

## **Update to CFS-OEWG on International Consultation organized by FAO/WHO on Sustainable Healthy Diets**

- Thank you Madam Chair for giving us the opportunity to present the outcome of the International Consultation on Sustainable Healthy Diets organized by FAO and WHO.
- I give this update on behalf of the two Organizations: FAO and WHO.

### **Introduction**

- Two of the major challenges facing our generation today are malnutrition in all its forms and the degradation of our environment and its natural resources. Both are happening at an accelerated rate.
- The Second International Conference on Nutrition, convened by FAO and WHO in 2014, acknowledged that ‘current food systems are being increasingly challenged to provide adequate, safe, diversified and nutrient rich-food for all that contribute to healthy diets due to, inter alia, constraints posed by resource scarcity and environmental degradation, as well as by unsustainable production and consumption patterns, food losses and waste, and unbalanced distribution’.

Concerns about healthy diets have become very critical for several reasons:

- Poor diets are among the top risk factors contributing to the global burden of disease and death today; unhealthy eating habits are linked with one fifth of deaths worldwide.
- Malnutrition in all its forms is on the rise in all regions and countries; currently 1 and 3 persons is affected. Over 821 million people suffer from hunger, two billion are micronutrient deficient and over two billion are overweight or obese.
- The effects of poor diets have life-long consequences, especially for children, affecting learning ability and adult earning potential.
- Poor diets and malnutrition severely impact economic productivity of nations.
- Worldwide, malnutrition costs \$3.5 trillion annually, with overweight- and obesity-related NCDs, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, adding \$2 trillion.

Madam Chair,

- The way we produce and consume food is taking a toll on the environment and natural resource base. Food production accounts for the use of 48 percent of land resources and 70 percent of fresh water resources at the global level.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on climate change (IPCC's) most recent report this year recognized that 'consumption of healthy and sustainable diets present major opportunities for reducing GHG emissions from food systems and improving health outcomes'.
- To address these challenges the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) puts a specific focus on the transformation of food systems to promote healthy diets to improve nutrition in order to achieve the global nutrition and diet-related NCD targets in line with ICN2 commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Under the auspices of the Nutrition Decade, FAO and WHO jointly organized a 3-day International Consultation on Sustainable Healthy Diets.
- Prior to the Consultation, FAO and WHO commissioned five background papers covering:
  1. elements and definitions of healthy diets;
  2. the role of healthy diets in (environmentally sustainable) food systems;
  3. the role of culture, economics and food environments in shaping choices for sustainable healthy diets;
  4. territorial diets; and
  5. food safety implications of sustainable healthy diets.
- Thirty-three experts representing low, middle, and high-income countries participated in the consultation.
- The objective of the consultation was to develop Guiding Principles around what constitutes Sustainable Healthy Diets.
- The Consultation resulted in the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Healthy Diets; these are food-based and take into account nutrient recommendations while considering economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability.

- The Consultation defined Sustainable Healthy Diets as:

“Dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individuals’ health and wellbeing; have low environmental pressure and impact; are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable; and are culturally acceptable.”

For the sake of time, I will briefly summarize the 16 Guiding Principles for Sustainable Healthy Diets from the Consultation. These cover the following:

1. Starting early with Exclusive Breastfeeding
2. Sustainable Healthy Diets are based on a great variety of unprocessed or minimally processed foods,
3. Include wholegrains, legumes, nuts and an abundance of fruits and vegetables
4. Can include moderate amounts of Animal Source Foods
5. Are safe
6. Reduce the risk of diet-related NCDs
7. Are adequate in energy and nutrients for growth and development
8. Include safe and clean drinking water as the fluid of choice
9. Maintain Greenhouse Gas emissions and other natural resources within set targets
10. Preserve biodiversity
11. Minimize the use of antibiotics and hormones in food production
12. Minimize the use of plastics in food packaging
13. Reduce food loss and waste
14. Are built on respect for local culture and local foods
15. Are accessible and desirable
16. Avoid adverse gender-related impacts.

Madam Chair,

Based on these, if a diet is healthy but is not affordable it is not a Sustainable Healthy Diet.

If a diet is healthy but is not culturally acceptable, it is not a Sustainable Healthy Diet.

If a diet is healthy but applies too much pressure and negative impact on the natural environment, it is not a Sustainable Healthy Diet.

Sustainable Healthy Diets must combine all dimensions of sustainability to avoid unintended consequences.

Madam Chair,

Agenda 2030 has put Governments in the lead through committing to the Sustainable Development Goals and defining country targets based on each country's priorities and context. The *Guiding Principles of Sustainable Healthy Diets* is a tool to support the Government by outlining principles to guide decisions for ensuring availability, affordability, and accessibility to healthy diets in accordance with each country's context. This tool will support governments to make decisions for nourishing people today while preparing to nourish people tomorrow and into the future.

I thank you.