

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE CFS OEWG ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

It is my pleasure to present the Preliminary Version of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition. The document is the result of intense work carried out by the CFS Secretariat in collaboration with a Technical Task Team made up of representatives from FAO, WFP, IFAD, WHO, SCN, UNICEF, CGIAR, CSM and PSM.

The document is divided into four chapters. The introductory chapter provides the context in which the CFS policy process is implemented, the objectives and purpose of the Voluntary Guidelines and the nature of the instrument.

The second chapter deals with the key concepts concerning food systems and nutrition and guiding principles that were identified as critical to contribute to reshaping food systems.

The third one includes the proposed scope of the Voluntary Guidelines. In line with the decision taken at CFS 45, they will use the three constituent elements of food systems – food supply chains, food environments, and consumer behaviour – as policy entry points. As defined in the [Terms of Reference](#) that were endorsed at CFS 45 in October 2018, the structure and the content of this chapter are in line with the conceptual framework and the main findings of the [HLPE Report on Nutrition and Food Systems](#). The policy relevant areas will be further developed following the inputs provided by the CFS stakeholders in the different stages of the consultation.

The last chapter of the document is intended to include provisions regarding the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines and the monitoring of their use and application within the framework of the CFS monitoring mechanism.

The purpose of the OEWG meeting on 8 March is to get specific feedback and suggestions on how to improve the document. Following the meeting, the opportunity to provide written comments will be given to CFS stakeholders. The inputs received will be considered in the preparation of the Zero Draft that is planned to be finalized by the end of April.

The Zero Draft will then be translated in the six UN official languages and presented and discussed during the following consultation process: an OEWG meeting on 30 May 2019¹, the five regional multistakeholder consultations planned between July and October, and the e-consultation taking place between June and August.

The outcomes of all these consultations will feed the preparation of the First Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines that is expected to be finalized by the end of 2019.

I would like to highlight once again the importance of an active participation of all interested stakeholders, especially at this initial stage in the process. This is a key factor for the implementation of an inclusive process and for an increased ownership and buy-in towards the development of the Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines.

¹ Originally scheduled on 21 June 2019.

It is very important that specific inputs are provided during the meeting and in written form after in order to ensure that the positions and views of all stakeholders are reflected in the Zero Draft.

I would also like to remind you that we are still at a consultation phase where we are not expected to find consensus between different views and positions. In order to facilitate the discussion on 8 March, I would kindly ask CFS stakeholders to focus their interventions on the four chapters of the Preliminary Version of the Zero Draft and to provide specific suggestions on how to improve its content.

Looking forward to your active participation and a fruitful discussion.

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CFS Food Systems and Nutrition OEWG Chair

Preparation of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition—

Preliminary Version of the Zero Draft

[The different chapters of this document include suggested language for the Voluntary Guidelines, except for Chapter III which includes descriptive text that is intended to inform the preparation of the upcoming versions of the document]

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1. Combatting malnutrition in all its forms – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity – is one of the greatest global challenges that countries face today. Malnutrition in at least one of its forms affects every country in the world and most countries are affected by multiple forms. This represents a major impediment to achieving global food security and sustainable development. The impacts of malnutrition and its various manifestations have profound consequences on people’s health and wellbeing, lives and livelihoods throughout their lifetime and from generation to generation². Malnutrition in all its forms affects the mortality of children under five, their school performance, future productivity and economic opportunities, increasing their vulnerability to chronic and non-communicable diseases. Urgent action is needed to address these challenges and the negative impacts of malnutrition.

2. The consumption of safe and healthy diets is crucial to reverse these negative trends as unhealthy diets are now one of the top risk factors globally for premature death and disability.

² Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition. 2016. Food systems and diets: Facing the challenges of the 21st century. London, UK

3. Promoting policy changes is key to reshaping food systems that improve nutrition and enable healthy diets while improving their economic, social and environmental sustainability as well.
4. The focus of policy guidance should be on how food systems can help deliver high quality diets that meet the increasing and evolving dietary needs of growing populations while paying special attention to the poorest and most nutritionally vulnerable and addressing the barriers they face in accessing healthy diets.
5. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is leading the policy process that will result in Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition to be presented for endorsement at the CFS Plenary Session in October 2020³.
6. The preparation of these Voluntary Guidelines is informed by the findings and scientific evidence provided in the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition's⁴ (HLPE) Report on *Nutrition and Food Systems*⁵.
7. This policy process is taking place while a great number of actors from different sectors are taking action actions to address malnutrition. Nutrition has received increased attention in recent years from the global community including the United Nations and its Member States and is recognized as a powerful driver towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2014 the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) Members committed to end hunger and malnutrition in all its forms at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)⁶. In 2016, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)⁷ and called upon FAO and WHO to lead its implementation, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), using multistakeholder platforms such as CFS.
8. The Voluntary Guidelines are expected to contribute to and complement these international initiatives with a view to promoting policy coherence. They will provide guidance to help countries operationalize ICN2's Framework for Action⁸ recommendations in support to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security and the achievement of

³ In 2018, the Committee has endorsed the Terms of Reference which provide the guiding elements for the preparation of the Voluntary Guidelines, including the main issues to be covered.

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/bodies/CFS_sessions/CFS_45/MX516_6/MX516_CFS_2018_45_6_en.pdf

⁴ The HLPE is the science-policy interface of CFS and provides structured evidence base to inform CFS policy discussions drawing on existing research and knowledge, and experiences and policies at different scales and in different contexts.

⁵ HLPE. 2017. Nutrition and Food Systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7846e.pdf>

⁶ FAO/WHO. 2014. ICN2, Rome Declaration on Nutrition. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

⁷ General Assembly resolution 70/259 available at <http://undocs.org/A/RES/70/259> and the Work Programme of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, available at:

https://www.un.org/nutrition/sites/www.un.org.nutrition/files/general/pdf/mv131_rev1_undoa_wp_rev1_fr.pdf

⁸ FAO/WHO. 2014. ICN2, Framework for Action. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 “to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”.

2. OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE

9. The Voluntary Guidelines are intended to be a reference point that provides guidance mainly to governments, as well as to their partners and other stakeholders, on effective policies, investments and institutional arrangements, that will address malnutrition in all its forms.

10. The objective of the Voluntary Guidelines is to contribute to reshaping food systems, in their different components, to make them more healthy and sustainable. This will ensure that the diets needed for optimal nutrition and health are available, affordable, acceptable, safe and of adequate quantity and quality while conforming with beliefs, cultures and traditions⁹.

11. The Voluntary Guidelines will follow a comprehensive and systemic approach to bring coherence to the existing policy fragmentation with a special emphasis on the food, agriculture and health sectors, while also addressing livelihood and sustainability challenges.

12. The Voluntary Guidelines are intended to be global in scope and to provide guidance to policy makers and relevant stakeholders while designing context-specific policies, strategies, plans and programmes. They will also help them analyze the food systems in which they operate. The Voluntary Guidelines will take into consideration country diversity, different typologies of food system as well as the many endogenous and exogenous drivers impacting them.

13. The five main categories and related drivers that were identified in the HLPE report will be taken into account. They are:

- a) biophysical and environmental (natural resource and ecosystem services, climate change);
- b) innovation, technology and infrastructure;
- c) political and economic (leadership, globalization, foreign investment, trade, food policies, land tenure, food prices and volatility, conflicts and humanitarian crises);
- d) socio-cultural (culture, religion, rituals, social traditions, gender inequalities and women’s empowerment);
- e) demographic drivers (population growth, changing age distribution, urbanization, migration and forced displacement).

3. NATURE OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES AND THEIR INTENDED USERS

14. The Voluntary Guidelines will be non-binding and should be interpreted and applied consistently with existing obligations under national and international law, and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments. CFS guidance should build on and integrate

⁹ FAO/WHO. 2014. ICN2, Rome Declaration on Nutrition. Paragraph 5.b. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-m1542e.pdf>

existing instruments adopted on these topics within the context of the UN system, including Member States endorsed guidance and recommendations¹⁰.

15. The Voluntary Guidelines will speak to all stakeholders that are involved in addressing, or are affected by, malnutrition in all its forms.

16. They primarily are targeted at all levels of government to help design public policies, but they can be used by relevant stakeholders in policy discussions and policy implementation processes. These stakeholders include:

- a) Governmental actors, including relevant ministries and national, sub-national, local institutions;
- b) Intergovernmental and regional organizations, including the specialized agencies of the UN;
- c) Civil society organizations;
- d) Private sector;
- e) Research organizations and universities;
- f) Development agencies, including international financial institutions;
- g) Philanthropic foundations.

II. KEY CONCEPTS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. KEY CONCEPTS CONCERNING FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

17. **Food systems** “gather all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes”¹¹.

18. **Food supply chains** “consist of the activities and actors that take from production to consumption and to the disposal of its waste”, including production, storage, distribution, processing, packaging, retailing and marketing¹².

¹⁰ Among these, the Framework for Action and the Rome Declaration on Nutrition of ICN2, UNGA Resolution A/RES/72/306 “Implementation of United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)”, UNGA Resolution A/RES/72/2 “Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases”, UNGA Resolution A/RES/73/132 “Global health and foreign policy: a healthier world through better nutrition”, UNGA Resolution A/RES/73/253 “Agriculture development, food security and nutrition”.

¹¹ HLPE. 2014. Food Losses and Waste in the context of Sustainable Food Systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3901e.pdf>

¹² HLPE 2017b

19. **Food environments** “refer to the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumer engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food”¹³.

20. **Consumer behaviour** “reflects all the choices and decisions made by consumers on what food to acquire, store, prepare, cook and eat, and on the allocation of food within the household”¹⁴.

21. **The most vulnerable to malnutrition in all its forms** “typically include those with high nutrient requirements and those who have less control over their choice of diet. This implies particular attention to young and school aged children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, indigenous peoples and local communities and smallholders and rural and urban poor also in consideration of the different types of food systems they live in”¹⁵.

22. **Healthy diets** “refer to a balanced, diverse and appropriate selection of foods eaten over a period of time. A healthy diet ensures that the needs for essential macronutrients (proteins, fats and carbohydrates including dietary fibres) and micronutrients (vitamins, minerals and trace elements) are met specific to the person’s gender, age, physical activity level and physiological state. WHO indicates that for diets to be healthy:

- a) daily needs of energy, vitamins and minerals should be met, but energy intake should not exceed needs;
- b) consumption of fruit and vegetables is over 400 g per day;
- c) intake of saturated fats is less than 10% of total energy intake;
- d) intake of trans-fats is less than 1% of total energy intake;
- e) intake of free sugars is less than 10% of total energy intake or, preferably, less than 5%;
- f) intake of salt is less than 5 g per day”¹⁶.

23. **Sustainable diets** “are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources”¹⁷.

¹³ ibidem

¹⁴ Ibidem

¹⁵ CFS 46. Terms of Reference for the preparation of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition

¹⁶ Information Note on the Framework for Action. Joint FAO-WHO ICN2 Secretariat. November 2014.

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/faoweb/ICN2/documents/InfoNote-e.pdf - A healthy diet for infant and young children is similar to that for adults but other important elements need to be considered. WHO. Healthy Diet. Fact sheet No 394.

¹⁷ Definition agreed at the International Scientific Symposium on Biodiversity and Sustainable Diets, November 2010, FAO Headquarters. Report, p.7: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i3004e/i3004e.pdf> - This definition is also used in the HLPE report on Nutrition and Food Systems (HLPE 2017b) and in the UNSCN discussion paper on Sustainable Diets for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet, 2017:

<https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/document/Climate-Nutrition-Paper-Nov2017-EN-WEB.pdf>

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RESHAPING FOOD SYSTEMS

24. Food systems serve and support multiple objectives within all domains of sustainable development, from economic to health, socio-cultural and ecological. While food systems might be different in characteristics and articulation, they offer critical entry points for public policies and investments that aim to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development across the SDGs.

25. The Voluntary Guidelines will include a number of guiding principles¹⁸ that should be followed to contribute to reshaping food systems realigning them with sustainable development while improving nutrition and enabling healthy diets.

26. These guiding principles are:

- a) Promote a systemic and holistic approach that looks at the multidimensional causes of malnutrition in all its forms, including the lack of stable access to healthy, balanced, diversified and safe diets and safe drinking water, inadequate infant and young child caring and feeding practices, poor sanitation and hygiene, insufficient access to education and health services, income poverty and low socio-economic status.
- b) Contribute to the implementation of cross-cutting and coherent policies through coordinated actions among different actors and across all relevant sectors at international, regional and national levels.
- c) Promote policies that are intended to enhance the livelihoods, health and well-being of the most vulnerable segments of the population and enhance the sustainability of food production as well as the protection of biodiversity.
- d) Promote gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment respecting their rights and considering the importance of creating the conditions for women's strong engagement in shaping food systems that can ensure improved nutrition.
- e) Contribute to the empowerment of people and the creation of an enabling environment for making informed choices about food products for healthy dietary practices and appropriate infant and young child feeding practices through improved health and nutrition information and education.

¹⁸ These guiding principles make reference to already agreed international documents and tools, such as the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action of ICN2.

III. THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

Differently from the other sections of the Zero Draft, Part III – The Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition- includes descriptive text that is intended to inform the preparation of the upcoming versions of the document. The language of this section does not represent suggested text for the Voluntary Guidelines but initial ideas regarding the issues and topics to be considered and discussed by CFS stakeholders.

27. This section includes the proposed scope of the Voluntary Guidelines. In line with the conceptual framework introduced in the HLPE report, the Voluntary Guidelines will use the three constituent elements of food systems as policy entry points for food system transformation towards improved nutrition. They are food supply chains, food environments, and consumer behaviour.

28. For each of these three elements the Voluntary Guidelines will consider the different typologies of food systems, with particular attention to those defined by the HLPE. Challenges and opportunities that specific food systems face along with the actors engaged, and the related power dynamics will be considered in order to assist policy makers in the design of policies, investments and interventions adapted to a given context.

29. The fragmentation between the several sectors that have an impact on food systems will be addressed in order to promote greater policy coherence between them.

30. The recommendations are expected to build upon and complement related guidance previously provided in other CFS policy guidelines and recommendations and consider the work and mandate of other relevant international bodies.

31. Different drivers of change that impact and are impacted by the ability of food systems to deliver healthy diets are important as they contextualize the recommendations provided in the Voluntary Guidelines. They will be analyzed in the development of the policy guidance with regards to the different elements of food systems and their subcomponents.

PART 1 – FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

32. The decisions made by the actors at any stage of the food supply chain have implications for the other stages. Interventions across food supply chains can affect the availability, affordability, accessibility and acceptability of nutritious food. Activities along the food supply chains can both increase and decrease the nutritional value of food by changing availability and access to macronutrients and micronutrients, or the levels of substances associated with diet-related non-communicable diseases.

1. PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

33. The different types and varieties of foods available can significantly shape diets. More diverse and integrated production systems at different scales tend to be more resilient to external shocks and

contribute to dietary quality and diversity. Attention needs to be paid to the role of investments in food production systems and associated research and development. The impact of agriculture¹⁹ and food production systems on nutrition should be considered in relation to the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental.


Policy-relevant areas

a) Landscape and dietary diversity

Diversified agricultural systems can contribute to food security and nutrition through different pathways, for example as a direct source of food or income.

b) Economic production incentives

Agricultural subsidies could orient agricultural production systems towards diverse and nutritious foods that enable healthy diets.

c) Protection of wild foods and local agrobiodiversity 

There are a number of challenges to promoting the protection of wild foods and local agrobiodiversity. These include overharvesting and land clearing for agriculture, difficulties in securing access to land and land tenure, perceptions about wild foods, loss of traditional knowledge, high workload to collect, process and prepare traditional foods, and weak integration in market economies.

d) Farm-to-school programmes

Farm-to-school programmes can improve the supply of nutritious foods to schools while creating a guaranteed market for local farmers  they can positively affect school-aged children's nutrition knowledge and consumption behaviour.


e) Women producers' livelihoods

Women tend to be less involved in commercial agriculture and more involved in informal activities which are often seen as an extension of their domestic responsibilities. Leadership in the community and access to and control of biophysical resources related to production are relevant areas for policy intervention to empower women.

f) Agricultural research and development for healthy diets

Investment in research and development for nutrient-rich crops, such as fruits and vegetables, could lead to improvements in productivity with better access to healthy diets and nutrition.

g) 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. These types of interventions may include increasing irrigation to provide more reliable water for crops,

¹⁹ In this document, the term agriculture includes crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture.

improving soil quality, and increasing the diversity of crop varieties and livestock breeds to increase resilience to heat, drought, pests and diseases.


h) Resilient food supply chains

Efforts to adapt or rebuild food supply chains to threats like conflicts and climate change should consider investing in building or rehabilitating the physical capital by means of cash, vouchers or food-based transfer programmes. In particular, these should address their immediate food needs while at the same time boost their assets.

2. STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION

34. Storage and distribution have an impact on diets and health. Lack of appropriate facilities and technologies contribute to contamination with serious health consequences for consumers. Proper storage and distribution are key to making nutritious food, with good quality attributes, available and accessible to a wide number of consumers. However, these facilities may not be available in all areas, especially in rural areas with poor infrastructure.

Policy relevant areas

a) Food losses and waste 

Food losses and waste are a major challenge mainly caused by inadequate storage, transport conditions and lack of infrastructure. Strategies towards improving infrastructure and adopting efficient technologies can have a positive impact on food systems by improving access to fresh and other perishable food, increasing shelf life and improving food safety.

3. PROCESSING AND PACKAGING

35. Appropriate food processing and packaging contribute to preventing food quantity and quality losses and waste and to extending shelf life. The extent to which food is processed may influence the degree to which nutrients and other substances/agents enter or exit the supply chain. Interventions aiming to improve food processing and packaging should look at enhancing the nutrient content of foods, limiting the use of unhealthy ingredients. Technologies and innovation also play an important role. Strengthening the capacity of smallholders and small entrepreneurs to process and package foods can help secure a nutritious food supply and in turn enhance nutrition, health and income generation.


Policy-relevant areas

a) 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. drying, fermenting, fortification) or to avoid or to remove less healthy ingredients (i.e. product reformulation).

b) Food processing policies and regulations

Regulatory limits and mandatory labelling are among 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 have been developed in different categories of foods to reduce  and sugar intake.

4. RETAIL AND MARKETS

36. Interactions in retail and markets shape the food systems, and the food environment, where consumers make purchasing decisions, influencing consumer behaviour and food consumption patterns. Local and traditional markets represent an important source of nutritious foods. However, the transformation occurring in agriculture and food systems, and in particular the rapid spread of supermarkets and fast food chains, means consumers are offered a range of products at a lower price. This trend also brings challenges for smallholder farmers, in terms of requirements and standards, centralized procurement systems, power relationships and decision making. The impact of drivers of change, such as international trade and demographic trends, have to be considered and addressed.

Policy-relevant areas

a) Connecting smallholders to markets

Policies and investments need to address barriers preventing smallholders from accessing markets. Lack of adequate storage, including cold storage and chains, can lead smallholders to sell their products soon after harvest when prices are low. Lack of transportation and road infrastructure makes it difficult for smallholders to reach markets. Information technology can play a key role in increasing farmers' opportunities to deliver a diversity of fresh, safe and nutritious foods to market.

b) Local food procurement and supply of nutritious foods

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

PART 2 – FOOD ENVIRONMENTS

37. Food environments consist of food entry points, namely the physical spaces where food is made available and accessible, and the infrastructure that allows access to these spaces; the affordability and price of foods; the advertising, marketing, and positioning of foods; and the quality and safety of foods as well as branding and labeling. Food environments are the interface between food supply and demand, a space of convergence where all actors involved in food systems can together bring transformative change leading to greater availability and affordability of nutritious food and ultimately healthier food consumption.

1. AVAILABILITY AND PHYSICAL ACCESS (PROXIMITY)

38. Unfavorable climatic and geographic conditions, low density of food entry points or limited access to nutritious foods, lack of appropriate infrastructure, food losses and waste, all forms of conflict and

humanitarian crises, migration and forced displacement, can have negative consequences on what can be purchased and consumed. The availability and physical access to diverse types of food influences what consumers can purchase and consume.

Policy-relevant areas

a) Food deserts and food swamps

Policies are needed to encourage healthy outlets and address the spread of food deserts and swamps, particularly in mixed food systems, as countries urbanize.

b) Public procurement

Healthier diets can be encouraged through the provision of local 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 businesses.

c) Systemic food assistance

Systemic food assistance, integrates emergency response with nutrition and longer-term strategies towards sustainable development and resilient food systems. Combining humanitarian assistance with longer-term development objectives can reduce the risks and impact of shocks, increase food productivity, and strengthen resilience to natural disasters and human-made crises.

2. ECONOMIC ACCESS (AFFORDABILITY)

39. For several segments of the population, affording adequate diversity of nutrient-rich foods represents a significant challenge and has an impact on consumption patterns. This challenge is even stronger if prices were to increase to reflect the cost of production, including environmental costs, or if other costs that are not monetary are considered, such as the time and labour needed to buy, clean, prepare and cook.

40. The relative price of food is also a key issue as more nutritious food is often relatively more expensive than processed food that is high in salt, fats, sugar and low in fibre. Actions should be taken to make nutritious foods more affordable or to provide coupons to low-income groups and food transfers for women and children to safeguard maternal, infant and young child nutrition.

Policy-relevant areas

a) Nutrition-sensitive trade policies

Countries, in compliance with their international obligations, can consider using trade policies to shift production patterns and lead to improvements in the way food is produced, traded and accessed.

b) 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, measures like taxes and subsidies can regulate pricing and may influence food choices and dietary intake.

c) Social protection programmes leading to improved nutritional outcomes


Policies are needed to promote the design and implementation of social protection interventions and programmes in a nutrition-sensitive way to enable healthy diets and contribute to improved nutrition outcomes.

3. PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING

41. Promotion and advertising have a direct influence on consumer preferences, purchasing behaviour, consumption patterns, and the nutrition knowledge of the population. Particular attention needs to be paid to children as they are particularly susceptible to the influence of food marketing and advertising. Regulatory measures and the provision of transparent information in commercial advertising represent relevant interventions to promote healthier diets.

Policy-relevant areas

a) Regulations for advertising and marketing

Children of all age groups require special protection and attention, e.g. through full implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, bans on less nutritious foods and measures to ensure responsible food marketing, subsidizing healthier alternatives and interventions in school  promote healthier approaches to eating, as well as to encourage physical activity.

b) Transparency of information on labels

Nutrition labelling on food packaging (i.e. front of pack labelling) through voluntary or mandatory codes is one tool to inform consumers, shaping their preferences and encouraging product reformulations by manufacturers. The promotion of education campaigns are important to help consumers understand the labels which have to be accurate, transparent and easy-to-understand.

4. FOOD QUALITY AND SAFETY

42. Food quality describes the attributes of a food and refers, among other things, to the composition and the way food is produced and processed. Food safety refers to those hazards that may contaminate food, through pesticide residues and certain agricultural practices as well as bacteria, viruses and parasites.

43. Insufficient efforts in promoting food quality and safety negatively influence consumption patterns and have negative consequences on the health and nutrition of consumers.

Policy-relevant areas

a) 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. Improving food storage is another effective way to increase the amount, safety and quality of the available food. Strengthened institutions and policies are also key to improving cold chain transport and stabilization of the energy supply.

b) 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.

PART 3 – CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR


44. Consumer behaviour is influenced by several factors including demographics, lifestyle, personal preferences, knowledge, attitudes, skills, values, social environment, traditions, culture and beliefs. Consumer behaviour is shaped by and has the potential to influence the existing food supply chains and food environments so that collective changes in consumer behaviour can open pathways to more sustainable food systems that enhance food security and nutrition and health.

1. FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

45. Food and nutrition education and information, including on the origin of food, what it is composed of, how it is processed and prepared, is intended to stimulate critical analysis, motivate actions and develop practical skills for food choices and related practices leading to healthy diets. Nutrition education and consumer messages play an important role in increasing the acceptability of nutritious foods for healthy diets.

Policy-relevant areas

a) Social and behaviour change communication

Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) is the use of communication to  change behaviour 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 behaviour and demand.

b) 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 based on the latest evidence of the composition of healthy diets adapted to national contexts, representing also a helpful source of information for policy makers in several sectors (i.e. to promote more investment towards healthier and a more diverse range of products).

2. SOCIAL NORMS, VALUES AND TRADITIONS

46. Food affordability, convenience and desirability are influenced by the quality of, and the marketing around, food but also by the social norms and the cultural values associated with food.

Policy-relevant areas

a) Traditional food cultures

Protecting a diverse range of food cultures is a way to protect traditional diets and knowledge originating from diverse production systems. It also helps preserving diversity and identity of several populations, stimulate local economy and local farming.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

47. All CFS stakeholders are encouraged to promote at all levels within their constituencies the dissemination, use and application of the Voluntary Guidelines to support the development and implementation of national policies, programmes and investment plans across all sectors to address the multiple challenges of malnutrition in all its forms.

48. CFS should provide a forum where all relevant stakeholders can learn from the experiences of others in applying the Voluntary Guidelines and assess their continued relevance, effectiveness and impact on food security and nutrition. The intention is to support countries in making SMART commitments²⁰ and achieving nutrition objectives in the context of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

49. Efforts should be made to contribute to the achievement of the six Global Nutrition Targets (2025) endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2012 and the diet related non-communicable disease targets, which are the aims of the Decade of Action on Nutrition and contribute to the realization of the SDGs by 2030.

²⁰ In the context of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and ICN2 follow-up process, the next step is to translate the recommended policy options and strategies into country-specific commitments for action. These commitments should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. https://www.who.int/nutrition/decade-of-action/smart_commitments/en/