

Joint FAO/WHO
Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)
Concept Note, 1 March 2013

The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), an inclusive inter-governmental meeting on nutrition jointly organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), will be held at FAO Headquarters, in Rome, 19-21 November 2014. It will be a high-level ministerial conference which will seek to propose a flexible policy framework to adequately address the major nutrition challenges of the next decades. It will also seek to identify priorities for international cooperation on nutrition in the near and medium-term.

ICN2 will bring together senior national policymakers from agriculture, health and other relevant ministries and agencies, with leaders of United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, researchers, the private sector and consumers, to identify policy priorities on how national and global food, health and related systems and reforms can improve nutritional outcomes.

The 1992 International Conference on Nutrition (ICN)

The first ICN held in 1992, jointly sponsored by FAO and WHO, unanimously adopted a World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition. Delegates from 159 countries and the European Community pledged to eliminate or substantially reduce: starvation and famine; widespread chronic hunger; undernutrition, especially among children, women and the aged; micronutrient deficiencies, especially mineral and vitamin deficiencies; diet-related communicable and non-communicable diseases; impediments to optimal breast-feeding; and inadequate sanitation, poor hygiene and unsafe drinking water. Countries committed to prepare and implement National Plans of Action for Nutrition (NPANs) reflecting country priorities and strategies for alleviating hunger and malnutrition.

Nutrition Trends Since 1992

In the two decades following the 1992 ICN, notwithstanding improvements in many countries, overall progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition has been unacceptably slow. FAO estimates that around 868 million people (12.5 percent of the global population, or one in eight people) were undernourished in 2010-12, compared with about a billion people in 1990-92. Rising food prices, the economic downturn, persistent food price volatility, the greater frequency and severity of natural disasters, including climatic shocks, have further slowed significant improvements for the undernourished. WHO estimates that close to ten million children die before their fifth birthday every year, and a third of these deaths are associated with undernutrition. One in three developing country children under the age of five (171 million children) are stunted due to chronic undernutrition, while another 148 million children are underweight.

Micronutrient deficiencies or “hidden hunger” affect around two billion people (over 30 percent of the world population) with serious public health consequences. At the same time, obesity

affects around half a billion adults, increasingly in low and middle income countries, with consequences ranging from increased risk of premature death to serious chronic health conditions including increased prevalence of diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Changes in diets in recent decades, associated with changing lifestyles, rising incomes and increased consumption of convenience foods together with reductions in physical activity levels, are believed to be associated with this transition.

Malnutrition, in all its forms (under nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and over nutrition) is an intolerable burden, not only on national health systems, but on the entire cultural, social and economic fabric of nations, and is a major impediment to development and the full realization of human potential. While the cost of dealing with the effects of malnutrition - whether in fiscal, economic or human terms - is high, the cost of prevention is much less. Investing in nutrition, therefore, is not only a moral imperative, but also makes economic sense as it improves productivity and economic growth, reduces health care costs and promotes education, intellectual capacity and social development.

The Second International Conference on Nutrition ICN2

The conference will review progress made towards improving nutrition since 1992, reflect on nutrition problems that remain, as well as on the new challenges and opportunities for improving nutrition presented by changes in the global economy, in food systems, by advances in science and technology, and identify policy options for improving nutrition. Since nutrition is an outcome of multiple factors, comprehensive solutions are needed. ICN2 will address issues related to malnutrition, and explore how governments and others can better work together to address the multiple burdens of malnutrition. Further political and policy coherence, alignment, coordination and cooperation among food, agriculture, health and other sectors are urgently needed to improve global nutrition. Moreover, there is demand from countries for practical tools, guidelines, and sharing of experiences as well as lessons learned on how to align sectoral policies to improve nutritional outcomes. FAO and WHO, in collaboration with the Consortium of International Agriculture Research Centres (CGIAR) International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Secretary-General's High Level Task Force on Food Security (HLTF), IFAD, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, WFP and WTO, therefore decided to convene a second ICN.

Key Objectives

1. Review progress made since the 1992 ICN including country level achievements in scaling up nutrition through direct nutrition interventions and nutrition-enhancing policies and programmes;
2. Review relevant policies and institutions on agriculture, fisheries, health, trade, consumption and social protection to improve nutrition;
3. Strengthen institutional policy coherence and coordination to improve nutrition, and mobilize resources needed to improve nutrition;
4. Strengthen international, including inter-governmental cooperation, to enhance nutrition everywhere, especially in developing countries.

Scope

The ICN2 will:

- be global in perspective, but focus particularly on nutrition challenges in developing countries;
- address all forms of malnutrition, recognizing the nutrition transition and its consequences;
- seek to improve nutrition throughout the lifecycle, focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable households, and on women, infants and young children in deprived, vulnerable and emergency contexts.

Expected Outcomes

- A framework for considering current policy and institutional options and guidelines, based on country experiences and knowledge to better address current and future challenges such as:
 - working more effectively across agriculture, health, education, employment, social protection, sanitation and other key sectors to ensure nutrition-enhancing food systems;
 - reducing the multiple burdens of malnutrition and better managing dietary transitions;
 - creating and sustaining partnerships.
- Reinvigorating international, especially inter-governmental cooperation on nutrition with broad objectives, targets and accountability mechanisms for the major stakeholders involved.
- Committing resources to promote more nutrition-enhancing food systems and reduce the multiple burdens of malnutrition.
- Inclusion of nutrition-enhancing food systems into national policies and plans for improving nutrition.
- Making specific recommendations for global bodies to strengthen governance and institutional mechanisms for better nutrition outcomes by engaging stakeholders in post-ICN2 processes.

ICN2 will also contribute to the post-2015 UN development agenda. ICN2 will contribute to ensure a higher degree of policy coherence at global, regional, national and sub-national levels, and global partnership for development at all levels, including the UN Secretary-General's call to take up the "Zero Hunger Challenge". ICN2 will also contribute to and interact with international initiatives and processes in nutrition (e.g. the G8 nutrition events, SUN¹, REACH²).

Preparatory Activities

In preparation for the conference, a series of regional meetings have been held and country nutrition papers and case studies are under preparation. Further expert meetings as well as stakeholder consultations are scheduled for 2013. These processes will feed into and inform ICN2. Some details include the following:

- Seven regional and sub-regional ICN2 preparatory meetings have been held (Harare, 3-5 May 2011; Ouagadougou, 4-5 July 2011; Colombo, 10-12 August 2011; Amman, 2-3 November 2011; Lima, 16-18 November 2011; Bridgetown, 2-4 October 2012; Tel Aviv, 13 March 2013).

¹ Scaling-Up Nutrition

² Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger Initiative

At these meetings, agriculture and health representatives were requested to work together in preparing their country nutrition papers. Country case studies in interested countries (including SUN and REACH countries) will help identify best practices and lessons learned for improving nutrition. This collaboration is also intended to strengthen the capacity of the local institutions involved. These preparatory meetings and country case studies also help identify gaps in our knowledge.

- Other background papers are being prepared by experts in the area of ‘Nutrition-enhancing agriculture and food systems’ and ‘Social protection and nutrition’. Expert meetings will be convened in 2013, including the ‘Meeting of the Minds on the Nutrition Impact of Food Systems’. The background papers will inform the technical discussions in the November 2013 preparatory meeting and the high level event in November 2014.
- Stakeholder consultations among civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector are scheduled for 2013. Stakeholders are invited to participate in ICN2 preparations to ensure that their views and experiences are considered, and possible areas for greater collaboration may be jointly identified. The focus of these conversations will be on how CSOs and the private sector can contribute to improving diets and raising levels of nutrition. The report of the stakeholder consultations will help inform technical discussions at the November 2013 preparatory meeting and the high level event in November 2014.

Preparatory Technical Meeting, November 2013

The preparatory technical meeting is planned for 13 to 15 November 2013 at FAO in Rome. Participants include high-level technical experts from member states working on nutrition-enhancing food systems as well as experts from United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental organizations, civil society including non-governmental organizations, researchers, the private sector and consumers. The draft programme of the preparatory technical meeting consists of a series of thematic sessions possibly covering issues such as:

- key policy and institutional initiatives to improve nutrition;
- building nutrition-enhancing agriculture and food systems (including trade, food safety, etc.);
- managing the dietary transition;
- social protection for nutrition;
- measuring malnutrition – operational and policy-relevant measures, indicators, data and statistics.

A number of related events are under preparation including the International Year of Quinoa and the International Year of Family Farming. Italy is supporting the holding of a meeting on food losses and food waste. At such meetings the technical issues and policy options identified by the ICN2 preparatory process will be presented and the outcome of such meetings will feed into and inform the ICN2. The three Rome-based agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP) are working together to support these initiatives.

Provisional Schedule

The programme of the high level ICN2 conference in 2014 is to be organized around themes identified by the preparatory technical meeting in November 2013. Participants will include high-level representatives of agriculture, health and other relevant ministries and agencies, policy-makers and advisors, researchers, leaders of international organizations, development experts and representatives from the private sector and civil society. The preparatory process will generate and exchange knowledge leading to recommendations for a flexible policy framework to address nutrition challenges as well as priorities for enhanced international cooperation on nutrition issues.

ICN2 & Milan EXPO 2015

Milan EXPO 2015 is focused on the theme of food and nutrition. ICN2 offers a timely opportunity to increase awareness and ensure that nutrition remains high on the international agenda, thus reinforcing coherence, synergies and alignment between the two. An EXPO side event during ICN2 will be arranged, while the FAO contribution to Milan EXPO 2015 will, *inter alia*, highlight the significance of ICN2 outcomes.