

Statement from H.E. Prof. Dr. Rajata Rajatanavin

Public Health Minister of Thailand

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Thank you Chair,

Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, I would like to commend the leadership of FAO and WHO in organizing this important conference. The conference is an important opportunity for governments, development partners, and all stakeholders to commit tackling major nutrition challenges— including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight— and to achieve the global nutrition targets by 2025. It also needs to achieve coherence between food supply and public health policies, as they both contribute to food and nutrition security. Thailand strongly commits and supports governments and all key partners to scale up proven interventions for tackling all nutrition challenges and problems related to food security.

Thailand has become an upper middle-income country since 2012. We are currently facing an ageing population and a growing urban sector. Changes in lifestyle, including a reduction in physical activity, and increased consumption of unhealthy foods have created new nutrition challenges.

Globalization, the rapid growth of agro-industry, international trade on food, and changes in the food systems have pushed the Thai people to consume more unhealthy foods, including those that containing high levels of sugar, fat and salt while the consumption of fruits and vegetables has been comparatively inadequate.

The recent survey shows that these contributing factors lead to a rising trend in overweight, obesity and NCDs. Many agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations have implemented a number of initiatives,

projects, public education, and campaigns to prevent and control over-nutrition and NCDs, but little impact and unfavorable outcomes have been achieved since these activities have been implemented in isolation.

Chair,

In order to reduce fragmentation in implementation, Thailand promulgated the National Food Committee Act in 2008. The act aims to strengthen efficiency and effectiveness of food management, and to achieve food security through sustainable food production and the supply of high quality, safe foods for the nutrition and health of Thais as well as for food trade. The multi-sectoral National Food Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, has been established as a mechanism to formulate and coordinate the implementation of the National Food Management Policies and Strategies.

Furthermore, the annual National Health Assembly convened by the National Health Commission is an important mechanism for 'evidence based participatory healthy public policies'. In the past 6 years, the National Health Assemblies have approved 6 resolutions¹ related to foods and nutrition.

After several years of implementation under these two multi-sectoral public—private mechanisms, we have achieved some social consensus. However, much more work still needs to be done in terms of capacity development throughout the food-chain from food production to consumer education and public communication. There is a strong need for research to generate evidence for policy-making decisions on effective legal and other measures, and support the roles of Local Administration, community leaders and all key partners who are in charge of community-based programmes. Development and campaign for healthy diets for all age groups during normal healthy times, and when conditions of ill health are also needed.

Chair,

¹ เกษตรและอาหารในยุควิกฤต (NHA1) การจัดการภาวะน้ำหนักเกินและโรคอ้วน(NHA2) ความปลอดภัยทางอาหาร:การจัดการน้ำมันทอดซ้ำ (NHA4) ความปลอดภัยทางอาหาร: การแก้ไขปัญหาจากสารเคมีกำจัดศัตรูพืช (NHA5) การพัฒนาเกลือและกระบวนการที่สามารถรับมือผลกระทบด้านสุขภาพจากการเข้าสู่ประชาคมอาเซียนโดยเฉพาะอาหารและสินค้าเกษตรที่เป็นอาหาร (NHA5) การจัดการอาหารในโรงเรียน (NHA6)

Thailand's experiences clearly show that agricultural and food systems have played a critical role in food and nutrition policies at both the national and local level, among communities, households and individuals. The agricultural and food sectors have contributed their best to ensure adequate supplies of high quality and safe foods for consumers and for trade. The multi-sectoral efforts of agriculture, health, and other relevant sectors, local administration, and community participation have proved to be a constructive and promising mechanism in alleviating maternal and child malnutrition in Thailand. In the midst of increasing prevalence of overweight, obesity, and NCDs, agricultural and food systems will play a greater role in ensuring adequate supplies and services of healthy and safe foods for consumers at local, national, and international levels.

Thailand, praised as the kitchen of the world, will continue our commitments to effectively implement our National Food Management Policies and Strategies to achieve high quality of healthy and safe food.

We are pleased to work collaboratively with other countries, including governments, agricultural and health professionals, development partners at all levels, to strengthen the food security, food safety and nutrition, especially after 2015, where the Sustainable Development Goals are competitive among food, feed, fuel and bio-products.

We are also willing to learn and share our experiences, and facilitate our collaborations with international agencies and development partners. We commit to eliminate all forms of malnutrition before 2025.

Thank you, Chair.

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