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INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION
UNION INTERNATIONALE DE PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ ET D'ÉDUCATION POUR LA SANTÉ
UNIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE PROMOCIÓN DE LA SALUD Y EDUCACIÓN PARA LA SALUD

Inputs from the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) on the Framework for Action for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) Zero Draft

All our comments below are based on the IUHPE Position Paper: “Advancing Health Promoting Food Systems”, authored by Dr Jane Dixon, Australian National University (May 2014)

1. General comments on the zero draft Framework for Action

1.1. The draft Framework for Action (FFA) prepared for the Second International Conference on Nutrition represents an excellent beginning, particularly through its acknowledgement of key missing dimensions to the nutrition debate: food systems, social protection schemes and accountability mechanisms. However, we have identified several issues which have been omitted or need strengthening, which we elaborate below.

1.2 A major oversight concerns two aspects of food system capacity, which will be fundamental to success with the FFA.

The first is in relation to the capacity of farmers and fisher people to sustain their food production activities, and by ‘capacity’ we are referring to food producer income streams, their own nutritional health, and the skills and technologies to adapt to environmental changes. This issue is hugely significant given that 70 per cent of the world’s rural population (3 billion) works in agriculture and that many of today’s hungry people are themselves food producers. **While the section on social protection is welcome it refers mainly to the alleviation of household poverty and to assisting food producers in crisis periods. These proposals are not sufficient to develop sustainable nutrition-enhancing food systems.**

The second is the capacity of governments and civil society organisations to act on all of the proposed responsibilities in the FFA. The IUHPE is aware that low and middle income countries governments and civil society organisations simply do not have the numbers of trained agronomists, nutritionists, health promotion officers and food system planners to carry out current duties. **The FFA will add to their duties, and it is not clear how the requisite in-country ‘manpower’ will be established and maintained.**

1.3 While we recognise that Frameworks for Action need to be clear, concise and forward looking, they can be accused of being unachievable if they ignore any reference to the challenges inherent in taking action. Given the evidence from food system developments over the last 50 years (increasing corporatisation of supply chains, oligopoly control over the major agricultural inputs, national government de-regulation of food system activities, international agreements taking precedence over national government policies, food companies playing a major role in nutrition advice) it is not sufficient to mention 'trade-offs' and 'possible 'win-win' options' as it happens on page 7. **As it currently stands, the FFA does not acknowledge the push and pull of major global initiatives and forces which currently undermine nutrition security, and which will undermine the goals of ICN2.**

Chief among these are structural adjustment programs requiring nations to undergo painful economic transitions, often leading to smaller government; and hence undermining the capacity for the nutrition strategic planning, implementation and monitoring called for in this FFA. In particular, the movement of people out of agriculture and into factories and service jobs, or de-agrarianization, can lead simultaneously to higher national incomes as well as an increase in urban poverty. For those rural citizens who leave the land and who cannot find work in cities, or who can secure only the most precarious jobs, income and food poverty follow. Their return to rural areas as landless peasants can also result in higher rates of rural poverty.

A second and related tension, which gets only brief mention, concerns the push for agriculture to be included in trade agreements even when this may undercut rural livelihoods, self-sufficiency in fresh food production, and rural and urban food security. Nutritional security is undermined when international trade law takes precedence over international human rights law and international environmental law.

The third force with potential to curtail the achievement of the FFA concerns the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people due to war, civil strife and environmental degradation. It would be prudent to acknowledge this current and future reality and to commend an action that deals specifically with the nutritional needs of displaced populations, building on the existing raft of uncoordinated actions presently in place.

2. Comments on Chapters 1-2

Chapter 1 sets the scene for what follows.

Chapter 2: Following the comments above, **the critical missing ingredient in the FFA concerns support for people who produce food and who can enact and implement the FFA. Chapter 2 needs a new sub-section (2.2) headed: 'Professional and technical capacity building for improved nutrition outcomes'.** Here the need could be highlighted for a) technical and livelihood support for farmers and fisher people and small food firms; and b) training of, and salaries for, in-country agricultural specialists, nutritionists, health educators and strategic planners.

An associated missing element which should be noted in Chapter 2 (possibly 2.3) is agri-food environmental governance. Again, without healthy marine and land environments food yields will

deteriorate and the people reliant on these environments will lose livelihoods and household food supplies. FAO research, for example, suggests tropical fish catches could decrease by as much as 50 percent as a result of climate change, with South East Asia and the Pacific the most adversely affected. A comparative study for the WorldFish Centre - which investigated the vulnerability of 132 national economies to climate change impacts on their capture fisheries - indicated that the majority of the most vulnerable countries are also the poorest and most of their inhabitants are twice as dependent upon fish for food as those in richer nations.

Section 2.3 – Financing- could then become Section 2.4 and incorporate priority actions for human and environmental capacity building. It is not sufficient to suggest as does Chapter 4, that regional offices of UN organisations will do more, without proposing where this resourcing will come from.

3. Comments on Chapter 3

The strongest parts of this Chapter are Section 3.2 ‘Social Protection’ and Section 3.3 ‘Health’. The weakest aspects are Sections 3.1.2 ‘Sustainable healthy diets’ regarding the bio-physical challenges to food system sustainability, and 3.4 (reads as 4.4 on top of page 24) ‘International Trade and Investment’ which does not include any priority actions. We also note that Section 3.1 ‘Food systems’ is poorly organised and could be edited to become tighter and to follow a sequence that goes from key issues in: nutritional security and dietary diversity (including the WHO dietary recommendations), production, processing, marketing, distribution, retailing, consuming through to waste disposal. Cross-cutting themes of gender and equity considerations could then follow.

We would recommend that Section 3.1.2 ‘Sustainable healthy diets’ becomes a section in its own right and be relabelled to ‘Bio-sensitive food environments’. This section should at least mention the major environmental challenges to food production in addition to climate change and they include: fossil fuel dependency, looming environmental micro-nutrient deficiencies (phosphorous) and toxicities (nitrogen in seas), deforestation for meat production and alternative energy sources, waste generation and disposal. The critical matter of zoonoses interrupting poultry and other supply chains could also be mentioned. If food producers cannot adapt to the new environmental conditions, they become impoverished to the point that they leave the land. A spiral of environmental and social impoverishment commences, threatening food availability, accessibility and appropriateness. **The section should also recognise the important contribution of the growing academic movement investigating ‘healthy agriculture for healthy populations’.**

Section 3.4 ‘International Trade and Investment’ needs strengthening by identifying some of the key institutions and forces at work in terms of trade not only in foodstuffs, but also Intellectual Property rights, foreign investment in agricultural lands (sea and land-leasing and purchasing) and the activities of speculative capital in commodity trading. The unregulated application of financial instruments, or the ‘financialisation’ of commodity chains – futures trading, private equity funds – has entailed an upward trend of speculative capital into commodity sectors (along with environmental catastrophes being responsible for price spikes harming nutritional security and price crashes harming farmer incomes).

4. Comments on Chapters 4 and 5

Leaving aside the omission of the critically important national capacity constraints (as outlined in our opening paragraphs), **these Chapters provide welcome signals of the directions in which FAO and WHO are headed.**

We would urge reference to the following to strengthen the action framework.

4.1. Go beyond social protection to include links between nutrition security and human security.

Countries that have high food insecurity commonly have poor infrastructure, low levels of education and skills, limited investment in agriculture. In turn, food insecurity contributes to famine, civil unrest, warfare, degradation of land, and protectionist trade policies. It is in this sense that food insecurity is both a cause and an outcome of human insecurity. **Given the centrality of global development policy and environmental sustainability governance to nutrition-enhancing food systems, it would seem prudent to make more of the involvement of the UNDP and UNEP agencies.**

4.2 Advocate the financial support of regional knowledge networks to develop a register of bio-sensitive nutrition practice policies and initiatives which advance health promoting food systems: in terms of being good for human health, the environment, human security and national development

4.3 Develop action proposals specifically for the unprecedented homeless and displaced populations.

August 13, 2014

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