

Statement by Australia on Agenda Item V

Australia welcomes the completion of the negotiations on the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition and we extend our deep admiration and respect for the Chair of the Open Ended Working Group for his exceptional stamina and commitment to consensus, together with the exceptional work of the CFS Secretariat team.

We recognise the significant potential these non-binding, voluntary guidelines offer as a tool for shaping food systems that are sustainable and nutrition-sensitive in order to achieve the SDGs, especially SDG2, by 2030.

No country is exempt from the challenge of providing adequate and better nutrition to its people. While Australia does not suffer the double burden of malnutrition, overweight and obesity is a major public health concern and affects two-thirds of our adult population.

We respectfully offer three reflections on the development of the guidelines that may be useful to consider in future processes.

- The time commitment required to negotiate a document covering such a broad range of topics puts a particular strain and disadvantage on small delegations. While we appreciate the ambition and timeliness of these guidelines, we see increased feasibility in negotiating more targeted topics in the future. This could include breaking down the document into thematic sections. Further, and as mentioned during Australia's intervention on the MYPOW yesterday, we highlight the value of dedicated attention to one workstream at a time.
- Given the nature of the negotiation process, we noted delegations were not always able to effectively use their experts to make positive contributions to the text. For example, we noticed experts present in the last round of negotiations were unfortunately unable to make much impact on an already heavily negotiated document. In future, we recommend the Secretariat proactively seek to engage early and targeted expert participation to ensure the process is not unnecessarily influenced by political agendas. This is particularly important at the early stages of negotiation
- There is a need for all Members and stakeholders to be mindful of the diversity in national circumstances and not try to insert their preferred approach into every paragraph of a document which, by design, must be adaptable to national contexts when implemented.

With these comments, Australia endorses the Guidelines.