of the IPC <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/postponement-of-the-consultation-of-the-civil-society-organizations-of-europe-and-central-asia/> and also at the Facebook page of the Nyeleni Europe, together with the websites of the organisations of constituencies. The deadline was given to the public to send an interest letter to the address which was designated for the Consultation: info@nyeleni-eca.net. The Secretariat was using the e-mail address to communicate with the applicants and report on the applications to the ad-hoc Steering Committee.

The selection was done on the criteria for participation and the ad-hoc Steering Committee held the discussions based on the registrations.

PARTICIPATION in NUMBERS (Participants lists – Annex II)

Number of total participants	:54
Delegates	: 34
Observers	: 20
Women delegates	:20
Men delegates	:14
Western European delegates	: 13
Eastern European delegates	: 10
Central Asian delegates	: 11



AGENDA FOR CSO CONSULTATION in prior to the FAO 32nd REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE (ERC)

The Agenda of the CSO Consultation was prepared based on the FAO Regional Conference draft agenda. The two main agenda points of the FAO Regional Conference were:

1. Sustainable food systems and healthy diets in Europe and Central Asia
2. Solutions for Youth, Employment and Developing Rural Areas in relation to the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UN DFF)

Other Conference Agenda items that were discussed, were:

- UN Food Systems Summit (UN FSS) 2021
- FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative: a New Approach
- Overview of FAO's Strategic Objectives Programme
- Innovation and Digitalisation
- United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

During the Consultation on 21 and 22 October, in the afternoons webinars were held, again open to a wider participants of the CSOs.

On 21 October, a webinar was held on: A food sovereignty agenda for the youth; The implementation of UNDROP in the Region ; Agroecology: the way forward after the COVID crises. Key-note speakers were: Ramona Duminićiu (Eco Ruralis / ECVC) and Joanna Bojczewska (Nyéléni Polska)

On 22 October, the last webinar was held on: The impact of corporate concentration on food systems in the Region: the role of Digitalisation. Key note speakers were Sofia Monsalve (FIAN International and Tom Wakeford (ETC Group).

Another agenda item which is not related with the FAO Regional Conference Agenda but related to the future of the CSOs follow up actions on the decisions of the previous CSO Consultation was "The priorities of the Nyéléni ECA Food Sovereignty Network and the next steps as Nyéléni ECA network linked to the FAO programme and linked to other CSO processes

As Civil Society Organisations (small-scale farmers, pastoralists, fishers, indigenous peoples, agricultural and food workers, consumers, women, youth and NGOs) from across different regions, we are the rights-holders and active members of the food system. Through our collective efforts, we work to guarantee the right to adequate food – especially in difficult times such as these.

This CSO Consultation is indeed held in times of great uncertainties and challenges for the region and for the whole world. This pandemic is aggravating pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems. It has and continues to push many rural and urban people in our region into severe financial and food insecurity and poverty.



Women are the ones who generate local knowledge, build and shape social justice, promote our respective and varied identities and cultures, and strengthen the vision of a new society founded on gender relations based on dignity, justice, equality and equity. Despite the fact that they are vital, and that they have been sharing and transmitting our knowledge for centuries, they still face discrimination, violence and exploitation for profit; there are still unequal opportunities to education. Their economic, social, legal and political rights are not fully recognized, and public policies fail to guarantee our equal social and economic participation. Their rights of access to land, support services, financial and economic resources and legal recognition are minimal. In spite of this, they represent the majority of food producers and continue to do unpaid essential food-related care work such as processing, preparing, storing and seed saving, Young women are losing their lands, their territories and their natural resources as well as their work. This is a result of displacement and forced migrations, especially with the current deepening global multiple crises. Today, the first of these global crises is the COVID-19 pandemic.

Daily waged workers - both migrant workers in the field and in food chain processing units - often have no social protection when they fall ill in both Western Europe and other countries in our region. ILO has clearly pointed out that there are increased violations of workers' rights, with a particular focus on migrant and agri-food chain workers. This is echoed by the erosion of the Human Right to Food and many other rights (housing, health...) in many of the States in our region. The restrictions imposed to respond to the pandemic have and continue to affect the livelihoods of many small-scale food producers, be they farmers, fisherpeople or pastoralists. This is also particularly true for Indigenous Peoples.

In addition to these health issues, there has been increased political violence and political instability and criminalisation of people's resistance in some parts of our region, including war. We condemn war and call all States of our Region to contribute to peace-building based on social justice. War is destructive for all life: humans, animals, plants and for the planet. War, instability and oppression are particularly brutal for agriculture. This obviously affects food production and supply chains, and presents special risks to small-scale food producers in these zones as well as to urban poor. Food security is linked to peace, and food sovereignty to peoples' right to determine their own food systems and their right to adequate and culturally appropriate food and nutrition. This must be prioritised in our region.

There has also been a documented evidence-based increase in domestic violence affecting mainly women and also children during the pandemic, in both urban and rural areas during strict periods of lockdown. Lack of support for elderly and disabled people has also been identified across the region!

There is a need for the democratization of our societies and full participation of youth in political and decision-making processes. We must ensure that everywhere in society, youth should be able to develop leadership skills. In our region we need holistic policies for the integration of youth in rural areas based on the democratization of access to land, and the creation of direct employment, access to local and territorial markets, housing and food production that offers full rights over land, that recognises the legal rights of Indigenous Peoples, peasants, and other people working in rural areas, that includes the right to life and adequate standards, the right to land and territory, seeds, productive resources, markets, information, justice and equality between women and men.



We need the Decade of Family Farming and the Decade of Nutrition to be considered as unique opportunities for policy coherence and governmental commitment based on human rights' obligations and for these two initiatives to be more than a mere formality. These two Decades must be considered as a real opportunity for ensuring policies and public investments that benefit and support small-scale food producers and family-owned small-scale farms, in rural and urban communities across the Region as well as the access to healthy food and nutrition for all consumers, both urban and rural.

Food banks are witnessing an up to 40% increase in demand. School closures last spring meant that many children have been deprived of their school meals, often the only source of a healthy meal in their day. There have been and continue to be massive job losses due to the resulting economic crisis that are leading to homelessness and inability to buy healthy food. This lack of healthy food in turn leads to weaker immune systems and greater risks of developing underlying health conditions which in turn means that people are less able to resist if and when they catch Covid-19. The major underlying health conditions that make people vulnerable to the Covid-19 pandemic are industrial food related Non-Communicable (NSDs) diseases such as heart conditions, diabetes as well as malnutrition, obesity, and under-nutrition – lack of minerals and vitamins (C and D).

The prioritisation of trade and international markets to the detriment of local markets and small food producers, have and continue to be aggravating factors.

Several studies by FAO and the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism have clearly shown that short food chains and territorial food systems have proven to be the most resilient. At local level, direct supply chains between producers and consumers (such as Community Supported Agriculture, consumers cooperatives, urban-rural connected direct sales mechanisms, etc) were authorised to continue during the pandemic all over the world. In many cases existing partnerships were extended to include larger groups of local producers to help consumers and especially the urban poor to access fresh healthy food (there was a several hundred percentile increase in demand during the earlier stages of the pandemic with the first series of lockdowns) and ensure that producers could continue to sell their produce and access markets. And although demand has fallen back, contractualised sales of vegetable boxes from producers to consumers has increased by an overall 20%. This can be considered as part of the social dimension of the 10 Elements of Agroecology that includes solidarity economy, with different price mechanisms and support from Local Government to enable access to healthy affordable food for all, even in times of Covid-19. This needs to be based on farmer-led prices to ensure they have decent livelihoods. We clearly believe that we need to promote all aspects of agroecology as part of the Covid-19 response by the UN institutions and States as well as Local Governments and integrate our Covid-19 response into the food systems and nutrition discussion in a way we have not yet done.

This is why it is so important to give greater support to local food systems innovations and facilitate the networking of those experiences at regional level, in order to overcome the multiple environmental, social and economic crises that we are facing.

For the purpose of surmounting these challenges we need a drastic paradigm shift from a trade- to a rights-based approach for food and agricultural policies – as the trade approach has been proven to fail many times at different levels in the region. This is why the dissemination and implementation of both UNDROP and UNDRIP at Regional, national and local level is crucial.



Moreover, with the imminent approach and ambivalent welcoming of the digitalization process, we also need to draw more attention to the question of ownership of the food producers' and Indigenous Peoples' data, as it is currently being grabbed from them without their prior or informed consent – this needs to stop! We need to immediately halt all on-going data-grabbing from smallholder food producers, and implement a strict regulatory framework that will allow them to benefit from the digitalisation processes to which they choose to adhere. Moreover, these processes should be community owned.

In light of these elements, the next steps Nyéléni ECA proposes in the Region are the following:

First of all, we will establish and widely share a regional hub of convergence on innovative experiences of local food systems based on food sovereignty and agroecology in our networks paying special attention to and emphasizing gender and youth.. We believe it is extremely important to share knowledge and experiences to inspire and empower food producers, as well as connecting them at regional level.

Secondly, we will continue to raise awareness of the UNDROP, the UNDRIP, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure (VGTT) and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines) in the region and also around the world and within institutions, while strengthening the link between human rights and food and agricultural issues, and influencing public policies in support of small-scale sustainable producers. We are committed to working towards transparent and inclusive legislative and further implementation processes, with a strong focus on the rights holders – small family farmers, peasants, fisher people, pastoralists, other people working in rural areas, and as well as the Indigenous Peoples overall right to adequate and culturally appropriate food and nutrition.

Thirdly, we plan to launch an Observatory on the criminalisation of food producers' leaders and their organizations – as all too often the crimes and repression against them are not recognised or sufficiently followed up, leaving them without justice being served on those who have persecuted them.

Fourthly, we will promote the convergence of different actors (including organizations and individuals outside the food sovereignty movement) to protect small-scale food producers' and Indigenous knowledge from data grabbing, and enhance food producers' and Indigenous Peoples digital sovereignty.

Our recommendations are the following:

A. Sustainable food systems and healthy diets in Europe and Central Asia

1. Democratic governance of Food Systems.

A. We call upon States to guarantee meaningful participation of small-scale food producers including all their constituencies (peasants, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolks, food

And agricultural workers) in the decision making for food and agriculture at all levels, through a transparent, inclusive and accountable process, that responds to the needs of local communities and consumers. The small-scale food producers participation is fundamental in the democratization of food systems. In addition, it needs to foster participation of all the stakeholders involved, including consumers, local authorities, civil society and experts in the field, based on transparent rules of engagement.

- *Related to the recommendation for action 3, 5.*

B. We also call upon States to maintain a leading role in food systems and protect them against conflicts of interest. States should ensure transparency in their actions and establish clear frameworks and mechanisms through which they can be held accountable by their people for decisions and actions taken in relation to food systems. At the same time, they should establish clear regulations and accountability and transparency frameworks for holding private actors, including corporations, accountable for actions that undermine human rights, in accordance with domestic and international law.

- *Related to the recommendation for action 4.*

2. *Policy coherence with Human Rights obligations in Food Systems.* States must recognise the right to adequate food and nutrition as being closely interconnected with other human rights such as the human right to water, health, a healthy environment, the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, the rights of workers and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The instruments, particularly the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas (UNDROP) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) are fundamental for guiding the process of transformation of food systems, an objective proposed by FAO REU to governments in our region. States should also promote and mainstream women's rights through public policies and actions regarding food systems and sustainable, healthy diets. The human rights-based approach is timely and urgent, if we are to build stronger social objectives for public policies.

- *Related to the recommendation for action 5, 8.*

3. *Importance of local and resilient food systems.*

A. States should acknowledge the diversity of food systems and provide appropriate and balanced support for all of them, in order to ensure food security in our region.

It is essential to differentiate between food systems based on their specific drivers, obstacles, limitations, vulnerabilities, impact and many more key elements. Largely, these food systems can be categorized into two dominant types:

- a) the industrial food system;
- b) the local, agroecological, Indigenous, traditional food systems.

Each of these food systems receive different recognition and support through public policies. The industrial food system receives disproportionate support, to the detriment of local food systems. This generates inequalities at all levels, violations of the rights of workers and peasants, social and food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. It also aggravates the climate crisis. These inequalities are pushing our region (and society in general) further from achieving the Agenda 2030 goals.



Ensuring a balance between food systems, increases their sustainability in general, and sets the scene for more diverse, nutritious, healthy and culturally appropriate food to be produced and distributed.

- *Related to the recommendation for action 1, 2, 8.*

B. Promote local and territorial resilient food systems. Localized agroecological food systems, short food supply chains that are based on the recognition and fulfilment of the human right to adequate food and nutrition, and the recognition of the positive contribution of small-scale food producers are key to building resilience at all levels. They are the ones that preserve and regenerate the environment, protect and increase biodiversity, produce nutritious, healthy, sustainable, diverse and culturally appropriate food and preserve traditional knowledge. Thus, sustainability does not only refer to the environmental dimension, but also to culturally appropriateness, equity and livelihood enhancement. The sustainability of local and territorial food systems must be supported through public policies, including support measures for local markets, infrastructure and public procurement.

C. The support for agroecology, as a practice, knowledge and a movement at all levels is essential. It needs to be integrated at policy level, financially, and research. The access to resources is fundamental, as this plays a major role in ensuring the resilience of local food systems, as well as contributing to building effective solutions to respond to the Climate crisis.

D. Access and rights to natural resources such as land, seeds and water for peasants, fisherpeople and pastoralists as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities, is fundamental.

4. Understanding diets. The concept of sustainable healthy diets needs to move beyond health. A broader debate needs to be fostered in our region at all levels, in order to respond to and include the different visions of different stakeholders, including the social, cultural and ecological dimensions of diets.

States should recognise and promote sustainable healthy diets, including local and traditional diets based on traditional food systems (such as traditional fisheries, deer herding etc.). This is essential for local communities and Indigenous Peoples in our region.

5. Understanding of innovation in food systems. The concept of innovation needs to protect the local and traditional knowledge that has historically fed our society. Currently there are significant attempts to capitalize on this knowledge, and to delegitimize local communities in decisions regarding innovation. The social role of technology and innovation and farmers' innovations need to be recognized, promoted and used as criteria that condition policy making.



B. Solutions for Youth, Employment and Developing Rural Areas in relation to the United Nations Decade of Family Farming

The term 'family farming' is vast and may include almost any agricultural model or method. It includes both small-scale and large-scale producers (with farms covering thousands of hectares), as well as small-scale producers who are entirely dependent on the private sector, through contract farming or other forms of economic exploitation. This is why small-scale food producers' organisations defend family farming in terms of peasant-based agroecological farming, as opposed to the large-scale, industrial farming model based on the use of agri-toxins and agri-businesses, that expel peasants and all small-scale food producers from their land, grab the lands on which they are working and living.

In our Region, rural communities as well as youth suffer forced migrations due to war, climate change and oppressive economic and social conditions. Land, seeds, aquatic resources, etc. are grabbed by extractive industries, including agribusiness, mining activities and the energy sector - including that of so-called renewable energy. While all these factors restrict the ability of youth - especially young women - to access land, mainstream sources also continue to spread the false notion that there is no future for the agrarian sector, and that prosperity can only be found in formal, urban employment. On the other hand, we are suffering from a depopulated, deserted countryside with an increasingly ageing population. We all agree that all these factors have direct and urgent consequences both in the present and for the future.

Governments must take actions to support and value peasant knowledge and ways of life on the land, and build and develop educational and cultural strategies to raise awareness and public perception of the social and cultural importance of small-scale food producers? Such programmes should also include training systems which are appropriate and designed for the needs of the young people to transition to agroecology and support and develop feasible options for the inter-generational continuity of farms.

We strongly believe that this Decade is a very important tool to promote public policies supporting family farming, provide momentum to rural life, and establish a strong focus on the inclusion of youth in farming, for both new entrants and children of the small-scale food producers. They need support, and building of positive consideration for the sector. We see Agroecology as a key way to end hunger and mitigate climate change. Small family farmers, including peasants, fisherpeople, pastoralists and Indigenous People, who jointly make up almost half the world's population, are capable of producing food for their communities and feeding the world in a sustainable and healthy way - and revitalize the rural areas and through local, circular, and solidarity economy.

We call on States for greater support for more young people who work for the realization of Food Sovereignty through a comprehensive position on Agroecology in rural areas, and we request that there be less financial and public support - as well in education and research - for industrial farming with more funding earmarked for youth and agroecology.

We struggle for the democratization of our societies and the full participation of youth in political and decision-making processes. We must ensure that young people are supported and able to develop leadership skills, both within our own organizations and in the institutions, We need to promote strong public policies that guarantee a future for youth and future generations.



- **CSOs RECOMMENDATIONS to FAO**

Hand-in-Hand Initiative

Civil society understands that the Hand in Hand (HiH) initiative is country-led and country-owned, and evidence-based as well as relying on multiple partnerships, including with the private sector. The objectives are to advance all three pillars of the SDGs: social, environmental and economic goals and especially to work towards achieving SDG 1 and 2. We can all agree that these goals are currently falling far short of meeting their objectives, as is SDG 13 on climate change and that 2030 is less than 10 years away. In this critical period of a global pandemic, the situation is further significantly aggravated by the multiple crises that are all too often also linked: agricultural and food processing/packaging workers and many consumers are daily waged; when they fall ill or their companies lay them off, their lack of income is instantly reflected in an inability to pay for food or housing.

Various studies (FAO and CSM) have already shown that short supply chains and territorial markets and local food systems have proven to be the most resilient and supportive of both producers and consumers. National, and even more so, Local Governments have indeed been at the forefront of the response to ensure that food that is produced is reaching those that eat it.

The fact that HiH is country-led and country-owned can be considered as either positive or negative, depending on the country's political positions and their willingness to dialogue with us as social movements... The fact that it will include Local Governments for the first time is something that Civil Society considers as very positive in terms of local/territorial food systems. If the approach is genuinely participatory, including at local level, and inclusive this would be very positive and interesting.

The fact that HiH also aims to be evidence-based can also be very positive. As social movements we perceive this as an opportunity to validate and continue the great body of work done by peasants, fisherpeople, pastoralists and Indigenous Peoples as well as by those academics working by their side who can demonstrate that agroecology in all its multiple facets is the way forward and can provide precisely the social, economic and environmental effects required to achieve SDG 1,2 and 13 as well as the preservation of agrobiodiversity that is so essential for our planet's survival.

For us, as social movements, it is indeed essential to strengthen these partnerships to achieve very quantifiable and evidence-based results of sustainable healthy territorial and local markets in line with the CFS policy recommendations on Connecting Small-holders to Markets. Local governments know their region best of all, can support sustainable local development in line with Regional Objectives ensure that healthy food is reaching those most at risk of being marginalised, including local public procurement policies for schools, and supporting territorial food sovereignty in general. This means that HiH needs to be based on a bottom-up rather than a top-down partnership approach. Local small-scale food producers can in this way be guaranteed their land rights, rights to preserve and reproduce their own seeds, and all small-scale food producers earn a decent living. This is also true for access of indigenous peoples, pastoralists, fisherpeople and pastoralists to their traditional



hunting and fishing grounds and grazing lands for those in our Region, as these are key issues, as is the need to work to preserve agrobiodiversity, both for soil and human health.

HiH is based on multi-stakeholder partnerships. If this is based on the partnerships that we as social movements wish to build, it could support a real paradigm shift in terms of social, environmental and economic partners. This should be based on the 10 Elements of Agroecology, including solidarity economy that includes co-operatives and social enterprises and community finance rather than anchored in international trade and neo-liberalism as an economic approach. This would lead to people-centred partnerships and shared community wealth rather than corporate greed and gain.

The issues of digitisation and global digital platforms are not always adapted to those in our movements. Food producer-led digital platforms and softwares that guarantee data ownership are the only kind of digitalisation of agriculture that can really benefit food producers; currently this is not the case and digitalisation is another form of data capture and grabbing from food producers and this question of data ownership is key. Family farmers, small-scale artisanal fisherpeople and pastoralists and all indigenous peoples have their own indicators that can not and should not necessarily be linked to such approaches. They are linked to agroecology; nothing can replace smelling what is in the wind, reading the water of the land as those who have lived there all their lives. Which is not a refusal of technologies, but a very different approach that will be examined in the segment of this meeting dedicated to this subject. For CSO constituencies it is essential to maintain control over the data relative to their own resources: land, water and seeds and fish stocks. This should not be interpreted as a refusal to engage with digitisation, but it needs to be appropriate to our constituencies needs and community controlled and owned.

Social movements of all our constituencies, farmers, fisherpeople, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, agri-food workers and consumers can all work jointly and in partnership with governments. We also need to pay specific attention to gender issues and to youth. We can collectively produce agreed evidence-based results, but on our own terms, not those imposed by corporations that would dispossess us of our collective knowledge. HiH can indeed support us, and we can continue to work fruitfully with FAO at regional level as we have done in the past; but it must also continue to respect our identities and approaches to agroecology and support our convictions that it is through our long and on-going collective efforts that we can reach the objectives of leaving no-one behind and ensuring the right to healthy nutritious food for all that we will achieve these goals.

Digitalisation and Innovation

- Innovation and digitalization are not the same. Digitalization is conventional and backward-looking if it is used as a technology to dispossess people from their resources and their knowledge; and to further concentrate economic and political power. FAO should commit to supporting innovation processes led by small-scale food producers and their communities with the purpose of making food systems sustainable, healthy and just.
- FAO should support small-scale food producers' efforts, in alliance with technological sovereignty initiatives, to assess on-going digitalization initiatives.



- FAO must promote equality and digital inclusion, as well as the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas in all its programs and initiatives related to digitalization (e.g. Hand in Hand Initiative, International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture etc). Recognition and protection of the individual and collective economic rights to data of Indigenous Peoples, peasants, fisherpeople, pastoralists, workers throughout food systems and consumers are of the utmost importance. Applying a precautionary principle to FAO activities in the promotion of digitalization in food and agriculture is key to halting data grabbing from small-scale food producers and Indigenous Peoples.
- FAO should contribute to establishing appropriate regulatory frameworks for the digital economy in the food and agricultural sector, in order to avoid monopolistic digital ecosystems and the concentration of digital power.
- Promote a convergence of different actors (including organizations and individuals outside the food sovereignty movement) to protect farmers and Indigenous knowledge from data grabbing, and enhance small-scale food producers and Indigenous Peoples' digital sovereignty by supporting policies and practices of the food producers' lead in initiatives on digital agriculture.

Strategic Objectives of REU

CSO contribution to FAO REU Regional priorities -20-21

1. Formulating effective policies, promoting digital innovation and facilitating rural transformation, with emphasis on smallholders and youth

A) Promotion and implementation of UNDROP and UNDRIP in the Region

We need a drastic paradigm shift from a trade- to a rights-based approach for food and agricultural policies – as the trade approach has been proven a failure many times at different levels in the region. This is why the dissemination and implementation of both UNDROP and UNDRIP at Regional, national and local level is crucial.

B) Digitalisation

Innovation and digitalization are not the same. Digitalization is conventional and backward-looking if it is used as a technology to dispossess people from their resources and their knowledge, and to further concentrate economic and political power. We will promote innovation processes led by small-scale food producers and their communities with the purpose of making food systems sustainable, healthy and just. (Recognition of traditional knowledge to be innovative is essential).

Promote small-scale food producers efforts, in alliance with technological sovereignty initiatives, to assess on-going digitalization initiatives.

Promote equality and digital inclusion, as well as the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas in all its programs and initiatives related to digitalization.

Recognition and protection of the individual and collective economic rights to data of Indigenous Peoples, peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralists, workers throughout food systems and consumers are of

utmost importance. Applying a precautionary principle to all activities in the promotion of digitalization in food and agriculture is key to halting data grabbing from small-scale food producers and indigenous people.

Contribute to establishing appropriate regulatory frameworks for the digital economy in the food and agricultural sector in order to avoid monopolistic digital ecosystems and concentration of digital power.

Promote a convergence of different actors (including organizations and individuals outside the food sovereignty movement) to protect farmers, fisherpeople, pastoralist and indigenous knowledge from data grabbing and enhance small-scale food producers and indigenous people digital sovereignty supporting policies and practices of the food producers' lead initiatives on digital agriculture.

C) Youth

- There should be an emphasis on access to land and other production-related resources for young people where there is no measure that tackles land concentration in the land-related policies despite the fact that the phenomenon of land concentration has increased exponentially, especially in Eastern Europe. States should facilitate access to land for young people, protect the soil and prevent the artificialisation of the land.
- In our region we need integral policies for the integration of youth in rural areas through the democratization of land, and the creation of direct employment, housing and food production that offers full rights over lands, recognises the legal rights of Indigenous communities over their territories, guarantees fishing communities access to and control over fisheries and ecosystems, and recognises the right of access to and control over livestock migration routes and pastures through the implementation of the Tenure Guidelines (VGGT)
- More support should be given to community owned and controlled technology - this is an important aspect where youth can contribute to the food producing communities. Nevertheless not only technological innovation should be promoted but also social innovations that are based on values that strengthen local communities, with specific attention to youth, women and the most vulnerable.
- Promote the full participation of youth in political and decision-making processes in order to ensure that youth can develop leadership skills. Strong public policies are called for to achieve this.

D) Local food systems and Agroecology

- Promote agroecology and community-based local food systems across the region.
- Support is required for more young people in the rural areas who work for the realization of Food Sovereignty through a comprehensive position on Agroecology.
- We ask for less financial and public support - as well in education and research - to be given to industrial farming and more to agroecology.

E) Programme to Support decent livelihoods for fisher communities :

- Facilitate direct sales mechanisms, access to local markets, and Community Supported Fisheries
- Support the creation of networks for small-scale fishers (as well as preventing the domination of value chain by contract buying and middlemen).

- Ensure the recognition and equal participation of fisherwomen and young generations and make their roles in pre-, during, and post-harvest more visible and equal.
- Create increased awareness of Small Scale Fisheries activities, identity and culture and strengthen the support by policy makers, civil society, and food sovereignty actors.
- Implement the Voluntary Guidelines on Small-scale Fisheries, including awareness raising and training of all concerned.

F) UNDF national plans

Promote UNDF national plans that includes A, B, C, D and E

- Initiatives in support of the 2022 UN International Year of Artisanal Fishing and Aquaculture (IYAFA) should be prioritised and developed. With FAO as the lead agency for the celebrating IYAFA, we are of the view it is of significant importance for the regional FAO office to work with us and the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department (FIAP) as part of the FAO on the implementation of the UN Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). We recommend for the FAO regional office to give priority to the Global Strategic Framework of the SSF Guidelines - the mechanism endorsed by the UN Committee on Fisheries in 2016 in order to guide the implementation of the SSF guidelines

Contribution to SDG 1,2,5,8,10,17

- **States** should consider the Decade of Family Farming and the Decade of Nutrition as a unique opportunity for policy coherence and governmental commitment. This commitment is based on human rights obligations and is not a mere formality. These two Decades must be considered as a real opportunity to ensure policies and public investments that benefit and support small-scale producers and family-owned small-scale farms across the region.
- **States should support** implementation and promotion of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure (VGTT) as well as the International Guidelines Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Guidelines) at national and local level, based on the States' human rights obligations.
- There needs to be a strong commitment of **States** for the implementation of the UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, which includes right to life and adequate standards of living, the right to land and territory, to seeds, information, justice and equality between women and men.

2. Food system transformation and support in exploring new markets through the alignment of trade, food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary policies to meet WTO commitments and promote value chain development

Contribution to SDG:1,2,5,8,12,17

- States must guarantee meaningful participation of small-scale food producers including all their constituencies (peasants, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolks, food and agricultural workers): • *Related to the recommendation for action 3, 5.*
- Acknowledge the diversity of food systems and provide appropriate and balanced support for all of them: • *Related to the recommendation for action 1, 2, 8.*
- States must continue to play a leading role in food systems and protect them against conflicts of interest: *Related to the recommendation for action 4.*

- ***States must uphold policy coherence with Human Rights obligations in Food Systems.*** The right to adequate food and nutrition needs to be recognized as closely interconnected with other human rights such as the human right to water, to health, to a healthy environment, the rights of women, the rights of children, the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, the rights of workers and the rights of indigenous peoples: *Related to the recommendation for action 5, 8*
- Acknowledging the diversity of food systems and providing appropriate and balanced support for all of them, in order to ensure food security in our region: *Related to the recommendation for action 1, 2, 8.*
- remote local and resilient food systems, especially localized food systems, short food supply chains that are based on the recognition and fulfilment of the human right to adequate food and nutrition and the recognition of the positive contribution of small-scale food producers.
- We call on States to support agroecology as a practice, knowledge and movement at policy level, financially. Research and access to resources is fundamental as it plays a major role in ensuring the resilience of local food systems, as well as contributing effective solutions to respond to the Climate crisis
- We demand the respect of access and rights to natural resources for peasants, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, such as land, seeds and water, as they are fundamental.
- ***On the question of the understanding of diets***, the concept of diets, sustainable healthy diets need to be considered beyond health. A broader debate needs to be fostered in our region at all levels, to respond to and include different visions of different stakeholders, including the social, cultural and ecological dimensions of diets.
- ***On the understanding of innovation in food systems***, the concept of innovation needs to protect local and traditional knowledge that has historically fed our society.
- Concerning the social role of technology and innovation, farmers' innovations need to be recognized, promoted and used as criteria that conditions policy making.

3. Promoting sustainable natural resources management and facilitating resilience in agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors, including mitigating and adapting to climate change

- Promote and engage initiatives on cultivated biodiversity and foster regional and national projects that strengthen the link between agroecology and peasants/farmers rights to seeds.
- Enable effective participation of pastoralist communities in nature preservation areas and facilitate the introduction and implementation of national laws for the protection of cattle droves and transhumance practices which act as bio-corridors. Support native livestock breeders associations and research and development programmes in the field to associate extensive pastoralism and landscape management.
- Implementation of guidelines on small-scale fisheries: To halt the high pressure created by marine intensive aquaculture and their link with industrial fishing in order to capture pelagic species from around the world by grabbing small-scale fishers' aquatic resources and turning them into fish meal and fish oil.
- **Indigenous peoples preservation of natural reserves programme**

Indigenous Peoples territories must be recognized as a separate land category that results in effective conservation and sustainable use.



Recognition and respect for customary sustainable use, including recognition and support for community-based initiatives, Indigenous food systems, and collective actions.

- Incorporation of Indigenous and local knowledge in risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms (LMOs)
- Integration of diverse biodiversity and cultural values into national and local sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes and incorporation into national accounting and reporting systems

Contribution to SDG:1,2,6,12,13,14

4. Addressing food insecurity and reducing all forms of malnutrition

Our overall contribution is the main way to address food insecurity and malnutrition in a holistic manner.

Although most food systems could theoretically be equitable and produce healthy diets

needed for optimal nutrition, they can also be shaped by the concentration of power and imbalances, which may not be inclusive and equitable. Some food systems are sustainable while others show their limits in terms of sustainability and inefficiency in natural resource utilization. The way in which they use labour and energy, leads to environmental degradation, water pollution, and the loss of agrobiodiversity as well as to patterns of excessive food consumption and food waste. The functionality of food systems and their ability to deliver healthy diets is influenced by a number of drivers which indicate that in order to improve nutrition, context-specific changes are needed, not only in agriculture and food policies, but also across multiple sectors and policy areas that address concerns such as national development priorities, economic policies, and social norms.

There have been and continue to be massive job losses due to the resulting economic crisis that are leading to homelessness and inability to buy healthy food. This lack of healthy food in turn leads to weaker immune systems and greater risks of developing underlying health conditions which in turn means that people are less able to resist if and when they catch Covid-19. The major underlying health conditions that make people vulnerable to the Covid-19 pandemic are industrial food related Non-Communicable (NSDs) diseases such as heart conditions, diabetes as well as malnutrition, obesity, and under-nutrition – lack of minerals and vitamins (C and D).

- **CSOs RECOMMENDATIONS to FAO and the States**

UN FSS

We are extremely concerned about the UN Food Systems Summit. Hunger and malnutrition continue to increase all over the world. We are confronted on a daily basis by the way in which extreme poverty especially affects small-scale food producers in rural areas. Furthermore, we have also had direct experience of how the current COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the horrific structural inequalities, discrimination, exploitation, racism, sexism and patriarchy in our societies, including in Europe and Central Asia.

There is nothing new in the fact that social movements and organised civil society, such as the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), of which Nyéléni Europe and Central



Asia is a member, have constantly denounced the structural inequalities and the industrial food system which are key factors that have led to the current crises. Our agenda for change did not begin with the creation of the 2030 Agenda. But what we observe and what we are confronted by is often the lack of political will and the increased influence of corporate power that are shaping our food systems.

At a first glance, the aims of the UNFSS seem to make sense in the current reality. However, the genesis of the Summit and its ongoing process show how much corporate power is shaping the path towards the Summit and therefore highlighting serious conflicts of interests. We are extremely concerned by the extent to which corporate power is shaping the path towards the summit. We have to highlight the fact that the UNFSS is the result of the partnership agreement signed in 2019 between the World Economic Forum and the United Nations. This opened the door and gave corporations preferential and deferential access to the UN system at the highest level in all fields, from food to health and beyond. The process towards this Summit represents a big threat to the UN multilateral system, while pushing for the promotion of multi-stakeholder governance in which corporate power will increase its influence within the UN System, risking the integrity of the UN including that of the FAO and threatening the protection and promotion of human rights.

The Committee on World Food Security (and consequently the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism) as the foremost international and intergovernmental policy platform on food issues, has been undermined from the beginning of the Summit process. At the same time, social movements and organised civil society have been deliberately excluded from the Summit process, while organisers are handpicking individuals to be called “champions”, “heroes” and so on. There is no clarity or transparent criteria for their selection, nor respect for or recognition of the principles of autonomy and self-organization of social movements and civil society.

The proposed Summit is not building on the legacy of the two previous World Food Summits. Instead, it risks undermining the 25 years of work in democratizing international decision-making in food and agriculture and a model of engagement that fosters and values the critical participation of those who are most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, while being the primary contributors to food security.

FAO:

We would welcome FAO allowing a transformative, bottom-up approach in the region that is not captured by corporations and that can still influence the global process in the framework of the UNFSS.

LIST OF SPOKESPEOPLE

5 CSO spokespeople from different constituencies proposed to and approved by the Consultation to represent the CSO Consultation 2020 at the 32nd FAO Regional Conference (ERC):

- Elene shatberashvili : ECVC/Elkana - Small holder constituency (farmers)
- Aida Jamangulova : ADI- Small holder constituency (farmers)
- Rodion Sulyandziga : CSIPN_Indigenous peoples constituency
- Dinora Azimova : Mohira Bonu – Smallholder constituency (pastoralists)
- Andrea Ferrante : Schola Campesina_NGO constituency

Secretariat:

- Olcay Bingöl : ECVC/ Nyéléni ECA