

CFS Report

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First of all, I have to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to the organizers of the event; the Government of Mexico, the Government of Hungary, Rare, IFOAM Organics International and CBD to make the side event #68 "Farming solutions with benefits for biodiversity and access to healthy, diverse and nutritious food" possible. When I received the invitation for the 45th meeting of the Committee on Food Security at FAO headquarters in Rome, I knew that it was a unique opportunity.



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The meeting of the Committee on Food Security (CFS) was very interesting since this organization is a platform to address the issues of food security and nutrition together with all stakeholders. Together, they consider the best options or alternatives to achieve the global goal of reaching zero hunger by the year 2030. These recommendations and the implementation of activities are linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is important to mention that the committee has its own structure determined by FAO regulations, but fundamentally allows it to receive contributions from all stakeholders at the global, regional and national levels. It consists of a Bureau and an Advisory Group, the Plenary, a High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) and the Secretariat. Currently the president is Mr. Mario Arvelo, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to FAO, IFAD and WFP.

This means that both the contributions of each country's delegation and the organizations that have a voice in the plenary, such as the mechanism of civil society and indigenous peoples and the mechanism of the private sector, can directly influence the voluntary guidelines that are provided by the CFS. This is extremely important since the level of discussion of the sessions is very high and the issues are discussed in a context more political than technical. Even so, each country has its own representatives with ample knowledge of the issues that are discussed and the committee has a panel of experts on the issues of food security and nutrition. The cultural diversity and the background of the people participating vary to a degree that it is somewhat difficult to think that such a diverse group can come up with specific recommendations. The negotiation in plenary has a lot to do with the specific potentials and challenges that each country faces, in addition to the varying preferences for types of public policies that the country creates internally to address these issues.

From my point of view, the diplomatic skills of the Chair to moderate the sessions should be recognized. Besides this, I have to mention that it is interesting to witness diplomacy within the dynamics of the plenary. It takes a person with well-defined criteria and objectives to moderate a session at such a high level; especially when the discussion lengthens or deviates from the important points. In addition to that, you must also have the sensitivity to identify the crucial points of each intervention to be able to take them into account. The way in which the discussion was developed in the CFS 45 gave several examples of what I mention, controversial issues such as the use of biotechnologies or the use of agroecology as the best option to fight hunger as well as mitigate the effects of change climate change and have more resilient agriculture.



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During the plenary sessions of the CFS, it could be perceived that many people were informed about the topics of the side events and were even attending these events; it was clear the CFS did not want to prolong the sessions to avoid affecting the side events. It was very interesting to be able to attend and listen to so many speakers with so much knowledge, with diverse backgrounds and working in different sectors; particularly because we all shared the common concern to generate proposals and communicate alternatives to reach the goal of Zero Hunger. Due to this, the range of topics of the side events was quite diverse: From agribusinesses and big players in the food market to empowerment of rural women and the involvement of young people in agriculture.

Despite sharing a common goal there can be many ways to propose solutions for the challenge we face. Each sector in each country represents a different context and exhibits different needs. Even if the challenge is big, I believe if the solutions in the field and the efforts of creating public policy are coordinated to obtain appropriate results for each case, then we can certainly achieve the objective.



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However, there were many points of view within the discussions both in the plenary and in the side events that take different stands based on the food production methods that they use or promote. This is largely due to the variety of strategies proposed to achieve zero hunger. Still, any strategy requires a holistic approach that must factor in elements such as climate change mitigation, prevention of post-harvest losses and food waste, empowerment of women and involvement of young people. This seems fundamental to me because the discussion must also include context-specific elements such as culturally appropriate diets and local production. To me it seems like the Chair of the CFS has a strong will to take the objective of zero hunger to a transversal position in which other sectors should contribute to this vision.

Fortunately, the side events were good to learn about different processes that are taking place around the world. They provided a platform for perspectives and visions on how we can make a transition in our value chains towards sustainable food systems. Public policies that promote biodiversity in agricultural activities constitute fundamental part of the solutions in the field. Our side event titled "Farming solutions with benefits for biodiversity and access to healthy, diverse and nutritious food" showcased efforts of our projects along with their results. I have to mention that I was grateful to meet the Deputy Director - General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (**FAO**) Maria Helena Semedo, who gave a keynote in our event. She mentioned, among other things, that FAO is committed to promoting sustainable farming systems that preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services.



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After the representative of the Government of Mexico expressed a few words and Gábor Figezky the Head of Global Policy of IFOAM-Organics International spoke about the principles and work that IFOAM does and also the background of the Solution Search: Farming for Biodiversity competition, it was my turn to talk about the work of Desarrollo Alternativo e Investigación and our experience hosting and attending the campaigning for conservation trainings of Rare together with IFOAM.

My presentation was focused on the evolution of our organization based on the work of Participatory Seed Dissemination as a strategy to strengthen the food security of at least 1,500 small-scale maize producers. Then we set up a couple of demonstration plots of a system called Maize Intercropped with Fruit Trees (MIAF) in order to diversify plots that have a traditional agriculture management but also to have crops that can be marketed as fruit trees, without

having to replace the traditional maize, beans and squash (Milpa) system. In this way, we work not only on food security but also food sovereignty also we promote that agroecology should function as a motor for the economic development of the plots and communities. This year we established 100 plots of MIAF of approximately 1 ha each in order to scale-up the project and we have had a good response from small scale producers; even one of our champion producers or "Pollinators of agrobiodiversity", as we like to call them, mentioned that the community has begun to value the effort of the farmers by increasing the economic value of these plots. Although our pollinator sold his plot of one hectare in \$ 200,000.00 MXN (\$10,000.00 USD Approx.) he did it because the normal value of a plot is \$ 50,000.00 MXN (\$2,500.00 USD Approx.); his strategy is to buy the trees again and establish the same system after having learned to manage the plot in an alternative way. Finally to finish the presentation, I made the call to think about strategies that can allow both adult and young farmers to have more income so that they are not forced to leave the field and can develop a dignified life in their communities, involve the women as a central part of the systems and that in our case they are the ones that directly influence the selection criteria for seeds. Finally, I highlighted the importance that these traditional systems have in the conservation and management of biodiversity, in addition to provide ecosystem services to humanity.



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Subsequently the Deputy Head of Department of the Hungaria Ministry of Agriculture, Levente Kőrösi, spoke of regulations on the conservation of biodiversity and the law in Hungary to avoid the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) in the country's production. Finally, the Stefano Padulosi, Senior Scientist of Bioversity International mentioned that despite having identified thousands of plants that are edible, our current food system uses few species to satisfy the diet of most people. In addition, there are species that have stopped being used but that are of primary importance to contribute to the food security of families in different countries. Undermined crops can also be an opportunity to generate agribusiness in rural areas. I have to mention that our moderator Ann-Kathrin Neureuther (Rare) did a very good job of leading the session.

I would like to conclude by saying that many of the solutions found through last year's Solution Search: Farming for Biodiversity, are focusing on contributing to the transition of our current food system into a sustainable food system. We can have the satisfaction that the actions we take are benefiting a large number of people around the world at the moment. We have to continue our work and it's important to communicate our results. Consequently, I am sure that we will see more attention from different stakeholders at the local, regional and international levels.