To: FAO Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum)  
**Subject:** Response to FSN Forum’s Online Discussion on “Are there any successful policies and programmes to fight overweight and obesity?”  
**Date:** 4 July 2016

Dear FSN Forum Moderators,

Across Asia, obesity, malnutrition and chronic diseases are some of the biggest health challenges of the 21st century. To facilitate a multi-stakeholder platform to initiate a dialogue on an integrated approach to solving these challenges, the Asia Roundtable on Food Innovation for Improved Nutrition, or ARoFIIN, was inaugurated on 30 January 2015 in Singapore.

With an initial focus on Southeast Asia and China, senior delegates from government, academia, industry and the rest of society exchange views on the current landscape as it relates to the social, economic and health opportunities for food and nutrition-based R&D, as well as consumer behavioural changes in the food and nutrition arena.

As a member of the Asia Roundtable on Food Innovation for Improved Nutrition (ARoFIIN), please find below our contribution.

The number of obese adults in the ASEAN+6 countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) increased at a faster rate than that of the United Kingdom and the United States of America from 2010 to 2014, according to data gathered by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

In response to the nutrition double burden problem in Asia, ARoFIIN was formally launched in January 2016 to leverage public-private partnerships and bring together experts from across government, academia, industry and civil society, to initiate and sustain a regional, multi-stakeholder dialogue on the role of food innovation in tackling obesity and chronic disease. ARoFIIN was convened by the Health Promotion Board (HPB), the Agency for Science, Research and Technology (A*STAR), the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences (SICS) and Food Industry Asia (FIA).

ARoFIIN was established based on these three principles:

1. **Whole-of-Society Approach**

   We believe in the power of bringing senior actors from government, academia, industry and NGOs together to analyse the existing landscape in Asia as it relates to:

   a) Social, economic and health opportunities for food and nutrition-based R&D  
   b) Consumer behaviour changes in the food and nutrition arena

ARoFIIN is a unique partnership centred on using innovative ways to deliver science-based solutions. It works on four broad areas for collaborative activity that draw on the collective strengths of its delegates:

   a) **Platform:** Establishing an evidence-based knowledge hub and facilitating the nutrition dialogue  
   b) **Consumer:** Enhancing nutrition literacy and understanding consumer behaviour
c) **Regulation**: Understanding the barriers and enablers of innovation

c) **Double Burden**: Optimising nutrient accessibility, food innovation and reformulation to tackle malnutrition

2. **The First Obesity Study for Asia**

ARoFIIN is collaborating with the Health Promotion Board of Singapore on a benchmarking obesity study, which is being undertaken independently by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The study aims to provide visibility on the obesity and NCD interventions that have been shown to be effective in tackling obesity in the region and what the economic impact and resulting healthcare costs. This study is unique because it is the first-of-its-kind in Asia to allow policy-makers to compare the prevalence of obesity and related NCDs, as well as direct and indirect healthcare costs in the region.

The study is conducted in two phases:

**a) Phase 1: Economic cost analysis**

The purpose of the survey will be twofold: gathering prevalence rates and gauging cost of treatment. Two populations will be: obese people and medical practitioners who are involved in treating obesity-related conditions.

**b) Phase 2: Policy interventions**

In this phase, an overview of potential interventions will be conducted that can be used to prevent and control obesity with policies that have been deployed in South-east Asia. The framework is structured around four intervention areas: Activity, Psychology, Physiology, and Food.

3. **Scaling up Projects**

The results of the Asian obesity study, which is expected to be released before the end of 2016, will act as the first reference document for tackling nutrition challenges in Asia. It will guide ARoFIIN’s next steps in designing and scaling up feasible intervention projects to help address obesity and chronic disease in the context of Asia.

ARoFIIN taskforces are identifying other key potential projects that are scalable that focus on the double burden challenge in Asia.

Best regards,

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Member of the Asia Roundtable on Food Innovation for Improved Nutrition (ARoFIIN)

For more information, visit www.ARoFIIN.org or e-mail us at secretariat@arofiin.org