



**AGROECOLOGY & FOOD
SOVEREIGNTY ALLIANCE**

Agroecology & Food Sovereignty Alliance

Submission to the Consultation for the HLPE on ‘Critical, Emerging and Enduring Issues’

Submitted to:

**High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the Committee on
World Food Security for the UN FAO (CFS)**

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We thank the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the Committee on World Food Security for the UN FAO (CFS) for initiating an inquiry into Critical, Emerging and Enduring Issues (#4). AFSA welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission, as well as all further opportunities to participate, via the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Organisation (CSIPM) in development of the Critical, Emerging and Enduring Issues (#4). We hope the HLPE of the CFS will facilitate robust and meaningful stakeholder engagement across all aspects of the agricultural and food sector, prioritising the voices of First Peoples, rights holders and those with lived experience within our food system.

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About the Agroecology & Food Sovereignty Alliance

The Agroecology & Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA) is a farmer- and First-Peoples-led civil society organisation working for socially just and ecologically sound food and farming systems. We centre the voices of First Peoples, small-scale food producers, and local communities in decision-making.

AFSA connects small-scale producers for farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, advocates for fair access to local markets and infrastructure, and pushes for scale-appropriate regulation at all levels of government.

We are part of a strong global food sovereignty movement through our membership in La Vía Campesina, Urgenci, and the IPC for Food Sovereignty, and we support the Australasian delegate to the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism at the UN.

Our vision is for agroecology-oriented farms to thrive, producing nutritious food through short, fair supply chains that protect human and planetary health. This includes recognising and promoting First Peoples' knowledges and custodianship of Country, and committing to decolonial futures for food and agriculture.

Context

AFSA welcomes the call for submissions on the Zero Draft of the Critical, Emerging and Enduring Issues (CEEI) for the HLPE of the CFS. Since the previous note in 2022, the global context has shifted dramatically, and our understanding of food system challenges must reflect these broader geopolitical, ecological, and technological transformations. What happens at the macro level—conflict, economic instability, climate disruption, and corporate consolidation—inevitably cascades down to the micro level, shaping the daily realities of farmers, First Peoples, workers, and communities on the frontlines of food systems.

The 2022 CEEI note was released in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, at a moment when the war in Ukraine was only beginning and digital technologies were rapidly expanding across food systems. By 2026, the global landscape has become even more volatile; these issues are 'enduring'. Conflicts have deepened, humanitarian crises have multiplied, and geopolitical tensions have intensified. As AFSA and allied organisations have documented, global power struggles increasingly play out through food and agriculture: fertilizer markets manipulated during conflict, commodity corridors disrupted or weaponised, and sanctions regimes that restrict access to essential inputs for farmers. These dynamics expose how deeply food systems are entangled with imperialist geopolitical interests, replicating the process of colonial dispossession, and how these costs of crisis are disproportionately borne by small-scale producers, workers, and communities, not by the corporations or governments that shape global trade and finance. The weakening of multilateral institutions and the erosion of international norms around human rights and the use of food in conflict further undermine the world's ability to respond collectively to these challenges.

These global patterns are mirrored in Australia. AFSA has long challenged the highly consolidated, corporate, industrial food and agriculture sector in Australia, which continues to dominate production, processing, and retail, while an export-driven agricultural model prioritises global commodity markets over domestic food security. Despite Australia's status as a major food exporter, many households struggle to access affordable, nutritious food, a contradiction rooted in structural inequities and policy choices. Corporate concentration in the supermarket sector has enabled unfair trading practices, downward pressure on farmgate prices, and

environmental and labour concerns, all of which undermine the resilience and fairness of the food system. Recent national policy processes, including the establishment of a National Food Council, have been criticised by civil society for privileging agribusiness interests and excluding the voices of small-scale farmers, Indigenous Peoples, and community food system actors. At the same time, ongoing failures to uphold the rights, sovereignty, and cultural value of First Nations peoples continue to weaken the foundations of a just and sustainable food system.

It is within this global and national landscape that AFSA, with the support of the Food Connect Foundation, submits its response to the Zero Draft. We emphasise the need for the HLPE to address the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, conflict, and corporate concentration through a coherent, rights-based, and accountable food systems approach; one that centres agroecology, food sovereignty, and democratic governance as essential pathways forward.

Responses to Guiding Questions Proposed for the E-Consultation

Q.1: Are the issues identified by the HLPE-FSN the most important issues affecting food security and nutrition, globally and in specific contexts?

The issues identified by the HLPE-FSN present a solid overview of the important drivers of food security and nutrition globally. However, AFSA would like to highlight two points around the cross-cutting issues of structural issues in food systems, and how food sovereignty can also serve as a frame to reimagine food systems at global, regional, national, and local levels. Despite the HLPE not wanting to create silos, their treatment as discrete themes risks reproducing the very fragmentation the report seeks to overcome. Climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, trade regimes, corporate concentration, digitalisation, and community agency are not parallel challenges; they are structurally interdependent. You cannot meaningfully discuss agroecology, agency, or equitable food systems without simultaneously addressing the corporate and geopolitical forces that shape land access, market power, input dependency, and policy space. Likewise, conversations on climate adaptation or the Rio Conventions become incomplete when they do not explicitly confront the economic and political interests that determine whose lands are protected, whose are commodified, and whose knowledge systems are marginalized.

By separating issues such as corporate concentration, trade, climate, and agency into different Sections, the Draft Note risks obscuring the power relations that bind them. This limits the ability of policymakers to understand why transformative approaches, including agroecology, territorial markets, Indigenous governance, and rights-based frameworks, plus more inclusive, democratic and equitable governance structures, struggle to gain traction. Addressing structural inequities, embedding accountability mechanisms, and conducting power analyses across all issue areas is essential if the HLPE is to support honest, coherent, and actionable policy guidance for food system transformation.

AFSA would add that food sovereignty itself provides a unifying framework through which these structural challenges in the food system can be understood and prioritised. The right to food cannot be fully realised without addressing the ability of people and communities to define their own food systems. Equally, while we recognise the addition of ‘agency’ (Section 9), greater emphasis is also needed on colonial legacies and ongoing forms of extractivism that shape food systems in many contexts, including Australia, as well as on

the role of public policy, public investment, and collective institutions in countering corporate capture and market dependency. Without these additional dimensions, the list of issues risks treating symptoms rather than confronting the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition.

Q. 2: Are there any other key issues that should be added and elaborated? If yes, please justify why they are “critical”, together with relevant literature and data.

Reflecting from a domestic level in Australia, there are two issues we would like to see added to or elaborated in the CEEI. These include i) transparent and participatory accountability and governance mechanisms, and ii) colonial legacies and First Nations rights and voice.

i) TRANSPARENT AND PARTICIPATORY ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

At the national level in Australia, accountability in food systems governance is often shaped by agribusiness and corporate influence. This has created significant barriers to the adoption, implementation, monitoring, and protection of CFS policy products - such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Progressive Realisation of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. While the Draft Note identifies corporate concentration, trade, and agency as separate themes, it does not fully address the extent to which national governance structures - underpinned by neoliberal paradigms - determine whether CFS guidelines are meaningfully adopted or actively sidelined by the national government^{1 2 3}. As such, there is an opportunity for the HLPE Draft Note to consider the impact of neoliberal paradigms on food systems governance at global and national levels, and how shifting to rights-based and food sovereignty paradigms can support transparent, participatory, and equitable food governance to ensure food and nutrition security for all.

The situation in Australia illustrates this emerging global challenge highlighted in the HLPE Draft Note. The establishment of a National Food Council - dominated by big agribusiness and food industry voices - has raised concerns about transparency, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and the exclusion of small-scale farmers, Indigenous Peoples, and civil society voices. This mirrors patterns seen in many countries, where export-oriented agricultural models and consolidated corporate power limits democratic participation and weakens the domestic uptake of rights-based food system policies.

This governance gap has direct implications for the CFS. The effectiveness of policy instruments such as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure Land, Fisheries and Forests, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food, and the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition depends on national-level accountability, monitoring, and public oversight. In the context of ongoing FAO reforms and current challenges in the multilateral system, the role of national food governance bodies in supporting transparent and participatory food system governance, as well as the risks posed by corporate capture of

¹ Chester, L. (2010) Actually Existing Markets: The Case of Neoliberal Australia, *Journal of Economic Issues*, 44:2, 313-324, DOI: 10.2753/JEI0021-3624440204

² Iles, A. (2020): Can Australia transition to an agroecological future?, *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, DOI: 10.1080/21683565.2020.1780537

³ Lockie, S. 2009. 'Agricultural Biodiversity and Neoliberal Regimes of Agri-Environmental Governance in Australia', *Current Sociology*, May 2009, Vol. 57(3): 407-426

such bodies, constitutes a critical and emerging issue that could strengthen the preparation of the CFS MYPoW 2027-2030.

ii) COLONIAL LEGACIES AND FIRST NATIONS' RIGHTS AND VOICE

A critical and enduring issue that warrants explicit inclusion is the impact of colonial legacies and ongoing colonial political and economic structures on food systems, particularly for Indigenous Peoples. In Australia, contemporary food insecurity and malnutrition cannot be separated from histories of dispossession, the disruption of Indigenous food systems, and legal and governance frameworks that continue to privilege extractivism, export-oriented agriculture, and capital accumulation over Indigenous sovereignty and custodianship. First Nations peoples have sustained diverse, climate-resilient food systems for millennia, grounded in Country, relational governance, and reciprocal responsibility. Yet current agrifood, conservation⁴, and trade policies routinely marginalise Indigenous land governance, food economies, and knowledge systems, while constraining self-determination and agency. Addressing food security without confronting these structural continuities risks perpetuating injustice. Recognising and supporting Indigenous food sovereignty, land rights, and governance is therefore fundamental to realising the right to food and to any genuinely transformative, rights-based food system agenda.

Q.3: All the issues are interlinked, however, for the purpose of analysis and focus, they have been presented separately. Please let us know if, in your view, some of the issues could be combined, or if the linkages between different issues should be further strengthened in the analysis.

Sections 2 and 3 address closely interlinked drivers of food insecurity including climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation, and could be linked as a way to also address the fragmentation of policy spaces that the HLPE seeks to overcome. Climate impacts cannot be separated from the ecological degradation and governance failures addressed under the Rio Conventions; together, they shape all six dimensions of food security and nutrition. Merging the Sections, without losing the importance of both climate and the Rio conventions, would allow the report to present a unified systems analysis and avoid duplication, while strengthening the coherence of recommendations across climate, biodiversity, land, and food systems.

Both Sections already converge on similar solutions: diversified and resilient production systems, secure tenure, rights-based governance, and the need to repurpose harmful subsidies. AFSA notes the mention of agroecology in Section 2, as a holistic approach that enhances climate adaptation, biodiversity, and soil restoration. Emphasising the role of agroecology and principles of food sovereignty also supports the cross-cutting objectives of the three Rio Conventions while supporting the right to food.

Accountability with relation to the Rio Conventions, and across CFS policy instruments, can strengthen the collective approach and support multilateral development. This then supports the national implementation, monitoring, and reporting that further strengthens the collective uptake of CFS policy instruments to address climate and ecological challenges, and improve both nutrition and environmental food system outcomes.

⁴ Büscher, B. & Fletcher, R. 2020. The Conservation Revolution: Radical Ideas for Saving Nature Beyond the Anthropocene, Bloomsbury

Inputs on the CEEIs outlined in Draft 0

I. SECTION 1: Transformation of food systems post-2030

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

AFSA acknowledges in the HLPE report the recognition that food system and nutrition failures are systemic and multidimensional, rather than sectoral or technical. Further, the recognition that power imbalances, corporate concentration and governance issues often drive food system outcomes, and that food systems are linked and independent with nutrition, climate, livelihoods, health and biodiversity outcomes. This section, however, does not sufficiently critique export-oriented agricultural models; capital accumulation is promoted over people and ecological health, and people's production and access to culturally sensitive, safe, nutritious food. Additional recognition needs to be made of the neoliberal policy frameworks (market realisation, deregulation, financial realisation), and how they constrain governments in food security and nutrition policy. The use of farmers as stakeholders rather than rights holders and system builders emphasises this. Export-oriented food systems undermine diets, livelihoods, Indigenous food systems and policy space, casting farmers as victims not rights-holders; without confronting colonial power, capital accumulation and corporate capture, transformation becomes technocratic.

Additional Questions:

- Q. How do export-oriented and corporate-dominated food systems structurally undermine food sovereignty, dietary quality, and agency at national and household levels?
- Q. How can Indigenous food systems, knowledge, governance, and sovereignty be recognised and supported as central pillars of post-2030 food systems transformation?

II. SECTION 2: Food Security and Climate Crises

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

The role climate change has played in multiplying the risks and challenges for food security and nutrition in Australia resonates with aspects referenced in Section 2. In such a large country, we relate to how this impacts groups and regions differently, with climate shocks disrupting production, supply chains, food availability and livelihoods. At an international level, Australia's fossil fuel exports also drive global climate change, often felt in countries in the Global South. AFSA would recommend the reframing of climate events not as external shocks, but as consequences of industrial, export-oriented food systems that are major drivers of emissions and ecological degradation. The point should also be made that industrial plantation agriculture (e.g. palm oil) not only contributes to higher emissions, but severely damages ecosystem integrity, undermining their capacity to cope with climate extremes (e.g. massive landslides in Sumatra and Sri Lanka after heavy rains). Current policy settings risk reinforcing corporate concentration, land dispossession, and the marginalisation of small farmers and Indigenous People's rights to the country.

AFSA would like to see additional emphasis on the potential indirect outcome of poorly designed climate responses that reinforce 'False Solutions,' framed around market-based mechanisms, productivity gains and carbon sequestration. These will only further entrench the corporate concentration of our agricultural sector and undermine people's right to food, land and water. AFSA believes that greater attention on how

agroecology and Indigenous knowledge and land management practices can support biodiversity, resilience, and ecological sustainability while supporting nutrition and social equity outcomes.

Key References:

- Yunkaporta, Tyson. 2019. *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Change the World*, The Text Publishing Company, Australia.
- Graham, M. & M. Brigg. 2021. *Relationalist ethical impulse amidst colonial violence*. <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/indigenous-settler-relations-collaboration/resources/videos/relationalist-ethical-impulse-amidst-colonial-violence>
- Maddison, S. 2019. *The Colonial Fantasy: Why White Australia Can't Solve Black Problems*. Allen & Unwin.
- Grey, S. & Patel, R. 2014. *Food sovereignty as decolonisation: some contributions from Indigenous movements to food system and development politics*, *Agric Hum Values* (2015) 32:431–444 DOI 10.1007/s10460-014-9548-9.

Additional Questions:

- Q. How do 'false solutions' in agriculture (e.g. carbon markets, climate-smart intensification) risk reinforcing land concentration, corporate control, and Indigenous dispossession, and how can rights-based, agroecological alternatives be prioritised?
- Q. How can Indigenous food systems, land governance, and stewardship practices be recognised and supported as central climate adaptation strategies for food security and nutrition, including in settler-colonial contexts such as Australia?

III. SECTION 3: The Three Rio Conventions

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

Section 3 identifies climate, biodiversity loss, and land degradation as interconnected threats to food and nutrition security, however AFSA believes this insufficiently addresses how colonial land tenure, extractive development, and weak implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure shape outcomes. In Australia, Indigenous land governance and food systems remain marginalised despite delivering proven biodiversity, climate, and nutrition benefits. Stronger attention to rights, tenure, and accountability is needed, particularly where the Australian Government pays so little attention domestically to CFS frameworks and policy products, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other multilateral products.

Key References:

- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0639en>
- International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) (2023) *People-centred assessment of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication: Asia and the Pacific*. Rome: International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty. Available at: https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SSF-Guidelines_Report_AP_web.pdf

Additional Questions:

- Q. How can the VGGT, Indigenous sovereignty, and FPIC be operationalised within Rio Convention implementation to ensure climate and conservation actions do not undermine food security and land rights, including in settler-colonial contexts such as Australia?

IV. SECTION 4: Geopolitical Uncertainty and Multiple Crises

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

At the time of writing, the Australian Government is mobilising its National Cabinet in order to address the supply chain disruptions occurring through the conflict in the Middle East. The resilience of our food, fuel and input supply chains is directly linked to conflict, geopolitical instability and polycrises; in turn, they are driving food and security outcomes, price volatility and the cost of farming livelihoods. Reliance on fossil fuel-intensive, globalised food and supply chains, particularly for countries that are import and export dependent, and the risks this poses for marginalised communities, requires more emphasis in the Draft Note. Equally, accountability mechanisms and acknowledgement that globalised, centralised food systems magnify geopolitical shocks, seen with the energy and price volatility in the current Strait of Hormuz blockades. Greater attention is needed on how decentralised, localised and people-oriented food systems can support food sovereignty, reduce fossil fuel dependency, and challenge the dominance of export-oriented, corporate-controlled food system models.

Key References:

- IPES-Food (2025) *Fuel to fork: What will it take to get fossil fuels out of our food systems?* Brussels: International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. Available at: <https://ipes-food.org/report/fuel-to-fork/>

Additional Questions:

- Q. How can strengthening domestic food sovereignty and local production reduce vulnerability to geopolitical shocks compared to reliance on globalised supply chains?

V. SECTION 5: International Trade

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

This Section reinforces the Australian Government's approach to agriculture, where international trade is central to our industrial agriculture, export agenda, and reflects Australia's long-standing support for multilateral trade frameworks such as the WTO. AFSA finds this framework troublesome, as research shows that trade liberalisation, export-orientation, and market concentration systematically undermine domestic food security, dietary quality, and farmer viability, as has been seen increasingly since the 1990s in Australia. In the words of McMichael, 'food sovereignty emerged as the antithesis of the corporate food regime and its (unrealized) claims for "food security" via the free trade rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO)⁵.

⁵ IPC (International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty). 2015. "Report of the International Forum for Agroecology, Nyeleni, Mali, 24-27 February 2015." <<https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Download-declaration-Agroecology-Nyeleni-2015.pdf>> accessed 5/6/21.

Where food security is concerned with ensuring peoples' right and access to food, it fails to consider the social, political and ecological dimensions of corporate-driven food systems. Through the lens of food security, techno-optimism informs the increasing digitalisation of agriculture and rise of genetically-modified organisms (GMOs), causing further social and ecological destruction and particularly impacting smallholders and Indigenous Peoples' land across the world.

AfSA challenges the framing that trade is neutral or a necessary mechanism for 'stability', rather than a political system that reinforces existing power inequities and either ignores or marginalised people's human rights. Particularly, the WTO Agreement on Agriculture has been a significant barrier to realizing the right to adequate food, and further constrains the state to effectively support localised, agroecological, and food sovereignty aligned principles. Another negative consequence of free trade is to privatise biodiversity (e.g. through patents on seeds), increasingly making it illegal for First Peoples and farmers to save, exchange or modify seeds from so-called protected varieties.⁶ As such, any assessment and formulation of policy responses related to international trade by the CFS must be grounded in human rights, to adequately address entrenched power imbalances within the global trade system that creates barriers to the realisation of the right to adequate food.

Key References:

- Edelman, M. 2024. *Peasant Politics of the Twenty-First Century: Transnational Social Movements and Agrarian Change*, Cornell University.

Additional Questions:

- Q. How can the CFS effectively reshape international trade rules to better protect domestic food systems, farmer and indigenous livelihoods and support the adequate right to food (rather than entrench export orientation, corporate concentration and dependence on volatile Global markets?)

VI. SECTION 6: Corporate Concentration

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

AfSA commends the HLPE for identifying corporate concentration as a structural driver shaping food systems and nutrition outcomes through market power, value capture, and its influence over food policy. However, this analysis needs to be deepened in order to highlight how concentration is produced, protected through trade rules deregulation, financialisation, and domestic policy choices, like with the Food Policy Council and its corporate focus in Australia. Corporate capture, and its links with land and resource governance, commodification of resources and the broader financialization of the agricultural landscape also erodes Indigenous Peoples' rights and land tenure, and small holder farming systems⁷. This needs to be reinforced in this Section.

⁶ Alianza Biodiversidad & GRAIN (2021) *UPOV: the great seeds robbery*. Barcelona: GRAIN. Available at: <https://grain.org/system/articles/pdfs/000/006/644/original/EI%20gran%20robo-ENG-6MAR.pdf>

⁷ International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development +20 (ICARRD+20) (2026) *Final declaration of the Second International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development*. Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 24–28 February. Available at: <https://www.foodsovereignty.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/DECLARACION-GOBIERNOS.pdf>

In Australia, corporate dominance across retail, agricultural inputs, land, water, and processing markets reinforces export-oriented production and marginalises less powerful actors in the food system. Export-focused agricultural policy, consolidation of meat processing, and prioritisation of global markets over domestic resilience are driving the closure of local abattoirs, concentrating power among multinational corporations and sidelining small-scale farmers, regional economies, and public food security goals. This dynamic is reinforced by growing foreign ownership and contract farming models that lock farmers into dependent relationships with processors and exporters. As access to abattoirs declines, farmers face higher costs, reduced autonomy, longer transport distances, animal welfare concerns, and diminished capacity to supply local markets, weakening rural livelihoods and community resilience.⁸

Given these significant challenges, AFSA would like to see the CEEI highlight how food sovereignty offers a pathway to confront these power imbalances by reclaiming control over infrastructure, markets, and decision-making, supporting decentralised processing, localised supply chains, and democratic governance of food systems (as also outlined in the ICARRD +20 Declaration).

Key References:

- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2025) *UN experts urge binding accountability for agribusiness to safeguard peasants' rights and global food security*. Press release, 16 October. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/un-experts-urge-binding-accountability-agribusiness-safeguard-peasants>
- IPES-Food (2023) *Who's tipping the scales? The growing influence of corporations on the governance of food systems, and how to counter it*. Brussels: International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. Available at: <https://www.ipes-food.org/report/whos-tipping-the-scales/>
- Jonas, T. (2025) *Where have all the abattoirs gone? How export is hurting local farmers*. Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA), 15 April. Available at: <https://afsa.org.au/where-have-all-the-abattoirs-gone-how-export-is-hurting-local-farmers/>

Additional Questions:

- Q. How does corporate concentration across land, water, finance, and food markets undermine Indigenous land rights, small-scale farming, and national food security, and how can public policy reverse these trends?
- Q. What governance and accountability mechanisms are needed to prevent corporate capture of land and food systems, including through strengthened tenure protections, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and rights-based food system governance?

⁸ Jonas, T. (2025) *Where have all the abattoirs gone? How export is hurting local farmers*. Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA), 15 April. Available at: <https://afsa.org.au/where-have-all-the-abattoirs-gone-how-export-is-hurting-local-farmers/>

VII. SECTION 7: AI and Digital Innovations

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

This section outlines the growing role of AI and digital technologies in shaping food systems, with claimed benefits for productivity, logistics, marketing, and governance. Organisations such as the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group), which monitors the impacts of emerging technologies on biodiversity, agriculture, and human rights, warn that new high-risk technologies - from synthetic biology to geoengineering - are increasingly promoted as solutions to climate change, hunger, and biodiversity loss, while precaution, social impacts, and equity are sidelined in the rush to deploy technocratic fixes⁹.

Rather than accepting these narratives, AFSA calls for a more critical framing of digitisation in food and agricultural systems. Digital technologies and AI are not politically neutral: ownership of data, platform monopolisation, and proprietary technologies tend to reinforce corporate concentration and deepen power asymmetries. In Australia, digital agriculture is largely driven by agribusiness and financial interests, often with insufficient safeguards to protect Indigenous data sovereignty, community control, and autonomy.

AFSA highlights how digitisation can exacerbate exclusion, dependency, and surveillance, particularly for small-scale farmers and Indigenous communities, through control over data, infrastructure, and decision-making systems. The largely unregulated expansion of AI, evident explicitly in conflict settings, demonstrates how these technologies can be deployed asymmetrically, creating real and immediate risks. In agriculture, weak accountability around AI threatens to accelerate land consolidation, erode traditional knowledge systems, and reshape food environments, while data extracted from Indigenous lands and practices can be appropriated in ways that undermine self-determination.

The material footprint of digitalisation further compounds these harms. Resource extraction to support digital infrastructure, including mining, energy production, and battery manufacture, increasingly competes with farmers and Indigenous peoples for land, water, and energy. In Australia, the rapid expansion of data centres intensifies pressure on scarce resources and drives continued investment in fossil-fuel energy systems. Claims that technology can “feed the world” obscure the reality that enough food is already produced to feed an estimated 11 billion people, and that small-scale producers supply around 70 percent of the world’s food using just 30 percent of agricultural land. As digitisation and AI are imposed across food systems without meaningful participation or consent, they must not displace food sovereignty approaches but be constrained by strong safeguards that protect collective decision-making, Indigenous and community control, and democratic governance of technologies and data.

Key References:

- ETC Group (2022) *Cashing in on the climate crisis through agricultural digitalisation: Emerging cases in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines*. Montréal: Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration. Available at: <https://www.etcgroup.org/content/cashing-climate-crisis-through-agricultural-digitalisation>

⁹ ETC Group (2022) *Cashing in on the climate crisis through agricultural digitalisation: Emerging cases in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines*. Montréal: Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration. Available at: <https://www.etcgroup.org/content/cashing-climate-crisis-through-agricultural-digitalisation>

- IPES-Food (2026) *Head in the cloud: Challenging the false promise of digital agriculture and cultivating innovation from the ground up*. Brussels: International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. Available at: <https://ipes-food.org/report/head-in-the-cloud/>

Additional Questions:

- Q. How can data governance and AI regulation ensure small-farmer and Indigenous data sovereignty, transparency, and accountability, while preventing the reinforcement of corporate concentration and control over food systems?
- Q. How do digital technologies and AI shape power, control, labour, ownership, and social relations in food systems—and do they reinforce or undermine food sovereignty principles?
- Q. What public, cooperative or other digital infrastructures can be promoted that support the autonomy and existing knowledge of agroecology, Indigenous food systems, and small-scale farmers, rather than extractive, profit-driven models?

VIII. SECTION 8: “One Health” as an integrating framework for food security and nutrition

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

On the surface, One Health seeks to supplement ‘the germ theory of disease with an ecosystemic theory: that the health of organisms in the field is relational (Zinsstag et al. 2015)’ (Wallace et al. 2019, 222). Yet, while the recent move to bring the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) into a Quadripartite with the World Health Organisation (WHO), FAO and World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) to better anchor One Health initiatives in ecosystem-based approaches is welcome, the approach still fundamentally fails to examine the circuits of capital on which novel zoonoses and antimicrobial resistant (AMR) bacteria are hitching an ever-speedier ride (Wallace 2016; 2021). This failure to examine the role of ownership, concentration, trade, infrastructure, and supply chain length has to date delivered little more than disease emergence and alarming increases in AMR (IPES Food 2020; Dentico et al. 2022). When seeking to integrate One Health as a framework for food security and nutrition, attention should be focused on the role of upstream, holistic, and relational prevention measures.

Key References:

- Jonas, T., Trethewey, B. Agroecology for Structural One Health. *Development* **66**, 238–244 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41301-023-00385-0>

IX. SECTION 9: Affordability of healthy and nutritious diets to ensure food security and nutrition

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

The focus on affordability of health and nutritious diets to ensure food security and nutrition is a critical and enduring issue, and AFSA commends the HLPE for including this in the CFS MYPoW 2027-2030. There is an opportunity to strengthen this section by interlinking with other key issues identified, including international trade and climate crises. International trade is a key driver impacting access to healthy diets. The proliferation seen over the last two decades in trade of ultraprocessed foods (UPFs) negatively impacts access and affordability to fresh, healthy, and nutritious foods, and is a key driver globally and in Australia to the burden of multiple diet-related chronic diseases. The increased trade and consumption of UPFs has also

displaced traditional and Indigenous diets - which typically are higher in fresh, nutritious foods. When exploring policy options to reduce inequalities in relation to the accessibility and affordability of healthy and nutritious diets, emphasis also needs to be placed on ensuring access to traditional foods and diets.

Key References:

- FAO. (2024). The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets 2024 - Trade and nutrition: Policy coherence for healthy diets.
- HLPE. (2023). Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition. CFS HLPE-FSN. <https://www.fao.org/3/cc6536en/cc6536en.pdf>
- Monteiro C, Louzada M, Steele-Martinez E et al. Ultra-processed foods and human health: the main thesis and the evidence. The Lancet, 2025; 406, 2667-2684

Additional Questions:

- Q. What policy options exist to support access and affordability of traditional and Indigenous foods?

IX. SECTION 10: Agency for food security and nutrition

Drivers, Trends, and their impacts on FSN Outcomes

As identified in the Draft Note, agency is essential for the realization of the right to adequate food, and as such remains a key issue affecting food security and nutrition. The adoption of agency as the sixth pillar of food security represents a positive step towards consolidating understanding of the different dimensions of food security, however additional focus of other key and interrelated human rights principles could strengthen this section. In line with the PANTHER principles, a focus on *empowerment* and agency would further address structural inequities and power imbalances. A stronger emphasis on empowerment would support Question 3 and Question 4, particularly when identifying policies and institutional arrangements to enhance participation, voice, control, and decision making by groups whose agency and empowerment within food systems is constrained - such as Indigenous peoples, women, youth, elderly, and people with disabilities. Identified policy measures and institutional arrangement should also focus explicitly at enhancing group and collective empowerment and agency, not just at the individual level.

Key References:

- FAO. (2014). The right to food within the international framework of human rights and country constitutions. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/1250819b-1f3e-4731-ae44-59e7c2fc37dd/content>
- FAO. (2024). Realizing the right to food in a changing world - The Right to Food Guidelines: 20 years on and beyond. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3573en>

Additional Questions:

- Q. How to enhance group or collective empowerment and agency to progress the realisation of the right to adequate food, and support food and nutrition security?

Conclusion

In conclusion, AFSA emphasises that addressing food security and nutrition requires confronting the structural drivers that shape food systems in Australia, and globally. Export-oriented policies, corporate concentration, weakened public accountability, the ongoing violence and dispossession of colonial legacies, and the continued exclusion of First Nations peoples, civil society, and small-scale farmers continue to undermine food system resilience, equity, and sovereignty. These challenges cannot be treated as isolated or technical problems; they are rooted in power relations that determine whose knowledge counts, whose land is valued, and whose interests are prioritised in policy and governance processes.

This moment presents a vital opportunity for the CFS to confront the power imbalances, corporate concentration, and colonial legacies that underpin food system failures. The CFS can and must stand firm and be bold if it seeks to maintain relevance as the global platform for food governance, deepening its commitment to democratic, inclusive participation. This must center First Nations, civil society, small-scale food producers, and those on the front line of food systems, not stakeholders. Doing so strengthens the legitimacy and effectiveness of the CFS to address structural injustice and resist corporate and geopolitical capture, instead guided by human rights, robust accountability, and ensuring global food governance serves peoples and communities.