

CFS POLICY CONVERGENCE PROCESS ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION ELEMENTS PAPER

This Elements Paper is intended to set the stage and support the CFS policy convergence process on food systems and nutrition by highlighting a number of issues that might be discussed in the course of the preparation process, and in case of agreement, addressed in the Voluntary Guidelines.

The CFS Nutrition Open-Ended Working Group decided that this is a working document, to be regularly updated by the CFS Secretariat, which includes the suggestions being provided by CFS stakeholders on the issues and topics that could be addressed in the Voluntary Guidelines.

The structure of the Elements Paper is the same of the Terms of Reference for the preparation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, in line with the consideration that the conceptual framework and the policy entry points introduced in the HLPE report should be used as the basis and as the guiding element for the next steps of the process.

This version – posted in December 2018 – includes, in addition to the policy relevant areas highlighted in the HLPE report, a number of suggestions provided by CFS stakeholders.

Interested actors are invited to provide their inputs and suggestions on additional policy relevant areas - following the proposed format below - that they want to be considered and discussed.

1. FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

a) Production systems

Agriculture and food production systems affect food availability, accessibility and affordability as well as dietary quality and diversity and the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.

Policy-relevant areas

- Landscape and dietary diversity
Small-scale farming can contribute to food security and nutrition through different pathways by acting for example as a direct source of food and income.
- Protection of wild foods and local agrobiodiversity
Incentives could contribute to increase agrobiodiversity and use of wild foods and their influence to dietary diversity. There are a number of challenges to address to ensure their protection, such as declining availability of wild foods and forest foods due to overharvesting and land clearing for agriculture; difficulties in regaining or securing access to land and land tenure; local populations'

perceptions about wild foods; loss of traditional knowledge; high workload to collect, process and prepare traditional foods; and weak integration in market economies.

- Links of local farms to school meals

Farm-to-school programmes can improve the provisioning of nutritious foods in schools while creating a guaranteed market for local farmers. They can determine positive behaviour changes leading to healthier diets for children.

- Women producers' livelihoods

Women tend to play a lower role in commercial agriculture and that they are often more involved in informal activities in food production or food collection for subsistence use. These subsistence activities are often seen as an extension of their domestic responsibilities meaning that women can lose the control over a production when it becomes a commercial or cash production. Leadership in the community and control of biophysical resources related to production are relevant areas for policy intervention to empower women.

- Agricultural research and development for diets

Investments in research and development for nutrient-rich crops such as fruits and vegetables, ASF and underutilized species could lead to improvements in productivity with access to better nutrition.

- Climate smart and nutrition-sensitive approaches

Climate smart and nutrition-sensitive approaches are important to maintain necessary levels of nutritious food production while minimizing the environmental effects of agriculture. This type of interventions may include increasing irrigation to provide more reliable water for crops, improving soil quality, and increasing diversity of crop varieties and livestock breeds to increase resilience to heat, drought, pests and diseases.

b) Storage and distribution

Storage and distribution have an impact on diets and health. Lack of appropriate facilities create many opportunities for contamination and food quality losses and waste while proper storage and distribution contribute to making nutritious food available and accessible to a wider number of consumers.

Policy-relevant areas

- Food losses and waste

Food losses and waste are among the main contributing factors to food insecurity and malnutrition. Up to one third of all food is spoiled or wasted before it is consumed by people, due to inadequate/inefficient harvesting, storage, packing, transport, infrastructure or market mechanisms, as well as institutional and legal frameworks. In this context, taking into account the recommendations on this matter adopted by CFS in 2014, policies can contribute to create a

positive and enabling environment for improved storage and distribution methodology and technology.

- Food safety and quality during storage and distribution

Mycotoxins can contaminate agricultural products both in the field and during storage. Improved storage techniques are key to prevent to reduce contaminations.

c) Processing and packaging

Food processing and packaging contribute to preventing food quantity and quality losses and waste and to extending shelf-life while they may influence the degree to which nutrients and other substances/agents enter or exit the supply chain.

Policy-relevant areas

- Practices and technologies to protect and add nutritional value along food chains

Policies and programmes can be put in place to preserve or add micronutrients into foods during processing (i.e. fortification) or to remove less healthy ingredients (i.e. product reformulation).

- Food processing policies and regulations

In some countries, food processing policies and programmes have targeted trans fat and sodium to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases. Mandatory labelling of trans fats has been one of the approaches followed to reducing trans fat availability in the food supply leading to the reformulation of many products. Also recommended or mandatory targets or standards for salt levels have been developed in different categories of foods to reduce salt consumption.

d) Retail and markets

Interactions in retail and markets shape the food systems, and the food environment in which consumers make purchasing decisions, influencing consumer behaviour and food consumption patterns.

Policy-relevant areas

- Connectivity of smallholders to markets

Taking into account the recommendations endorsed by CFS in 2016, policies and investments need to address a wide range of barriers preventing smallholders from accessing markets. Lack of storage, including cold storage, lead often smallholders to sell their products soon after harvest when prices are low. Lack of transportation and road infrastructure make it difficult for smallholders to reach markets contributing to disconnect rural smallholders from urban markets. Information technology can play a key role in increasing farmers' opportunities to cater nutritious foods to markets.

- Local food procurement and supply of nutritious foods

Policies and programmes should be developed to encourage supermarkets to supply more nutritious food items at affordable prices, and to procure local products, particularly from smallholders determining a positive impact in terms of dietary patterns and nutritional outcomes.

2. FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

a) Availability and physical access (proximity)

Unfavorable climatic, geographic and seasonality-related conditions, particularly with low density of food entry points or limited access to foods for healthy diets, are an important factor increasing the risk of malnutrition. Furthermore, lack of appropriate infrastructure, food losses and waste, all forms of conflict and humanitarian crises, migration and forced displacement can limit access to and distribution of diversified food, especially fresh and other perishable foods, with negative consequences on what can be purchased and consumed.

Policy-relevant areas

- Food deserts and food swamps
Policies are needed to encourage healthy outlets and address the spread of food deserts and swamps, especially in LMICs, particularly in mixed food systems, as these countries urbanize.
- Public procurement
Healthier diets can be encouraged through the provision of quality food in schools, hospitals, workplaces and other government institutions and buildings, also influencing production, providing a reliable source of demand for local producers and business. For example, farm-to-school programmes have the potential to positively affect school-aged children's nutrition knowledge and healthy consumption behavior.

b) Economic access (affordability)

For several segments of the population, affording adequate diversity of nutrient-rich foods represents a significant challenge.

Policy-relevant areas

- Nutrition-sensitive trade policies
Countries, in compliance with their international obligations, can consider to use trade policies to shift production patterns and lead to improvements in the way food is produced, traded and accessed.
- Taxes and subsidies
Depending on the type of food system and the national and local context and taking into consideration all possible effects, including those on lower income groups, the cost of healthy

food options is often at high prices and unaffordable. Measures like taxes and subsidies can regulate pricing and may influence food choices and dietary intake (i.e. reduction of taxed sugar-sweetened beverages and increase consumption of subsidized fruits and vegetables).

c) Promotion, advertising and information

Promotion, advertising and information have a direct influence on consumer preferences, purchasing behaviour, consumption patterns, and the nutrition knowledge of the population.

Policy-relevant areas

- **Regulations for advertising and marketing**
Healthier food options can be promoted through different approaches. Children at all age groups require special protection and attention e.g. through advertising bans to children and education campaigns, subsidizing healthier alternatives and restricting certain ingredients and interventions in schools to promote healthier approaches to eating and physical activity.
- **Transparency of information on labels**
Nutrition labelling of foods on food packaging (i.e. front of the pack labelling) through voluntary or mandatory codes is a tool to inform consumers, shaping their preferences and influencing industry behavior by encouraging product reformulations. The promotion of education campaigns are important to help consumers understand the labels which have to be accurate, transparent and easy-to-understand.

d) Food quality, safety

Food quality and safety influence consumer health and preferences. Insufficient efforts in promoting food quality and safety negatively influence consumption patterns through changes either in consumer preferences or in food affordability.

Policy-relevant areas

- **Food safety and traceability**
The ability to trace and follow food through all stages of production and distribution helps provide safer foods and better connect producers to consumers. Strengthened institutions and policies are also key vehicles to improve cold chain transport and stabilization of the energy supply. Improving food storage is another effective way to increase the amount, safety and quality of the available food.
- **Food quality improvements**
Product reformulation and policy options for improving composition of food can improve its quality. Food fortification is also an effective public health intervention for preventing nutritional deficiencies while contributing to improving health outcomes.

3. CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

a) Food and nutrition education

Food and nutrition education and information, including on food origin, in the context of food systems is intended to stimulate critical analysis and practical skills for food choices leading to sustainable and healthy diets.

Policy-relevant areas

- **Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC)**
SBCC is the use of communication to change behaviour including service utilization, by positively influencing knowledge, attitudes and social norms. SBCC coordinates messaging across a variety of communication channels to reach multiple levels of society to stimulate community engagement and buy-in, ultimately influencing individuals' behaviour and demand.
- **National food-based dietary guidelines**
National food-based dietary guidelines are another important source of information and guidance for consumers and producers. They provide recommendations on latest evidence of food and nutrient composition of healthy diets adapted to national contexts.
- **Social protection programmes leading to improved nutritional outcomes**
Social protection programmes, such as cash transfers and school feeding programmes can play a key role in addressing immediate, underlying and basic causes of malnutrition. In line with the CFS recommendations endorsed in 2012, policies are needed to ensure social protection interventions and programmes are designed and implemented in a nutrition-sensitive way to contribute to improved nutrition outcomes.

b) Food acceptability

Acceptability can be influenced by the promotion of specific foods and diets as well as by consumer preferences.

c) Social norms, values and traditions

Food affordability, convenience and desirability are influenced not only by the quality of and the marketing around food but also by the social norms and the cultural values associated with food.

- **Traditional food cultures**
Promoting the retention of traditional food culture is a way to protect and conserve traditional diets and use local agricultural products and at the same time stimulate local economic growth and local farming. Traditional food preparation practices and cooking skills are also important determinants for the healthy diets.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS AND/OR MODIFICATIONS SUGGESTED BY CFS STAKEHOLDERS

a) On Food Supply Chains

Links of local farms to school meals

Include the added value of children and professors learning and being more related with agriculture, school farming and adequate nutrition for reaching zero hunger and sustainable development.

Women producers' livelihoods

Include the mentioning of the need to train women in agricultural/commercial knowledge as a key issue to empower women.

Climate smart and nutrition-sensitive approaches

Include the resilience to climate change and disasters

Storage and distribution

Include training for farmers and consumers, as well as capacity building on storage and delivery.

Current food systems are not delivering the quality diets needed for optimal health and are putting pressure on planet's natural resources. Coherent and innovative actions covering the entire food system from inputs and production, through processing, storage, transport and retailing to consumption are needed to ensure access to sustainable, healthy diets for all and reduce food and nutrient losses and waste. (UN Decade for Action on Nutrition-Work Programme)

b) On Food Environments

[...]

c) On Consumer Behaviour

National food-based dietary guidelines for sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets

Include the need to take into account the age/gender/maternity/sick persons special demand approach as well as the principle of not discrimination.

Social protection programmes leading to improved nutritional outcomes

Include the mentioning of food safety and the need to increase population's knowledge on food safety and adequate nutrition. Special attention should be given to low income families and groups in vulnerabilities.

Food acceptability

Include the need to develop family literacy on age cycle nutrition using communicational messages, parent's schools, media. Special attention should be given to breastfeeding and the special nutrition requirements for children and pregnant women, and groups in vulnerability.

d) General comments

- i. In order to be in line with the SDGs, nutrition aims to not only be healthy for humans but also healthy for the planet and therefore base on sustainable agricultural production and food systems. Only then can the implementation of these guidelines add true value towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The consumption side cannot be addressed in isolation from the production side. We will not achieve the transformation to sustainable food systems without sustainable diets. These are diets coupling low environmental impacts with healthy life for present and future generations. They are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable. They are nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy while optimizing natural and human resources.
- ii. Need to explicitly state that food from the oceans and inland waters are included when talking about nutrition. Fisheries and aquaculture are not mentioned in the TORs. Need to include this footnote when using the term agriculture: "agriculture includes crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture.
- iii. Interagency work in the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition needs to be properly considered. The proclamation of the Nutrition Decade mandated the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop a Work Programme for the Nutrition Decade in consultation with all stakeholders. Member States, regional political and economic communities to translate the commitments into SMART commitments for action, in the context of national nutrition and nutrition-related policies. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition is a commitment by United Nations Member States to undertake 10 years of sustained and coherent implementation of policies, programmes and increased investments to eliminate malnutrition in all its forms, everywhere, leaving no one behind. (UN Decade for Action on Nutrition-Work Programme) (UN Decade for Action on Nutrition-Work Programme).