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Progress Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

Executive Summary

In November 2014, FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) co-hosted the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), which adopted the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and its Framework for Action. In April 2016 the UN General Assembly endorsed the ICN2 outcome documents and proclaimed the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), providing a clearly defined, time-bound cohesive framework to implement the ICN2 commitments, along with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UN General Assembly mandated FAO and WHO to: (i) co-lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with WFP, IFAD and UNICEF; (ii) cooperatively develop a work programme for the Decade; and (iii) produce biennial reports about the Decade's implementation.

This report provides an update on progress made in implementing the Decade and in following up on ICN2 commitments. In the past two years, while efforts to implement ICN2 international commitments have been actively pursued, global nutrition targets are yet to be achieved. Almost all countries have nutrition-related policies, yet nutrition is not always a stated objective in national sectoral policies and development plans. Implementation needs therefore to be scaled up, with investments for nutrition increased and policy coherence on nutrition further enhanced.

Suggested action by the Council

The Conference is invited to:

- 1) Welcome the proclamation of the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) by the UN General Assembly;
- 2) Acknowledge the progress made in following up on ICN2 commitments and in implementing the Decade of Action on Nutrition, including the development of its Work Programme;
- 3) Provide guidance on further actions in the way forward.

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I. Background

1. In November 2014, FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) co-hosted the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), which adopted the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and its companion Framework for Action (FfA). The Rome Declaration sets out a common vision for global action to eradicate hunger and end all forms of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity and makes ten broad policy commitments. The FfA sets forth 60 recommendations to guide the effective implementation of the commitments enshrined in the Rome Declaration.
2. In 2015, the FAO Conference endorsed the ICN2 outcome documents and urged Members to implement the commitments set out in the Rome Declaration and the FfA recommendations¹. The Conference also encouraged FAO to continue its collaboration with WHO on ICN2 follow-up, including the proposed Decade of Action on Nutrition. A similar request was made by the World Health Assembly to the Director-General of WHO.
3. The UN General Assembly acknowledged ICN2 commitments by including in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a specific goal to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (SDG2), as well as embedding nutrition-related concerns in the other SDGs.
4. Compiled jointly with WHO, this document outlines progress made in the last biennium on follow-up and the Decade's implementation, reflecting key developments at international and country levels.

II. Implementation of ICN2 commitments at international level

A. The Decade of Action on Nutrition and its Work Programme

5. In April 2016, the UN General Assembly endorsed the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the FfA, and proclaimed the *United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)* (Decade) through Resolution 70/259² whereby FAO and WHO were mandated to: (i) co-lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with WFP, IFAD and UNICEF; (ii) develop a work programme for the Decade, using coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in consultation with other international and regional organizations and platforms; and (iii) produce biennial reports for use by the UN Secretary-General to inform the UN General Assembly about the Decade's implementation.
6. In July 2016, the Decade was launched in New York during the meeting of the High Level Political Forum, and a further advocacy event was arranged in September 2016 during the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly.
7. The aim of the Decade is to provide a clearly defined, time-bound cohesive framework that works within existing structures and available resources to implement the commitments made at ICN2 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The added value of the Decade is to establish a focused period to set, track and achieve impact and outcomes, and provide an accessible, transparent and global framework for tracking progress and ensuring mutual accountability for the commitments made.
8. The Decade will build on existing efforts, promote alignment among actors and actions, accelerate implementation of commitments, and foster additional commitments in line with the transformative ambitions of ICN2, the SDGs and the World Health Assembly targets. It will be inclusive and provide an enabling environment such that policies and programmes respect, protect and fulfil human rights obligations and gender requirements.

¹ C 2015/REP- <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mo153e.pdf>

² A/RES/70/259- https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/259

9. The Work Programme of the Decade³ was developed through an inclusive and collaborative process, including face-to-face discussions with Members and two open online consultations organized by UNSCN. It embraces six cross-cutting and connected action areas derived from the FfA recommendations, namely:

- a) Sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets;
- b) Aligned health systems providing universal coverage of essential nutrition actions;
- c) Social protection and nutrition education;
- d) Trade and investment for improved nutrition;
- e) Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages;
- f) Strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition.

10. The means of implementation of the Decade include:

- a) the submission by Members of their ICN2 commitments for action, in the context of national nutrition and nutrition-related policies and in dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders, tracked through an open access database;
- b) the convening of action networks, i.e. informal coalitions of countries aimed at advocating for the establishment of policies and legislation, allowing the exchange of practices, highlighting successes and providing mutual support to accelerate implementation;
- c) the convening of fora for planning, sharing knowledge, recognizing success, voicing challenges and promoting collaboration;
- d) the mobilization of financial resources to support implementation of national policies and programmes.

B. International developments related to ICN2

11. In October 2016, CFS decided to scale up its role in advancing nutrition. To this end, it endorsed a framework to step up its contribution to the global fight against malnutrition, serving as an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder global forum on nutrition.

12. In December 2016, FAO and WHO co-hosted in Rome an *International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition*, with a focus on three tracks: (i) supply-side policies and measures for increasing access to healthy diets; (ii) demand-side policies and measures for increasing access and empowering consumers to choose healthy diets; and (iii) measures to strengthen accountability, resilience and equity within the food system. The Symposium fostered collaboration between governments and other stakeholders in developing innovative solutions to enable food systems to deliver healthy diets for better nutrition.

³ <http://www.who.int/nutrition/decade-of-action/workprogramme-2016to2025/en/>

13. Other international developments related to the Decade and ICN2 follow-up include:
- a) To raise awareness of malnutrition challenges and build support for improved nutrition stemming from ICN2, two FAO *Special Ambassadors for Nutrition* were nominated: Queen Letizia of Spain in 2015 and King Letsie III of Lesotho in 2016;
 - b) The *Third International Conference on Financing for Development* (Addis Ababa, July 2015) adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as part of the 2030 Agenda, which encourages increased public and private investments for nutrition;
 - c) In January 2015, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture endorsed *Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition*, which identify relevant sectors and development goals into which concerns related to biodiversity for nutrition can be mainstreamed, including ICN2 follow-up actions at country level;
 - d) The 2015 and 2016 *Global Nutrition Reports* underlined the relevance of ICN2 commitments and recommendations especially in giving prominence to the issue of food systems;
 - e) *Recommendations to Improve Nutrition through Agriculture and Food Systems*, which explicitly refer to ICN2 and the Decade, were formulated by the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition in August 2016;
 - f) The joint communiqué from *Nutrition for Growth* (Rio de Janeiro, August 2016) stressed the importance of nutrition-related financial and policy commitments in the context of ICN2 and the Decade;
 - g) *Panorama of Food and Nutrition Security in Latin America and the Caribbean*, issued in January 2017 as an ICN2 follow-up activity linked to the Decade, reported that obesity affects 23% of the region's population, and that around 58% of its inhabitants are overweight and calls for coordinated policies and actions to address obesity in the region.

III. Implementation of ICN2 commitments at country level

A. Overview

14. Addressing all forms of malnutrition: 793 million people are undernourished globally, down 167 million over the last decade. In 2015, global child stunting, wasting and overweight rates were 23.2% (156 million), 7.4% (50 million) and 6.2% (42 million) respectively. Exclusive breastfeeding reached 43% and anaemia was 29%. 49 countries reduced stunting since 2012 and 36 reported increase in exclusive breastfeeding. Conversely, overweight is increasing and anaemia is not decreasing. Obesity in adults nearly doubled between 1980 and 2014; in 2014, 11% of men and 15% of women were obese.

15. Increasing investments: donor funding for nutrition is primarily focused on undernutrition. The World Bank estimates that current yearly spending on nutrition-specific interventions to address stunting, severe acute malnutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, and women's anaemia is USD2.9 billion from government sources and USD1 billion from donors. To fully achieve the World Health Assembly targets an additional USD7 billion per year should be spent in the next 10 years.

16. Raising the profile of nutrition in national policies: currently 183 countries have national policies on nutrition, 105 have health sector plans with nutrition components and 48 have integrated nutrition objectives in their national development plans. Among the 60 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks analysed, 50% include the World Health Assembly Global Nutrition Targets. Over 70 countries worldwide have made efforts in 2014 and 2015 to mainstream food security and nutrition in sectoral policies and investment programmes⁴.

⁴ Sources: 2nd WHO Global Nutrition Policy Review (2016-2017) and <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ms430e.pdf>

17. **Strengthening human and institutional capacities:** 73 countries have trained nutrition professionals and 63 provide training for health workers on maternal and child nutrition. Capacity building has been carried out on food safety, the Codex Alimentarius and antimicrobial resistance.
18. **Providing technical support:** Overall FAO provided technical support to over 90 countries (20 Latin America/Caribbean; 5 Europe/Central Asia; 40 Africa; 9 Near East/North Africa; 20 Asia/Pacific) with focus on integration of food-based approaches in multi-sectoral nutrition strategies, and of nutrition in agriculture policies and investment plans, school food and nutrition, nutrition information systems and nutrition education.
19. **Supporting Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** As called for by the SAMOA Pathway⁵, FAO, together with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) has led the development of Global Action Programme on Food Security and Nutrition in SIDS (GAP), to be launched at the FAO Conference in July 2017. The GAP is a guidance document intended to promote coordinated actions of governments, private sector, civil society, international organizations and other development partners required to accelerate action to halt and reverse the growing in food security and nutrition crises in a comprehensive manner. Fully integrated with the 2030 Agenda and the ICN2 FFA, the GAP recommends actions at local, national, regional and global levels to achieve three mutually-reinforcing objectives: (i) strengthen the enabling environments for food security and nutrition; (ii) improve the sustainability, resilience and nutrition-sensitivity of food systems; and (iii) empower people and communities for improved food security and nutrition. As a means of supporting the implementation of the GAP, a new Interregional Initiative on SIDS has been initiated at FAO. The SIDS Interregional Initiative has been designed to promote cross-strategic programme support.

B. Key activities for each of the action areas

20. To report progress against the FfA recommendations, these have been grouped into the six action areas of the Work Programme of the Decade (see para 9).

1: Sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets⁶

21. ICN2 highlighted the need for coherent national policies with explicit nutrition targets and strategies to improve food systems, including all components of production, processing and distribution, to provide in a sustainable manner adequate, safe, diversified and nutrient rich foods for healthy diets.
22. 27 countries have been assisted to reduce food loss and waste through awareness-raising campaigns, capacity building and evidence-based policies. An increasing number of countries are considering incorporating sustainability in their food-based dietary guidelines.
23. Prevention and mitigation of food insecurity risk have been implemented in 57 countries and 28 countries have applied socio-economic measures that reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience of communities at risk of threats and crisis.
24. Efforts to improve the nutrition quality of the food supply are underway with 67 countries fortifying wheat, 102 fortifying salt with iodine and 42 fortifying oils with vitamin A. 50 countries are implementing product reformulation measures (mandatory or voluntary) and at least 10 have established measures to reduce trans fatty acids in food products.
25. 51 countries have policies to reduce marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children; about 30 countries use fiscal policies to drive food choices; and 11 countries have improved various aspects of their national food control systems, including legislative and institutional frameworks, and technical and scientific capacities to design and implement risk-based food safety management programmes.

⁵ A/CONF.233/10, *Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway)*, 2014 (http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.233/10&Lang=E).

⁶ FFA recommendations 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 50, 53, 54, 55, 56, and 57.

2: Aligned health systems providing universal coverage of essential nutrition actions⁷

26. Main interventions delivered are iron or iron-folic acid supplementation to women of reproductive age (111 countries) and micronutrient supplementation to children under 5: vitamin A (71 countries), iron (37 countries), zinc (33 countries), multiple micronutrient powders (47 countries). 63 countries conduct deworming programmes. Nutrition is integrated into programmes addressing HIV/AIDS in 71 countries and tuberculosis in 57 countries.

3: Social protection and nutrition education⁸

27. 42 countries address nutrition through social protection; and 38 implement conditional cash transfers. FAO's strategic programme on rural poverty reduction employs contextualized strategies to support countries to strengthen social protection systems through policy advice, capacity development, information systems and evidence-based knowledge instruments for improving rural livelihoods and strengthening ability of the rural poor to manage risks.

28. On nutrition education, 108 countries have counselling programmes on healthy diets and 90 media campaigns; 89 have school health and nutrition programmes, with 61 including nutrition education; 116 have developed food-based dietary guidelines. Many countries are implementing nutrition labelling, but only 25 have front-of-pack labelling. Food safety is integrated in nutrition programmes through the Five Keys to Safer Food.

4: Trade and investment for improved nutrition⁹

29. FAO supported countries and regional economic communities in the formulation and implementation of 18 international trade agreements. WHO promoted the use of international food safety standards through the Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. Some countries have imposed restrictions and tariffs on imports on foods high in fats, sugars and salt, sometimes facing challenges to comply with international trade agreements.

5: Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages¹⁰

30. 114 countries recommend exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, and 85 continue to recommend breastfeeding until two years or beyond. However, only 12% of births occur in facilities designated as "Baby-friendly". 135 countries have enacted legal measures covering some of the provisions of the International Code of Marketing Breast-Milk Substitutes, but only 39 incorporate all or most provisions. 77 countries currently provide maternity leave cash benefits of at least two thirds of prior earnings for 14 weeks.

31. 46 countries included in their plans or policies actions to create healthy food environments in the workplace, 32 in hospitals and 97 in schools, but only 40 countries have clear standards for foods and beverages available in schools. Adolescent underweight and anemia was addressed only in 23 countries.

6: Strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition¹¹

32. To achieve coherence in relevant national strategies, policies, plans and programmes and align national resources to achieve nutrition objectives and targets, intersectoral mechanisms are needed to oversee and monitor implementation and accountability. 146 countries have one or more intersectoral coordination mechanisms, involving multiple stakeholders and chaired by Agriculture (27 countries), Health (115 countries) or the Prime Minister's or President's office (36 countries). Such mechanisms include the private sector in 51 countries, which emphasize the need for robust safeguards against conflicts of interest.

⁷ FfA recommendations 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36, 37, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49.

⁸ FfA recommendations 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

⁹ FfA recommendations 4, 8, 17, and 18.

¹⁰ FfA recommendations 13, 15, 16, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 51, and 52.

¹¹ FfA recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 58, 59 and 60.

33. The Scaling Up Nutrition Movement has 59 participating countries and three Indian States. 49 countries have an active multi-stakeholder platform at the national level, with private sector representatives included in 29 platforms. A national common results framework is in place in 35 countries, and 32 countries have a nutrition action plan.

34. 11 countries received support to establish systems to monitor, analyze and reform food and agricultural policies. Through the South-South Cooperation programme, FAO promoted exchange and learning among governments and civil society representatives from 10 countries at the Knowledge Share Fair on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment.

IV. Contributions by UN Agencies

35. FAO has mainstreamed nutrition in its Strategic Framework, making nutrition one of the four cross-cutting themes for the Organization, and bringing to the fore the need to focus on food systems as a sustainable way to address malnutrition in all its forms. FAO has supported about 50 countries in sub-Saharan Africa to incorporate nutrition objectives in agriculture policies and programmes. FAO is supporting countries to develop Food-Based Dietary Guidelines on how people should eat. FAO is contributing to address the global dietary data gap through the development of the Global Individual Food Consumption database. FAO is supporting the organization in 2017-18 of regional conferences to incorporate the food systems approach to address all forms of malnutrition.

36. Besides a 2016-25 Nutrition Strategy, WHO developed evidence-informed guidance on healthy diet and effective nutrition interventions and provided technical assistance to 70 countries, with a focus on guidelines dissemination and adaptation, nutrition surveillance, capacity building, development of strategies, action plans and national legislation.

37. UNICEF supported 127 countries with a high burden of malnutrition; provided vitamin A supplements to nearly 270 million children and supported severe acute malnutrition management in both development and humanitarian contexts, reaching nearly 2 million children. UNICEF has a specific outcome for nutrition in its Strategic Plan 2014-17 and has developed a new Nutrition Strategy.

38. WFP reaches more than 70 million vulnerable and food-insecure people each year, supporting the development and delivery of national plans and policies to end malnutrition in all its forms. The WFP Strategic Plan 2017-21 includes a nutrition objective and a new Nutrition Strategy has been endorsed.

39. IFAD's investments are aimed at strengthening local food production through smallholder and family farmers with a focus on women. One third of projects approved in 2016-18 are nutrition-sensitive, aimed particularly at dietary diversification.

40. To enhance coherence in the UN system, UNSCN has released a new Strategic Plan 2016-20 and produced a Discussion Paper on 'Global Governance for Nutrition' describing the current nutrition architecture, with a detailed overview of the main nutrition actors and their mandate, including the role of UNSCN focusing on three specific areas: enhancing coherence; stewardship; evidence and accountability.

V. Conclusion

41. Efforts to implement ICN2 international commitments have been actively pursued. Global nutrition targets are yet to be fully achieved, but some progress has been made in the implementation of national commitments. Almost all countries have policies related to nutrition, often covering all forms of malnutrition, although nutrition is not always a stated objective in national sectoral policies or development plans. Intersectoral coordination mechanisms have been established, often including multiple stakeholders. In general, implementation needs to be scaled up, investments for nutrition have to increase and greater policy coherence is required. The Decade provides an opportunity to accelerate progress on all these fronts.

VI. Suggested Action by the Conference

42. The Conference is invited to:
- a) Welcome the proclamation of the Decade of Action on Nutrition by the UN General Assembly;
 - b) Acknowledge the progress made in following up on ICN2 commitments and in implementing the Decade of Action on Nutrition, including the development of its Work Programme;
 - c) Provide guidance on further actions for the way forward.