



Socially Embedded, Tailored for Change Data for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Food

Joint Statement on the Implementation of the CFS Policy Recommendations on Food and Nutrition Security Data

To make FSN data serve the needs of those who suffer from food and nutrition insecurity, in particular women, Indigenous Peoples, and other people in vulnerable situations, we propose the following recommendations to guide the implementation of the “CFS Policy Recommendations on Strengthening the Collection and Use of Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Data and Related Analysis Tools to Improve Decision-making in Support of the Progressive Realization of the Right to Food in the Context of National Food Security”.

The recommendations aim at addressing the structural causes of food and nutrition insecurity. It is essential that the collection and use of FSN data be accompanied by creating safe spaces in which FSN data can be discussed between duty bearers and rights holders.

- 1** Food systems transformation will be shaped by digitalization. We must use its potential in a targeted way to empower communities to become drivers of change. Digitalization needs an enabling environment and appropriate governance to support the progressive realization of the Right to Food.
- 2** Grassroots organizations, social movements, and civil society organizations are key actors in the design, collection, interpretation, and use of FSN Data. Food and nutrition insecurity results from social, economic, and political inequalities, often perpetuated from one generation to the next. Data aimed at progressively realizing the Right to Food must address and overcome these inequalities.
- 3** Communities must meaningfully participate throughout the entire lifecycle of FSN data. This involvement encompasses the conception and deployment of digital tools, identifying relevant data gaps, accompanying data collection, as well as interpretation, use, and sharing of results with community members. The key to enabling this process is capacity strengthening and providing adequate technical infrastructure and resources for all community members.
- 4** FSN data should serve to progressively realize the Right to Food, and empower people and communities to hold governments, the duty bearers, accountable.
- 5** Different types of knowledge are key to conceive and deploy digital tools for the collection and use of FSN data. Local communities, civil society organizations and their knowledge partners should collaboratively devise appropriate and responsive digital tools.

6 FSN data should be open and governed as a global common, requiring revised governance mechanisms. This is fundamentally important in a world where data and information play an increasingly significant role in generating private profits.

TMG Research gGmbH and partners have developed innovative digital approaches to support the collection and use of FSN data. These approaches support women and Indigenous Peoples to claim their land rights, support Water User Associations in operating under drought conditions, and enable food insecure urban communities to hold governments accountable. While they represent selected geographies and themes, these approaches demonstrate the power of socially embedded digital tools to support the transformation of food systems.

Recognizing the widespread impact of digitalization and the urgent need to counter the trend of rising global food and nutrition insecurity during times of multiple crises, we urge FAO Members and invite other actors to an exchange on these recommendations.

Rationale

The 2023 UN Secretary General (UNSG) Report on [“Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals”](#) paints a daunting picture: out of 140 targets with data records about 12% are on track; nearly half, though showing progress, are moderately or severely off track, while around 30% have either stagnated or regressed below the 2015 baseline. A detailed [analysis](#) by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) further underlines the slow progress on food and agriculture-related indicators.

Increased data capacity is one of the avenues that is being proposed to direct efforts to those who are in the need of support ([FAO 2023](#): VII). Yet, what exactly is the role of data to achieve the SDGs and their targets? The 2021 edition of [“The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World”](#) report finds that poverty and inequality are the “underlying structural causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms” (p.4). What is the role of more data to overcome these structural causes of food insecurity and malnutrition? Take the example of the beneficial effect of women’s access to natural resources. The causal links between women’s access to land and improved food and nutrition security are well established. Similarly, the reasons why women continue to be deprived of their legitimate tenure rights to land are well known. Is more data needed to address the cultural norms and prevailing power structures that lead to women losing their land? If so, what types of data are needed, and how will it be used in societal change processes?

TMG Research gGmbH and its partners firmly believe that, for data to become a lever of societal change, it needs to be embedded in an overarching theory of change. This theory of change cannot solely rely on increased data availability to bring about change. If this were the case, we would not find ourselves in the midst of a climate crisis, and we would not have to witness poor people continue to lack access to food. Given the scale of the challenge outlined by the UNSG, the calls for more data must be complemented by strategic analysis and a corresponding theory of change. The key question is: How can digitalization create an enabling environment for the progressive realization of the Right to Food.